

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 22, 2021  
PERKINSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS & EDUCATION  
NOON**

**I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:**

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m., established a quorum and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Chairman Schmitt welcomed the entire staff of Richmond Region Tourism to the meeting along with guests. Dr. Joe Casey, Chesterfield County Administrator welcomed the group to the county and to the facility, followed by a welcome from Sarah Snead, Interim Director of the Perkinson Center for the Arts & Education.
- B. City Center Plan Presentation: Ms. Maritza Mercado Pechin with the Department of Planning and Review for the City of Richmond presented the City Center Plan to the group. The group learned about the proposed plan for the downtown area.

*Staff departed for a tour of the facility while the Board reconvened to continue the agenda items.*

- C. MOTION Minutes: The minutes from the May 20 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Perry Miller made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Jim Holland. The vote passed.
- D. Hendren Retirement: Chairman Schmitt acknowledged the retirement of Jennifer Hendren, Chief Marketing Officer, after 14 years with the organization. Jennifer's last day with Richmond Region Tourism will be August 6<sup>th</sup>. While Jennifer could not attend the meeting, Chairman Schmitt reported that under her leadership, the Richmond region has enjoyed rising hotel occupancy and increased national and global visibility as a top leisure, meetings, and sports tourism destination. Hendren is known throughout the travel and tourism sector as a top creative mind, an innovative leader and an enthusiastic industry advocate.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. President's Report: Mr. Berry reported on the financial summary through April and noted that the finances are approximately \$1.6 million to the good for expenses in FY21. Mr. Berry reviewed the 30 year history of tax collections and noted that for FY19, a record year, tax collections were \$30 million. Collections for FY20 were \$25 million and for FY21 they were 32% down at \$17.3 million. Overall trends show occupancy up for May at 63% with business travel making the difference. Mr. Berry reported that he and other senior leaders from RRT recently attended the Destination International Annual conference in Baltimore where they heard from industry leaders that leisure travel will return in 2021, meetings and conventions will return in 2022 and business travel should return by 2023.
- B. MOTION FY22 Budget: Mr. Berry presented the FY22 budget The budget was originally presented in November when sent to the jurisdictions, but significant changes have occurred. The reserves were discussed, and Mr. Berry explained that with \$700,000 carried over from last fiscal year, combined with surplus from FY21 as well as the Payroll Protection Plan funds and the American Rescue Act Funds due to come, the surplus will grow from \$2.9 million to over \$5 million after the FY21 year is audited. Mr. Berry presented the FY22 budget which is \$6.8 million in revenue and \$7.9 million in expenses (\$1.16 over in expenses). The jurisdictions decided to continue to fund at 1.75% level of the occupancy tax until FY23 when it will increase to 2%.

Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President, reported on a new leadership structure for the new fiscal year. The primary goal of the change is to increase cross departmental collaboration to enable our program of work to better ladder up to the Tourism Master Plan and meet our strategic objectives. No additional staff will be hired, but three new Vice Presidents will be established, and all Vice Presidents will report to the Executive Vice President. There will be a Vice President of Community Relations, Vice President of Visitor Experience and Vice President of Sports. The proposed organizational chart compared to the previous chart was shared with the Board of Directors and Ms. O'Donnell walked through all the changes that will occur and ensured the board of the diversity of the staff. A compensation study review was conducted in the spring and adjustments were made for those staff that pay ranges were adjusted. Mr. Perry Miller requested a copy of the compensation study. After a discussion about the leadership changes, Mr. Jim Holland made a motion to adopt the FY22 budget, which motion was seconded by Mr. Perry Miller. The vote passed.

- C. Market Trends: Mr. Berry reviewed the June trends and noted that occupancy for our region is at 63.9%. Occupancy and REV par numbers for April, May and June for 2019, 2020 and 2021 were shared with the board. For June:

Occupancy June	REV Par June
2019 72%	\$70.54
2020 43.2%	\$30.40
2021 63.9%	\$57.80

- D. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Update: Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President, updated the board on the work from the staff DEI Task Force that was formed last December. The group has divided into three subcommittees to work on responsible sourcing, recruitment and advancement as well as education and training. The full plan will be presented to the Board in September.

