

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
MAY 18, 2023
LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN
HENRICO COUNTY
10:00 A.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.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. John Vithoukas, County Manager, who gave a brief welcome to the County of Henrico. Mr. Brian Trader, President & CEO, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, also welcomed the group. Mr. J.C. Poma was welcomed to the group representing Chesterfield County and a staff alternate to Mr. Jim Holland, replacing Mr. Clay Bowles.
- B. **MOTION Minutes**: The minutes from the March 16th meeting were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell made a motion to accept the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Pat Collins. The vote passed.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. President's Report: Mr. Jack Berry gave a personnel update and noted that we have hired a Director of Finance. Michael J. Kerr was hired and began working April 11th. During the process, Kelly Harding, Manager of Accounting, who had been with us for 10 years decided to resign and her last day with us was April 14th. In April, we accepted the resignation from J.C. Poma. J.C. is now the Executive Director of Sports, Entertainment, and Visitation for Chesterfield County. J.C. was with us almost 7 years and has grown our Community Relations Department as well as our Foundation through the RVA Sports Awards program as well as other programs. We are advertising the positions of Vice President of Community Relations and Manager of Accounting and hope to have candidates in place soon.

Mr. Berry reported that Richmond Region Tourism filed for and received Employee Tax Retention Credits in the amount of \$360,000. The financials through February were reviewed and Mr. Berry reported that expenses are well within budget. The market trends through March were reviewed and the REVPAR for March was the highest on record. The overall tax revenue collections are 16% ahead for the fiscal year.

- B. **MOTION Governance Committee Update**: Ms. Bridgette Bywater, committee chair, presented the following proposed slate of officers:

Proposed Slate of Officers for FY24 & FY25:

Chair – Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
Chair-Elect – Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
1st Vice Chair – Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
2nd Vice Chair – Ellen Robertson, Richmond
Secretary – Neil Amin – Shamin Hotels
Treasurer – Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion
Immediate Past Chair – Dan Schmitt, Henrico County

The Governance committee recommended the adoption of the slate of officers, effective July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025. Mr. Brian Anderson made the motion, seconded by Mr. Pat Collins to approve the slate of officers. The motion passed.

The Governance Committee has also worked with legal counsel and staff to propose edits to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The red-lined documents were distributed for review and the summary points include:

- Remove ChamberRVA from Class A Membership (not contributing monetarily)
- Create Ex Officio seat for ChamberRVA
- Create Ex Officio seat for TID Chair or Vice Chair of the TID Governance Committee of the board
- Remove Richmond Region Hospitality Association Seat and Rename to Hotel Seat and put it into the section of appointed by the RRT Board seats

The vote on the Articles and Bylaws will be held at the July 13th Board of Directors meeting and attendance is encouraged since 2/3rds of the directors will need to be in attendance.

- C. **MOTION Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update:** Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President, updated the board on the progress of the TID. The ordinance has passed in all jurisdictions except for the City of Richmond and City of Colonial Heights. The City is expected to vote in June and Colonial Heights in the fall. A webinar will be held on June 6th to address the fee ordinance and remittance procedures with the hotels.

The TID Governance Policy was presented. The initial members of the committee will be appointed by the RRT Board of Directors. Two-thirds of the committee members shall represent owners of a lodging business paying a TID fee with 41-149 rooms; one-third of the committee members shall represent owners of a lodging business paying a TID fee with 150 rooms or more. No one lodging business ownership shall hold more than three seats on the committee. The RRT Board chair and RRT President & CEO will have non-voting seats on the committee. The policy was reviewed and recommended for adoption. Mr. Perry Miller made a motion to adopt the policy, seconded by Ms. Lisa Sims. The vote passed. The initial committee members are as follows and was approved by motion from Mr. Pat Collins, seconded by Mr. Perry Miller. The vote passed.

Chair - Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
Vice-chair Mayush Mehta, JP Hospitality
Mark Yardis, Shamin Hotels
Ashley Lowery, Apple REIT
Robert Reed, SMI
Ravi Patel, SINA Hospitality
Nirav Mehta, S-Z Management
Paul Cooper, Retro Hospitality
Nick Patel, Kalyan Hospitality

- D. **Sports Tourism Strategic Plan Updates:** Ms. Jerrine Lee, Vice President of Sales, updated the board regarding the Sports Tourism Strategic Plan Updates. In 2019, Richmond Region Tourism contracted Huddle Up Group (HUG) to conduct a Sports Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan provided (3) primary recommendations and (3) secondary recommendations with action items for the Richmond region to remain competitive as a premier sports tourism destination. The recommendations were distributed to the board and reviewed in length. RRT has contracted with Collective Best to help move several of the recommendations

forward. We are well underway with phase one of our partnership around the region-wide venue master plan and gap analysis and should have this finalized before June 30, 2023. Phase two will be the creation and implementation of a sports tourism advisory group to be finalized by December 31, 2023.

