

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 20, 2025
LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA
CITY OF RICHMOND
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Chair Lisa Sims called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m. and established a quorum.
- B. Welcome Remarks: Mr. Dennis Clark, Librarian of Virginia and Mr. Scott Dodson, Executive Director of the Library of Virginia Foundation welcomed the board to the facility and called attention to their upcoming renovation plans for the 1st & 2nd floors of the library. The library is 450,000 square feet and available to the public as the state's library.
- C. Announcements: Various announcements were made including:
- Light up the Tracks and the Ashland Old Time Holiday Parade will be this upcoming weekend
 - 137 days until Baseball resumes in April
 - December 13th Sports Backers Tacky Light Run in Chesterfield
 - New Board of Supervisor was installed in Chesterfield – Dr. LeQuan Hylton for the Dale District
 - Successful Richmond Marathon over the past weekend
 - Children's Museum of Richmond is featuring a life size T.Rex replica
 - Valor Awards December 10th at Greater Richmond Convention Center
 - Frontier Airlines launched service to Atlanta as well as record traffic for September and October despite the government shutdown. Growth could occur in November depending on the holiday weekend.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. MOTION Minutes: The minutes of the September 18th meeting were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell moved to accept the minutes which were seconded by Ms. Danielle Ripperton. The vote passed unanimously.
- B. Board Member & Staff Recognition:
- Mr. John Cario was recognized for holding the Hotel Seat from 2023-2025. He also recently authored a book of his memories which can be found at all major book retailers. A book signing event will be held at James River Winery on November 21st.
 - Ms. Sarah Hunter, Community Relations & Events Manager, was acknowledged for her 20-year anniversary with RRT (2005-2025).
 - Ms. Michelle Lovatt, Vice President of Administration was acknowledged for her upcoming retirement at the end of December. Michelle has been with RRT for 37 years (1988-2025).
- C. FY25 Audit Presentation: Mr. Kerr, Director of Finance, introduced Mr. Brian Minor, CPA, with Harris, Hardy & Johnstone, P.C. who presented the FY25 audit results. Mr. Minor commended Mike Kerr, Robin Chidester, and Michelle Lovatt for the smooth and efficient process. Mr. Minor reported that the audit was conducted in accordance with the GAAP standards and was a clean and unmodified opinion. The audit is a consolidated audit of the Richmond Region Tourism, Richmond Region Tourism Foundation, and Tourism Improvement District. There were no differences in opinions or disagreements with management. There being no questions about the audit report; Mr. Kerr noted that the Executive Committee reviewed the audit moved recommendation for approval, which was seconded by Mr. Steve Trivett. The vote was unanimous.

- D. President's Report: Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, President & CEO, reported that for September, the tourism and occupancy numbers were up, as it was a strong month for hotels in the Richmond Region. While a lot of places around Virginia and across the country were seeing fewer guests, the Richmond Region was on the increase. We had almost 12% more people booking rooms than last year, and that pushed occupancy up nearly 8%. For context, all of Virginia was basically flat, and the U.S. dipped—so the Richmond Region truly stood out. While hotels elsewhere had to lower their prices, our rates remained strong and steady. Across the state and the country, hotel revenue per available room went down in September. Richmond Region, on the other hand, saw an 8% jump. For the year so far, demand is up, revenue is up, occupancy is up, and RevPAR is up. The only thing that's basically flat is the average rate. Richmond Region hotels are hosting more people, earning more revenue, and outperforming both the state and the nation—while keeping prices steady. Ms. O'Donnell also reported that October's numbers were just received yesterday and that our average daily rate and REVPAR were up 2%.

Ms. O'Donnell noted that the Board of Directors has been receiving their board materials via the new Zeck Deck which is a board platform to house the board's resources and agendas. Richmond Region Tourism plans to fully transition to Zeck and go paperless beginning with the January meeting. This means starting in January we will display Zeck on screen while members follow along on their phone, tablet, or laptop if they choose to. Zeck will also house key board resources including digital orientation documents which can be retrieved quickly and efficiently.

