

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 18, 2021  
HANOVER TAVERN  
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 to the meeting and introduced County Administrator, John Budesky who gave greetings to the group. David Deal with the Hanover Tavern also welcomed the group to the facility and Derek Stamey, Director of Hanover Parks & Recreation along with Jaime Fawcett with the Hanover Museum of History & Culture expressed their greetings and encouraged the board members to visit the museum after the meeting. Chairman Schmitt also welcomed new board member Jennifer Wakefield representing the Greater Richmond Partnership and new Vice President of Marketing, Tom Loftus. Tom is from Pittsburgh and started at Richmond Region Tourism on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Martha Miller was welcomed as the new tourism liaison from the Town of Ashland.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the September 16<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Perry Miller. The vote passed. Chairman Schmitt amended the agenda to allow for the speaker from Civitas on Zoom to present before the audit presentation.
- C. Tourism Improvement Districts Presentation: Tiffany Gallagher with Civitas presented to the board via zoom video conference. The presentation was recorded, and a playback will be sent to all board members after the meeting. A tourism improvement district (TID) is a stable source of funding for marketing efforts designed to increase occupancy and room rates for lodging businesses. Funds raised through a small assessment on lodging stays are used to provide services desired by and directly benefitting the businesses in the district. Ms. Gallagher presented the steps to create the districts and also reviewed some case studies by other localities who have been successful with the program. Currently our region is at 14% total occupancy tax and with a tourism improvement district, this would rise to 16% and would double our budget making us a more competitive destination.
- D. **MOTION** Audit Presentation: George Crowell and Brian Minor with Harris, Hardy & Johnstone, P.C. presented the FY21 audit report. The auditors reported that they did not encounter any difficulties in dealing with management or in performing and completing the audit. The auditors recognized Ms. Kelly Harding, Manager of Accounting for her thorough work in planning for the audit and her diligence with the finances of the organization all year. The audit presentation in bound books was distributed to all board members and the auditors stated that the cash position of the organization is great. Ms. Lisa Sims made a motion to adopt the audit report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jon Lugbill. The motion passed.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. President's Report: Mr. Berry commented that the Marketing Department has developed a Field Guide and one was given to each board member. The guide packed with information about the region is like a journal and will be distributed as client gifts. Mr. Berry reported that Richmond Region Tourism has been selected as a Smart Meetings 2021 Platinum Choice Award Winner. The Platinum Choice Awards honor the hospitality industry's top-ranked hotels and destinations that display the highest standards of overall excellence in service and amenities.

The finances through August were reviewed and it was noted that spending has been low until now and that travel by staff has increased as well as attendance at outside functions. A history of reserves from 2015 – 2021 were reviewed and Mr. Berry reported on the increase of reserves for the current year due to low spending during the pandemic and the Payroll Protection Program loans that amounted to over \$1million.

**MOTION** Mr. Berry presented the FY23 preliminary budget that was distributed to the funding localities by their November due dates. The budget, which represents \$5,069,948 in income is lower due to the hotel tax collections being down. Expenses for the coming fiscal year will remain at \$7,744,349 as we continue to recover from the pandemic. Reserves will be used to keep the budget whole. It was reported that tax collections from July through September are exceeding 2019 levels which is a great indicator that tourism and travel are returning. Ms. Lisa Sims made a motion to adopt the budget. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pat Collins. The vote passed. Mr. Berry also presented the '22-'23 Business Plan which accompanied the budget when it was submitted to the jurisdictions. The plan outlines how the budget will be spent in FY23.

- B. Tourism Master Plan Initiatives: Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President outlined the three Tourism Master Plan Initiatives that include a headquarter hotel, workforce development and an image campaign. A meeting was held recently with staff of Richmond Region Tourism and city personnel from economic development to discuss the headquarter hotel in the City of Richmond. The consultant who did the 2017 Future's Study for the Convention Center Authority has been approached by Richmond Region Tourism about doing an update to the study for the hotel component. The timeline will be quick, and Richmond Region Tourism will pay the fee which is \$7,500 plus expenses. The Executive Committee reviewed the letter from the consultant and indicated it was fine to proceed with the study update.

J.C. Poma reported that for Workforce Development, he and Tamera Harris in the Community Relations Department have worked on this initiative by partnering with VRLTA. We hosted a joint webinar in October and will do another one in the spring. While the ChamberRVA is taking a more global approach to workforce development, RRT will be concentrating on hospitality and tourism.

Katherine O'Donnell reported that the image campaign will be funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds that have been distributed to DMOs in Virginia. The funds from our localities total \$2.5 million and will be used on an image campaign focusing on leisure travelers and economic impact business relocations to the region. Mr. Tom Loftus, Vice President of Marketing will work with Maribeth Conrad at ChamberRVA and Jennifer Wakefield with the Greater Richmond Partnership on the campaign.

- C. Legislative Priorities: Mr. J.C. Poma gave a brief legislative update of tourism topics that will be before the legislatures in the upcoming general assembly session. Topics will include Tipped Wage, Economic relief for the tourism industry, cocktails to-go, short term rental authorities, liability protection from COVID19 lawsuits and recreational cannabis. Mr. Eric Terry with VRLTA will present legislative issues to the board of directors in January.

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

- A. RVA Sports Awards: It was also announced that the RVA Sports Awards Gala will be February 5<sup>th</sup> at the Greater Richmond Convention Center and Chairman Schmitt encouraged the board members to buy their tickets and/or tables now to show your support for the

Richmond Region Tourism Foundation and the work that we are doing with sports tourism. The awards program will be hosted by Tiki Barber and broadcasted live on CBS 6.

B. Chairman Schmitt announced the 2022 meeting dates and noted that they do not all fall on the normal 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the odd month. The dates will be sent to all board members via email and an Outlook Appointment reminder. The floor was open to any roundtable announcements and various topics included:

- Upcoming Hanover/Ashland events and Train Day will now be held in April 2022
- Airport travel
- Motorsports Heritage Trail
- Fall Line Trail
- November Marathon success with Expo at Richmond Raceway

There being no further business to discuss, the next meeting will be held Thursday, January 20th at Noon. The meeting will be held at the Greater Richmond Convention Center and will include a buffet lunch. The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m. and the attendees were encouraged to tour the Hanover Museum.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland  
Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels  
Dennis Bickmeier, Richmond Raceway  
Pat Collins, TowneBank  
Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia  
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen  
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County  
Jon Lugbill, 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  
Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership

Guests Present

John Budesky, Hanover County  
Derek Stamey, Hanover County  
Jaime Fawcett, Hanover County  
David Deal, Hanover Tavern  
George Crowell, Harris, Hardy & Johnstone  
Brian Minor, Harris, Hardy & Johnstone  
John D. Watt, Chesterfield County  
Karen Epps, Colonial Heights  
Angela Wright, Hanover County  
Martha Miller, Town of Ashland  
Maribeth Conrad, ChamberRVA  
Tiffany Gallagher, Civitas (virtual)

Absent:

Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA  
Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion  
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County  
Scott Jones, Richmond Region Hospitality Association  
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights  
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy  
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp  
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond  
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association  
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Staff Present

Jack Berry  
Katherine O'Donnell  
Michelle Lovatt  
J.C. Poma  
Tom Loftus  
Kelly Harding