III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

- A. Annual Meeting & Awards Breakfast Recap: Ms. Tamera Harris, Director of Community Relations, gave a brief recap of the May 11th Awards and Annual Meeting that was held at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. The event celebrated Richmond Region Tourism's 40th anniversary and the 20th Anniversary of the Convention Center. The Love, RVA video series was also debuted and launched at the event.

Ms. Katherine O'Donnell showed the 60 second Inspiration Campaign video that will launch June 1st. This marks a historic opportunity for us to invest more than double our normal budget for one marketing campaign, thanks to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding given to our jurisdictions to drive back visitation following the Covid-19 pandemic. The campaign, "Speaks for Itself" is a first-of-its-kind campaign for the Richmond Region using a sound-focused ASMR video approach centered around the authentic character of our destination. Our goal was to differentiate this campaign from others in our industry and to be flexible enough for our stakeholders to incorporate it into their marketing efforts. The launch includes:

- 15- and 30-second video ads on connected TV
- Digital display ads
- Out-of-Home digital billboards
- National & local press releases
- Social media posts
- Email to partners with a link to an online toolkit

In the coming weeks, we also will be advertising reels on Instagram, created by local influencers who will "speak for themselves" about their love of the region and some of their favorite locations. The campaign was developed by Padilla, a Richmond-based creative agency, that was selected by Richmond Region Tourism in partnership with ChamberRVA and the Greater Richmond Partnership.

- C. Recognition of the Chair: Ms. Angela Kelly-Wiecek, along with the help of Mr. Jack Berry, honored outgoing chair, Dan Schmitt for his service as Chairman of the Board of Directors from January 2020 – June 2023. Mr. Schmitt was presented with a memory book and gavel plaque and the board acknowledged him for his outstanding service to the community while serving the Richmond Region Tourism Board of Directors as Chairman.
- D. Roundtable Announcements: The floor was open to roundtable announcements. Topics included:
- Tourism Resource Center
 - Ashland Train Day, Farmer's Market and Strawberry Fair
 - Diamond District
 - InUnison and BLK RVA Partnership

- Economic development updates from GRP
- Federal Reserve tracking the economy update
- New branch of TowneBank in Short Pump
- Charity Classic adding a 5k component – Dominion Energy
- ChamberRVA's InterCity Visit to Kansas City
- Kings Dominion Water Park to open and a new Barbeque Restaurant onsite
- Congratulations to Perry Miller for Tourism Impact Award and as 2023-204 chair of American Association of Airport Executives
- Hanover Tomato Festival
- Venture Richmond cleanup efforts downtown
- Staffing challenges
- JMU student orientation
- Henrico Basketball Classic
- RiverCity master plan and concert series in Chesterfield
- Tri-City Chili Peppers at Shepherd Stadium – May 25 opening night
- Dominion Energy RiverRock
- Breeze inaugural flight to Los Angeles from RIC
- Children's Museum exhibit updates
- Flying Squirrels updates
- NASCAR next race, July 29-30
- Secretariat permanent 12ft statue coming to Ashland
- Shamin Hotels 75th hotel underway; and Lifetime Achievement award to Neil Amin by Hilton
- Venture Richmond Canal Cruise updates
- Friday Cheers and expanded service district in Manchester
- Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden expansion announcement and splash pad opening in June

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland
 Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
 Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA
 Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion
 Paulin Cheatham, Dominion Energy
 Pat Collins, TowneBank
 Renee Haltom, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
 Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
 Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
 Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers
 Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
 Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
 Danielle Ripperton, Children's Museum of Richmond
 Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
 Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
 Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
 Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association
 Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership
 Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

J.C. Poma, Chesterfield County
 John Vithoukas, Henrico County
 Brian Trader, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
 Dawn Miller, Henrico County
 Martha Miller, Town of Ashland
 Tara Worden, City of Richmond

Staff Present

Jack Berry
 Michelle Lovatt
 Katherine O'Donnell
 Jerrine Lee
 Matt Robinette
 Tamera Harris

Absent:

John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown
 Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
 Michael Lindsey, Lindsey Food Group
 Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
 Patricia Paige, New Kent County

Guests Present

Karen Epps, Colonial Heights