Ms. O'Donnell noted that the Strategic Plan has moved into Phase 4, which is the development of the plan. Many meetings have occurred, and results from the workshops and surveys have been reviewed and digested. The Board will review the final plan in January and be presented with the final plan for adoption. The staff of RRT may go through a realignment in advance of the plan being implemented July 1. Ms. O'Donnell also pointed out that both the FY27 budget and workplan will likely have substantial revisions following the completion of the strategic plan and will be resubmitted for board approval in May.

- E. Mission Moment: Ms. O'Donnell shared a recent mission moment of when she was presenting to the New Kent Board of Supervisors. It was noted that the Rockahock Campground located in New Kent County has been engaging more and more with Richmond Region Tourism and is taking full advantage of our resources and tools such as creating website listings and engaging with us to promote their facility to tourists. This engagement is driving results to the campground as shared to RRT Board Member Jordan Stewart. Ms. O'Donnell pointed out that this is an example of why we do what we do and the heart of the impact of RRT's work on our community.

- F. Staff Changes: Several staff position changes were announced:

Mr. Kevin Holland, National Destination Sales Manager, left RRT in early November to join Visit Philadelphia. We promoted Ms. Casey Armstrong to the National Sales Position and are advertising for Sales Manager. Ms. Luran Peoples, Director of Sales Marketing & Business Development will be leaving at the end of December to return to school and study abroad in France. Also, Ms. Deanne Ralston, Community Relations Coordinator, announced her departure, which will occur on December 12th.

- G. Financial Update: Mr. Mike Kerr, Director of Finance, reported on the financials through October and presented the FY27 budget for approval. It was noted that the FY27 budget submitted to the funding jurisdictions in November will change in the Spring once the Strategic Plan is finalized. The bottom line will not change, but expense line items could shift due to the priorities set out by the

strategic plan. Mr. Kerr reported that the FY27 budget reflects income and expenses of \$11,627,087 and is a balanced budget. Some key income points included:

- Income and expenses are balanced at \$11,627,087
- Class A @ 2% of TOT, Class B @ \$50,000.
- GRCCA is projected at \$754,590 (\$400,000 sales/marketing and \$354,590 for incentives). Incentives will likely change, but it is dollar for dollar usage.
- Advertising income is projected at \$24,000.
- Miscellaneous income is projected at \$3,100.
- TID income is projected at \$918,564.
- Interest income is projected at \$155,000.

Key expense points included:

- EVP included at full year, IT and HR included at six months (unfilled in FY26).
- Salesperson included at 12 months (unfilled in FY26).
- 3.625% salary increase.
- +15% medical increase, +3% for dental and +1.5% for vision.
- ADM-7000: Reserve funding reduced by \$25,000.
- DS-5257 JW Parking – Zeroed out for FY27.
- MKT-5221 Website – Site needs to be updated/modernized.

Mr. Kerr noted that the Executive Committee has reviewed the budget and recommended the budget for adoption. Ms. Jennifer Wakefield seconded the motion from the Executive Committee. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Kerr reviewed a separate attachment that outlines the surplus that occurred with the close of FY25. The reasons for the surplus were outlined and relate to positions not filled and resulted in savings with payroll and benefits. Some events did not materialize and therefore there were some incentives not paid out in FY25. Mr. Kerr explained that in January of 2025, when Chesterfield began discussions of not funding RRT at the full 2%, staff made a conscious effort to reduce spending and be conservative with the last half of the fiscal year's spending.

Mr. Brian Anderson with ChamberRVA noted that ChamberRVA and InUnison have partnered to offer an insurance solution called Wise Choice which is for any company with 2-49 employees as an option for less expensive benefit offerings. Mr. Kerr noted that RRT shopped the insurance offerings and changed to United Healthcare in August with cost savings to RRT. Mr. Steve Trivett commended Mr. Kerr and his team for the outstanding financial report and clean audit for FY25.

- H. Governance Report: Ms. Danielle Ripperton, Chair of the Governance Committee, reported that the committee recently met to review board governance items. Chesterfield County will be appointing a new Class A representative to stand for their county on the RRT Board in January. To ensure continued engagement and leadership, the Governance Committee recommends transitioning Mr. Neil Amin into the Tourism Improvement District seat, which aligns with his current role as Chair of the TID committee. This transition will relieve Mr. Mayush Mehta of his duties on the board in the TID seat, but Mr. Mehta will remain as the Vice-Chair of the TID committee.

