

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 24, 2022
KEYSTONE TRUCK & TRACTOR MUSEUM
COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VA
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:15 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 to the meeting and introduced Mr. Doug Smith, City Manager of the City of Colonial Heights. Mr. Smith welcomed the group and updated the board on a new hotel being built in Colonial Heights. The Tri-City Chili Peppers will open the baseball season on May 1st. Mr. Alan "Bones" Stone, Curator for the Museum, also welcomed the group and stated that they opened the facility in 2010. The Museum owner, Mr. Keith Jones, also surprised the group by welcoming them and also gave a brief history of his personal collection of the items in the museum.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the January 20th meeting were reviewed. Mr. Perry Miller made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Pat Collins. The vote passed.
- C. Congratulations to Dennis Bickmeier: Chairman Schmitt recognized Mr. Dennis Bickmeier for being named the Executive Director of the Henrico County Sports & Entertainment Authority. The announcement was made on March 23rd.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. President's Report: Mr. Berry announced that the coming weekend, being NASCAR weekend and Jefferson Cup soccer at various complexes across the region, could be the largest attended weekend in history. Mr. Berry stated that the Richmond Region Tourism team has been busy returning to business travel, and many have been at tradeshow this week in D.C. speaking and presenting on behalf of the tourism industry.

Mr. Berry updated the board on personnel changes and noted that Julie Fleshman, Convention Sales Coordinator, will be retiring after 10 years of service on March 31, 2022. Ms. Jatiska Reed has been hired to replace Ms. Fleshman as our Sales Coordinator. Ms. Jerrine Lee was promoted in late December to Vice President of Sales which will oversee sports and meetings/conventions. Mr. Danny Bonifas was promoted to Director of Sports & Events, and Ms. Lauran Peoples was promoted to Director of Sales Marketing & Business Development. Ms. Rachel McCue left our organization in March to relocate to Maryland. She was our Creative Services Manager. The position has been re-established and will be advertised as a Senior Creative Marketing Manager and will report to Vice President of Marketing, Tom Loftus. The position of Sports Sales & Events Manager was advertised, and Mr. Gerald Taylor was hired to fill the position. He starts work on April 4th. Mr. Michael Spurlock left Richmond Region Tourism and his position of Convention Services Manager is being advertised as well. There will be three internship positions available for summer 2022.

Mr. Berry distributed 2022 Attraction Guest Passes along with the 2022 Visitor Guide. The 2022 Conflict of Interest Disclosure Annual Statement that is to be signed by all employees and board members was distributed and board members were encouraged to return a completed copy to Michelle Lovatt as soon as possible.

MOTION Conflict of Interest Disclosure: Mr. Berry reported that Richmond Region Tourism would be holding its Annual Awards Meeting at the Hilton Short Pump Hotel which is owned by Shamin Hotels and Neil Amin. The event will be April 27th. Food and beverage costs are approximately \$10,500. Ms. Angela Kelly-Wiecek made a motion accepting the conflict disclosure. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jim Holland. The vote passed.

Mr. Berry reviewed the market trends through February and noted that for 7 straight months, the occupancy rates have been at record levels above 2019 levels. A new department report format has been established and the Board was encouraged to give feedback about the new look and format. Every other month that data will be emailed to the board one week prior to the meeting for review.

(Note: Chairman Schmitt moved item B. Class B Membership Discussion to be a closed session item and after the Tourism Improvement District Discussion item later on the agenda)

