

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
MAY 20, 2021
GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER
ROOM E21ABC
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. It was noted that several Board members were in attendance via conference call. Two student interns from Virginia State University were introduced. Ms. Janaé Christopher, who has just completed her internship, will be graduating on May 23rd from the Tourism & Hospitality Program. Ms. Vizion Wilson is beginning her internship and is also a student in the Tourism & Hospitality Program at Virginia State University. Ms. Christopher was given a small token of appreciation for her internship.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the March 18 meeting via Zoom Video Conference were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Ms. Patricia Paige. The vote passed.
- C. Greater Richmond Partnership and Air Promotion Presentation: Ms. Jennifer Wakefield, President & CEO of Greater Richmond Partnership updated the Board of Directors on the mission of the Partnership and discussed the results of a recent survey to potential corporate customers and site selectors as well as corporate executives. The current air promotion campaign was also reviewed. The presentation by Ms. Wakefield will be made available to all after the meeting.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. President's Report: Mr. Berry reported on the financial summary through February and noted that there will be an approximate savings of \$1.8 million dollars in this fiscal year which will be rolled into FY22. The full financials through February were shared with the Executive Committee and reviewed at their last meeting.

MOTION Conflict Disclosure: The Executive Committee reviewed the disclosure of a potential conflict with Mama J's Restaurant and Lester Johnson, owner. Richmond Region Tourism has contracted with Mama J's Restaurant to purchase catering for a group that met in Richmond in May. Ms. Angela Kelly-Wiecek made a motion to accept the disclosure, seconded by Mr. Jim Holland. The vote passed.

- B. Market Trends: Mr. Berry presented the market trends through April and noted that for April 2021, occupancy for our region is at 62.1%. April monthly figures for 2019 and 2020 were compared to where we are now in 2021 and it was noted that occupancy levels appear to be rebounding to some normalcy while the Average Daily Rates continue to be low.
- C. **MOTION** 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 objective is to put forward an internal DEI plan for RRT based on climate of inclusion survey results and global benchmarking process. Two benchmarking sessions using the Global DEI Benchmark process from the Center for Global Inclusion have been done:
- Evaluated RRT's score in these categories:
 - DEI Vision, Strategy and Business Impact
 - Leadership and Accountability
 - DEI Structure and Implementation

- Advancement & Retention
- DEI Learning & Development
- Responsible Sourcing
- Ranked LEVEL 3 for all: PROACTIVE: A clear awareness of the value of DEI; starting to implement DEI systemically. This is what is required and expected of all organizations.
- The Task Force created a vision statement for the organization relating to DEI: *To be inclusive and equitable with a strong culture of community, respect, and trust.*
- Divided into working groups to develop objectives and tactics in these areas that were prioritized by the group after completing the benchmarking
 - Advancement and Retention
 - DEI Vision, Strategy & Business Impact
 - DEI Learning and Development
- Goal to have the plan on paper to share with Senior team and the Executive Committee in July

Ms. O'Donnell reported that the DEI task force suggested that the Board create a Stop Asian Hate Statement. The statement below was reviewed by the Executive Committee:

Stop Asian Hate Statement

The notable recent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes nationwide is yet another horrific example of how racism persists in America. It must stop. This necessary change starts within each of us. It begins and ends with our collective resolution to stand up to hate, denouncing it in all form and fashion. The Richmond Region Tourism team and board of directors stand in solidarity with the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and condemn the ongoing violence, racism and xenophobia happening within our country.

The Richmond Region Tourism team remains committed to ensuring all residents and visitors have warm, welcoming, positive, memorable, and safe experiences. Inclusiveness and diversity are integral parts of our core values and are non-negotiables within our mission. We reaffirm our commitment to working with our communities, our neighbors, and our friends, to both fight injustice as well as ensure our region is a place where everyone can thrive, regardless of their background, heritage, race, or ethnicity.

While our nation seeks answers, healing and change, we encourage you to learn more about organizations supporting Asian communities right here within our region.

Chairman Schmitt remarked that he reviewed the statement and offered some feedback. He reiterated that this type of activity will not be tolerated and that while the timing is a little late for reacting to the Asian Hate, he does not want to make a statement just to make a statement. The Executive Committee met and reviewed the statement and stated that this bias will not be tolerated but that it would be appropriate to create a broader statement that shows that we are taking a lead on these issues in our industry. Mr. Jim Holland made a motion to adopt the statement, which was seconded by Mr. Perry Miller. The vote was passed.