The City of Richmond is appointing Ms. Kimberly Love-Lindsey to one of their seats to replace Mr. Michael Lindsey. Also, the Town of Ashland will be appointing a newly elected official to our board in their Class B seat in January. With the resignation of Mr. John Cario holding the Hotel seat, the

Governance Committee reviewed recommendations from staff and unanimously support the appointment of Mr. Rick Butts, Director of Sales and Marketing for the Omni Hotel, for the then open Hotel Seat. The Governance Committee recommends approval of the appointment of Mr. Neil Amin into the TID Seat as well as Mr. Rick Butts in the Hotel Seat. Mr. Todd Parnell seconded the motion of the committee, and the vote passed unanimously.

I. TID Update: Ms. Katherine O'Donnell reported on the progress of the TID:

SALES

- Event Incentives YTD: 125 approved → 65.8% conversion rates.
- Performance Impact: The TID's continued investment in meetings and sports development is clearly paying off, with double-digit growth in hotel performance during July and September - marking some of the region's strongest post-pandemic gains.
- Business Development Highlights:
 - Hosted Baltimore Ravens Client Event before the Sports ETA Summit.
 - Expanded ASAE partnership; featured in top-viewed *Associations Now* article.
 - Debuted custom tradeshow booth (Hamilton Glass design, SkyNav drone + Threshold 360 tech).
 - Launched multicultural marketing video with Tilt Creative.

MARKETING

- FOX D.C. Campaign: 30-min Richmond feature filmed Sept; 5 segments (Outdoors, Food, History, Shopping, Arts & Culture).
 - Segments airing regionally; full show broadcast once.
- Drive December Campaign: Began early (Oct) with new vendor Epsilon; focused on boosting holiday visitation.
- Billboard Campaign: 13 boards (I-64/I-95 corridors, Sep–Feb) featuring “Ride the Rapids,” “Street Art to Fine Art,” “Always Revolutionary,” and “Senior Skip Day.”
 - Includes two 3D extensions for high-impact visuals.

GROUP TOUR

- Virginia Motorcoach Association: Sponsored closing reception and secured the 2026 conference for Richmond.
- Movement Marketing Campaign (July–Oct 2025):
 - Reached 6,800+ travel agents, 900 operators, and 300+ Heritage Club directors nationwide.
 - 87% of surveyed agents were newly aware of Richmond — a strong awareness lift.
- Toni Bastian: Named TravelAbility 2025 Rising Star, recognizing leadership in accessible and inclusive travel advancement.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Special Events Grant Program: Supported *Live Red Triathlon, Big State Championship, Special Olympics Basketball, Richmond Film Network Indie Fest, Culture is Couture, and TudorCon*.
 - Combined impact: 2,052 room nights | \$1.2M EIC.
- I Am Tourism Campaign: Digital and print campaign with Richmond Times Dispatch and CBS spotlighting hospitality career pathways and industry pride.

III. ADJOURNMENT:

- A. Adjournment: With no further business to discuss, Chair Sims reminded the Board of the upcoming December 4 holiday party and the December 18th retirement party for Michelle Lovatt. The meeting adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

Attendees:

Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA
Brian Bald, Capital One
John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown
Will Dixon, Sports Backers
Mark Miller, Chesterfield County
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
Danielle Ripperton, Children's Museum of Richmond
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
Jennifer Schofield, Kings Dominion
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
Nancy Thomas, InUnison
Steve Trivett, Town of Ashland
Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership
Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

Guests Present:

Bryonna Head, City of Richmond Economic Development
Troy Bell, Capital Region Airport Commission
Brian Minor, Harris, Hardy & Johnstone

Staff Present:

Katherine O'Donnell
Michelle Lovatt
Tom Loftus
Mike Kerr
Sarah Hunter

Absent:

Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
Paulin Cheatham, Dominion Energy
Susan Dibble, Hanover County
Renee Haltom, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
Michael Lindsey, Lindsey Food Group
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
Mayush Mehta, JP Hospitality
Perry Miller, Richmond International Airport
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
Jordan Stewart, New Kent County