- B. **Tourism Master Plan Initiatives:** Jack Berry reported that the headquarter hotel item is making headway and the Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority is taking the lead along with the City of Richmond regarding the item. Mr. J.C. Poma updated the board regarding Workforce Development and reported that a long term approach to educating students on tourism industry jobs in our region will be of top priority. The Awards and Annual Meeting is scheduled to be April 27th and all board members are encouraged to attend and purchase tables. Tickets are available for NASCAR and the Squirrels opening game on April 12th. Anyone interested should see J.C. Poma for tickets. Mr. Tom Loftus updated the board on the image campaign. The jurisdictions are still submitting for the ARPA funds that will be used on the campaign but by late summer we expect an RFP will be ready to select an advertising agency. A new mid-week campaign is underway to assist with driving travelers to the region during the week. The campaign is being targeted in New York and we are also targeting direct fly markets as well as a tank of gas driving markets. Mr. John Cario thanked Mr. Loftus for his marketing efforts to assist with the mid-week travel slump due to business travel still being low.
- C. **MOTION Tourism Improvement Districts:** Katherine O'Donnell updated the board regarding the Tourism Improvement District progress. Meetings have been held with hotel owners as well as the steering committee that will oversee the creation of the TID plan. The next step is to sign the agreement which was distributed to the board for review to engage Civitas for their work with creating the TID. Cost is approximately \$71,500 based on a monthly fee of \$6,500 and paid over two fiscal years. The timeline would be approximately one year to create the districts. Mr. Perry Miller and Mr. Jon Lugbill both expressed the desire to add a clause to the agreement with CIVITAS that if an extension needs to be added to create the districts, that it be month-to-month and to lock in at the current rate in the agreement. Ms. Angela Kelly-Wiecek stated that we should proceed with caution and be mindful of excessive taxation and communicate well with hoteliers. She urged Richmond Region Tourism to work with the small hoteliers in addition to the larger ones. Mr. Brian Anderson made a motion to approve the agreement with CIVITAS. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry Miller. The vote passed.
- D. **Closed Session:** Chairman Schmitt entered into a closed session with the board and staff to discuss a Class B Membership item.

III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

A. Old Business: Chairman Schmitt asked for any old business that needed to be discussed. It was announced that Jon Luginbill will be inducted to the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in April, and all were encouraged to attend the event in Virginia Beach. The floor was then open to any roundtable announcements:

- Jefferson Cup Soccer Tournament
- New hotel developments in Chesterfield
- RiverCity Sportsplex Expansion
- Dory Baseball Stadium
- VCC Ground breaking soon
- July 15-16 Tomato Festival at Polegreen Park
- Concert series at Richmond Harley Davidson Facility
- Festivals at Hanover Vegetable Farm
- Woodspring Suites opening next to Bass Pro Shops in Hanover
- GreenTop's 75th anniversary outdoor expo
- Randolph Macon basketball champions
- Train Day April 30; Strawberry Fair June 11 in Ashland
- Downtown Ashland masterplan with powerlines going underground and new side walk improvements – multi-year project
- April 27 Awards & Annual Meeting at Hilton Short Pump Hotel
- ChamberRVA InterCity Visit to Columbus, OH May 17-20
- New green space in front of Science Museum of Va is underway
- Hanover Museum of History and Culture – new exhibit April 15
- Chard – a new restaurant in Hanover opening Friday
- NASCAR weekend and track laps for charity
- Airport update – 5 new flights with Breeze Airlines and JetBlue resumes direct to LAX in June
- Kings Dominion is open for weekends and has a new roller coaster. Park will be open full time at the end of May
- Staffing issues and workforce development concerns
- Va Green Conference in April
- April 7 is Global Meetings Industry Day
- Monument Avenue 10K April; Uncorked ½ marathon in New Kent and Dominion RiverRock May 20-22; Anthem corporate run in June
- Fall Line trail Ashland to Petersburg – State and Federal funds – 43 mile trail

There being no further business to discuss, the next meeting will be held Thursday, May 12th at Noon in Henrico at the Virginia Cliffe Inn. The meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.

Attendees:

Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA
Dennis Bickmeier, Richmond Raceway
Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion
John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown
Pat Collins, TowneBank
Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers
Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County

Guests Present

Doug Smith, Colonial Heights
Angela Oakes, Greater Richmond Partnership
Clay Bowles, Chesterfield County
John D. Watt, Chesterfield County
Dawn Miller, Henrico County
Angela Wright, Hanover County
Martha Miller, Town of Ashland
Anne Snead, Keystone Tractor Museum
Keith Jones, Keystone Tractor Museum
Alan "Bones" Stone, Keystone Tractor Museum

Absent:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland
Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
Patricia Paige, New Kent County
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners
Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership

Staff Present

Jack Berry
Katherine O'Donnell
Michelle Lovatt
Tom Loftus
Jerrine Lee
Matt Robinette
J.C. Poma