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

- Experience Development – Chairs: Dennis Bickmeier and staff liaison Matt Robinette reported that the goals and strategies are being developed for the three sections of their plan (Cultural Tourism, Adventure Tourism and Sports Tourism). The committee is very engaged and has developed subcommittees and is still actively finding subject experts to join the subcommittees. The taskforce took the board roster and added a fun photo of each board member and how they connect to the Visitor Experience. The group stated that they are very excited about the Governor’s lifting of the restrictions.
- Place Branding – Co-Chairs: Angela Kelly-Wiecek & Lisa Sims
Lisa Sims reported Place Branding is about storytelling and not a logo or an image campaign. She reported that Longwoods should have their survey findings complete soon and the report will be shared with all of those working on a Tourism Master Plan committee. Lisa thanked Jennifer Wakefield for presenting the findings of the survey conducted by the Greater Richmond Partnership.
- Infrastructure & Investment – Ms. Dasha Runyan reported on behalf of the Co-Chairs that were absent. The committee will meet again on June 4th and the committee has engaged economic development partners to also be involved with the committee. The group is focused on regional development and downtown hotel development. The group has heard from many presentations that are in the works and are continually looking for other presentation opportunities.
- Industry Advancement & Advocacy – Co-Chairs: Jim Holland & Brian Anderson (O’Donnell) Mr. Jim Holland reported on the work of the committee:
 - Reopening - Dan Schmitt provided an overview of the latest loosening of restrictions from the Governor.
 - Dasha Runyan provided an overview of the meeting and convention business that is at stake if guidelines do not change soon. Of particular concern is the Diversity Xpress conference in July, Police Fleet in August and BNOW in August. Larger business in the Fall is also at risk.
 - The group discussed various strategies to help advance reopening of indoor meetings and events. These included continued advocacy, media outreach via Op Eds and comparison of protocols to D.C. as it reopens.
 - ARP Fund - Eric Terry reported on the effort to allocate a portion of the ARP Funding required to go to tourism to hotels, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), attractions and restaurants in Virginia. This will be allocated by the General Assembly. Initial meetings with legislators are going well.
 - Resident Sentiment - Katherine O’Donnell reminded the group that RRT’s first local marketing campaign in decades will launch in tandem with the virtual Awards and Annual Meeting at 9 a.m. on May 7. The campaign is designed to encourage locals to get back out in the community and invite their friends and family to visit. Register for the meeting at www.RRTAnnualMeeting.com.
 - Workforce - Owen Matthews raised the issue of the challenge of hospitality businesses hiring workforce. Businesses in all sectors of the industry are having serious challenges hiring workforce to support reopening further or staying open at current levels. Owen recommended a campaign to share the message of the value of a career path in tourism.

- Brian Anderson suggested connecting VRTLA's job board and upcoming training program with Network2Work, which connects job seekers to organizations with openings.
- The group will meet again June 8th and hear from VRLTA regarding workforce programs and rehiring, etc.

E. Downtown Taskforce Update: Ms. Lisa Sims reported that the new Downtown Taskforce which is led by the City's Parks and Recreation, Venture Richmond and the Richmond Police Department has met and done a walk down Broad Street from City Hall to Laurel Street which is a 19 block stretch. The group is committed to addressing safety, crime, graffiti, plywood over businesses, homelessness, cleanliness, and perception issues. Venture Richmond kicked off Friday Cheers to sold out crowds and has added an extra date to the event schedule.

III. **OTHER NEW BUSINESS:**

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

- Workforce and Supply Chain issues affecting our industry
- Valor Awards in person December 2 at GRCC
- New venues opening in New Kent – Martha's Kitchen, new wineries and Farmer's Market, live horseracing at Colonial Downs
- Urban One Casino announcement
- U.S. National Collegiate Archery Championships at Dorey Park
- First Tee at Belmont re-opening
- Juneteenth Events
- RiverCity Sportsplex events
- 4th of July celebrations and Chesterfield Fair planning in the works
- Chesterfield Airport two new hangars opening and a flight school
- High School graduations
- PBR opening in Hanover
- Kings Dominion opening
- Washington Capitals partnership to open a hockey rink in Hanover
- Ashland Capital Bike Trail
- 300th anniversary in Hanover
- New Mosely Brewery in Chesterfield County
- TriCity Chili Peppers in Colonial Heights
- Uncorked event in New Kent and RiverRock events with Sportsbackers
- Raceway events – East Coast Logging and 30 year celebration event in September with 911 remembrance
- Growth of new air service routes
- Terminal A expansion with 6 additional gates at RIC

There being no new business to discuss, the next meeting will be held July 22nd. The time and place will be announced soon. The meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland*
Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels*
Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA*
Dennis Bickmeier, Richmond Raceway
Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion*
Pat Collins, TowneBank
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
Jon Luginbill, Sports Backers
Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
Patricia Paige, New Kent County
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels*
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond Dawn Miller, Henrico County
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Guests Present

Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership
John D. Watt, Chesterfield County
Dawn Miller, Henrico County
Scott Zaremba, Chesterfield County
Karen Epps, Colonial Heights

Absent: 7

Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia
Scott Jones, Richmond Region Hospitality Association
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
Tom Silvestri, Retired, Richmond Times Dispatch

Staff Present

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

On the Phone indicated with *