

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 16, 2023
ASHTON CREEK VINEYARD
CHESTERFIELD COUNTY
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m., established a quorum and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Chairman Schmitt welcomed the group and introduced Mr. Jim Holland who gave a brief welcome to the County of Chesterfield. Mr. Holland presented a video of Chesterfield. Mr. Kirk Thibault, owner of Ashton Creek Vineyard also welcomed the group and invited them to take a tour following the meeting.

Chairman Schmitt introduced Kevin Holland, the new National Destination Sales Manager who started with Richmond Region Tourism on February 21st as well as new student intern, Chloé Hagins from Mary Baldwin University. Other guests in attendance included Candice Eley and Jeff Wilson with Padilla, Angela Oakes with the Greater Richmond Partnership and Stephen Hayes with CBS 6.

- B. MOTION Minutes: The minutes from the January 19th meeting were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell made a motion to accept the minutes which were seconded by Mayor Kochuba. The vote passed.
- C. Recognitions: Chairman Schmitt recognized Tamera Harris for her 25th anniversary with Richmond Region Tourism. Tamera joined the organization in 1998 and was honored with an engraved award. Chairman Schmitt also recognized Jerrine Lee and Jennifer Wakefield for the Women Who Drive Richmond nominations.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Special Presentation: Mr. Tom Loftus introduced Candice Eley and Jeff Wilson with Padilla who presented the creative concept for the Inspiration Campaign. The primary goal of the campaign is to drive tourism and help the region's tourism industry continue its recovery. The campaign will also create a halo effect that is intended to achieve the following goals:

- Raise awareness of the Richmond Region as a thriving and exciting destination for leisure, family and friends, travel, sports events and business meetings
- Raise awareness of the region as a prime location for economic development
- Raise awareness of what RRT's jurisdictions have to offer
- Raise awareness of the region as an excellent destination to live, work, learn and play
- Drive hotel occupancy and visitation to the region's businesses and attractions
- Promote the diversity of the region and raise awareness of our diversity initiatives including BLK RVA and OutRVA
- Complement the efforts of Virginia Tourism Corp. in driving visitors to the Commonwealth and encouraging our visitors to vacation throughout Virginia

Mr. Loftus reported that the campaign will roll out to the public at the Annual Meeting on May 11th. Mr. Cario inquired about trademarking "Richmond Region Speaks for Itself" logo. The feedback from the board was positive with Ms. Thomas stating that the campaign would be memorable. The creative campaign will use the ASMR technology in the videos.

- B. President's Report: Mr. Jack Berry presented the new 2023 Attraction Pass and encouraged the board to be a tourist in their own community and visit the attractions listed on the pass. Also the new 2023 Visitor Guide featuring Pocahontas State Park on the cover was also distributed. Mr. Berry gave a personnel update noting that the Director of Finance position has almost been filled.

Mr. Berry reported a conflict disclosure and noted that Richmond Region Tourism has entered into a yearly agreement with RMC Events for services throughout the year.

The finances through December were reviewed and Mr. Berry noted that expenses are in line with the budget. The trends through January report that the region is up 19% from the record year last year in occupancy increase. Business travel is returning and the hotel rates continue to be high. A summary of hotel inventory was shared with the board which also demonstrates the hotels in the planning stages or are under construction in the region.

- C. Governance Update: Chairman Schmitt thanked Lisa Sims who has been the Governance chair for many years. Ms. Bridgette Bywater has been appointed the new Chair and Danielle Ripperton will join Pat Collins on the committee.

III. **OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:**

- A. Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update: Mr. Jack Berry noted that Katherine O'Donnell was attending the City of Richmond Finance Committee and could not be with us today. The dates of the Resolution of Intent Public Hearings and Ordinances for the jurisdictions were reviewed. Colonial Heights will go through the process this summer when their newest hotel opens in June. The TID process is moving along well and all ordinances are expected to be voted upon by May 22nd with the exception of Colonial Heights. The collection in those jurisdictions that pass the ordinance will begin in July.
- B. RVA Sports Awards Wrap-up: Mr. J.C. Poma showed a couple of videos which wrapped up the successful RVA Sports Awards which was held in February. Mr. Stephen Hayes with CBS 6 was recognized with an award for his efforts in making the event so successful. The date for next year is February 3, 2024 and will once again be held at the Altria Theater.
- C. Roundtable Announcements: Chairman Schmitt reminded the board of three upcoming events which included the RVA Champions Reception on March 22nd, the May 11th Annual Meeting breakfast and the May 18th board of directors meeting. The meeting will be held earlier than normal at 10:00 a.m. and will conclude with lunch at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. The floor was open to any roundtable announcements. Topics included:
- National Wheelchair Basketball Association 2023-2024
 - Squirrels Baseball pre-sale
 - April 30 free event at Children's Museum of Richmond at City Stadium
 - Economy and banking news – industry is stable
 - 2022 2nd best year for passenger traffic at RIR. New routes in May being announced. Iron Clad coffee will replace Caribou Coffee at RIR
 - Southeast Chapter-American Association of Airport Executives (SEC-AAAE) Conference April 29 – May 2
 - Kings Dominion open on weekends, bookings are increasing and reaching 2019 levels

- New hotels opening in Colonial Heights; May 25th Tri-City Chili Peppers baseball returns to Shepherd Stadium
- Fort Lee to be renamed next week – Fort Gregg Adams is the new name
- Jefferson Cup and NASCAR races March 31st weekend
- Upcoming ChamberRVA events on Transportation and business climate events
- InterCity Visit in May to Kansas City
- InUnison partnership with RRT regarding BLK RVA
- Monument Avenue 10K
- Hanover Concert Series this summer
- Accessibility training

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Attendees:

Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA
 Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion
 John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown
 Paulin Cheatham, Dominion Energy
 Pat Collins, TowneBank
 Renee Haltom, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
 Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
 Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
 Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
 Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
 Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
 Danielle Ripperton, Children's Museum of Richmond
 Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
 Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
 Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association

Guests Present

Candice Eley, Padilla
 Jeff Wilson, Padilla
 Stephen Hayes, CBS 6
 Clay Bowles, Chesterfield County
 Karen Epps, Colonial Heights

Absent:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland
 Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
 Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers
 Michael Lindsey, Lindsey Food Group
 Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
 Patricia Paige, New Kent County
 Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
 Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership
 Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

Staff Present

Jack Berry
 Michelle Lovatt
 Tom Loftus
 J.C. Poma
 Jerrine Lee
 Matt Robinette
 Tamera Harris
 Kevin Holland
 Chloé Hagins