- E. Tourism Master Plan Update: Chairman Schmitt thanked the committee chairs on the work that is moving forward. The following updates were made:

- **Place Branding – Co-Chairs: Angela Kelly-Wiecek & Lisa Sims**  
Angela Kelly-Wiecek reported that now that the Longwoods perception survey is complete and been presented, the committee will take time to read the entire report and meet with Longwoods for them to provide additional detail. The study and presentation have been sent to all board members to review. A meeting will be setup for the committee Co-Chairs to meet with Jennifer Hendren before her departure to determine next steps.
- **Experience Development – Chair: Dennis Bickmeier and staff liaison Matt Robinette**  
Mr. Dennis Bickmeier reported that the findings of the perception study will be beneficial to work of their group. The committee is planning a meeting in August.
- **Infrastructure & Investment – Co-Chairs Ellen Robertson and Neil Amin and staff liaison Dasha Runyan**  
Ms. Ellen Robertson reported that the group has heard several presentations and most recently heard from Bill Street about the James River Development Plan. The next meeting will be August 12<sup>th</sup> where the group will hear from Leonard Sledge with the

City regarding the One Casino project. The full board and staff will be invited to join the virtual meeting.

- Industry Advancement & Advocacy – Co-Chairs: Jim Holland & Brian Anderson and staff liaison Katherine O'Donnell  
Mr. Jim Holland reported on the work of the committee and noted that the group met in June and is focusing on workforce development. The group heard from Jim Wilson and is working with VRLTA to develop best practices for restaurants as they struggle with hiring. A workshop will be conducted to assist restaurants with HR and hiring issues.

### **III. OTHER NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Chairman Schmitt opened the floor to roundtable discussions and the following topics were announced:

- New Kent County live horse racing at Colonial Downs and Virginia Derby August 31
- Gail Carey, Office Manager with New Kent County Economic Development was in attendance and was introduced by Patricia Paige
- RMA's Valor Awards at GRCC December 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Urban One Casino referendum
- Downtown Task Force developments
- USA Softball at RF&P Park
- NASCAR in September and 9/11 Remembrance Plans
- Hanover Events for 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration (Squirrels ballgame, History & Culture Museum Day, Hanover Tomato Festival)
- Pony World Series in Chesterfield County starts July 23
- Coastal Playing League for Baseball – Tri-City Chili Peppers in Colonial Heights
- Fall Line Trail
- Kings Dominion Carnival Event and fall activities as well as staffing issues and capital projects that will return in 2023
- Breeze Airlines with direct flights to Charleston (July 8); New Orleans (July 15) and Tampa (July 22)
- Dominion Energy will be hosting its third annual Careers in Energy Diversity Student Conference virtually from October 5-7, 2021
- Sports Tourism in Chesterfield
- New projects underway in Chesterfield such as: Dancing Kilt, Molly's Bike Shop, Blind Dog Brewery

There being no new business to discuss, the next meeting will be held September 16<sup>th</sup> and will be at a location in Henrico County. The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

Attendees:

Dennis Bickmeier, Richmond Raceway  
Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion\*  
Pat Collins, TowneBank  
Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia  
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County  
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County  
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights  
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy  
Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers  
Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission  
Patricia Paige, New Kent County  
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond  
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County  
Tom Silvestri, Retired, Richmond Times Dispatch  
Dawn Miller, Henrico County  
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association

Guests Present

John D. Watt, Chesterfield County  
Doug Smith, Colonial Heights  
Angela Wright, Hanover County  
Gail Carey, New Kent County  
Joe Casey, Chesterfield County  
Sarah Snead, Perkinson Art & Education Center

Absent: 7

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland  
Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels  
Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA  
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen  
Scott Jones, Richmond Region Hospitality Association  
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp  
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels  
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond  
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Staff Present

Jack Berry  
Katherine O'Donnell  
Michelle Lovatt  
Dasha Runyan  
Matt Robinette  
Vizyon Wilson, Intern