

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 16, 2021
ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:03 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 noted that we are being as safe as possible and decided to be virtual but hopeful to be back to in person meetings soon. Chairman Schmitt commented on a great NASCAR event in the Region on September 11th and a great end to a baseball season.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the July 22 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Brian Anderson made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Pat Collins. The vote passed.
- C. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force Presentation: Co-Chairs Liana Acevedo and Lauran Peoples presented the overview of the internal DEI committee and its goals and objectives. The DEI committee is representative of the entire organization and all departments. The initial objective is to put forward an internal DEI plan based on our climate of inclusion survey results from the summer of 2020 as well as our recent benchmarking process. The focused vision is to be inclusive and equitable, with a strong culture of community, respect, and trust. A timeline of DEI activity since October 2020 was outlined. Three core categories include:

- Advancement & Retention
- Staff Education/Experiences
- Business Impact

The goals and short term tactics of each are:

Advancement & Retention:

Goal: Strengthen and provide equitable access to opportunities for employee professional growth and advancement

Short Term Tactics

- i. Conduct biannual data collection to find out where employees serve in leadership capacities and areas where they have leadership interest outside of the role at Richmond Region Tourism
- ii. Identify areas of focus and organizations where Richmond Region Tourism should have representation
- iii. Twice yearly assess professional development credentials/programs already acquired by staff and determine future ambitions for development via self-evaluation during reviews
- iv. Compile a list of leadership and development opportunities within our community and industry
- v. Intentionally connect employees to leadership and professional development opportunities

Staff Education/Experiences:

Goal: Educate staff and board members about the importance of a diverse, equitable and

inclusive organization which improves the quality of life for our residents, partners, and visitors

Short Term Tactics

- i. Create partnerships with local community organizations to share their knowledge through educational presentations and written information, and optimize relationships with BLK RVA and OutRVA to educate staff on DEI topics
- ii. Host educational experiences once a quarter, such as walking tours and heritage related training
- iii. Intro DEI mission/vision and goals during IAT classes
- iv. Incorporate DEI mission, vision statement, progress, and accomplishments into new hire onboarding information

Business Impact:

Goal: Develop best practices that support responsible sourcing, equitable partnerships, and business impact across all departments, both internally and externally

Short Term Tactics

- i. Conduct survey of internal spending to determine areas of opportunity to increase economic impact among small, minority-owned businesses and services
- ii. Establish qualitative and quantitative goals within each department that are relative, attainable, and conducive to primary business function
- iii. Create a responsible sourcing SOP for all employees with purchasing power
- iv. Introduce goals to Richmond Region Tourism personnel, effective at the beginning of the next FY, and communicate expectations.

Chairman Schmitt thanked the co-chairs and taskforce for their work. Mr. Jim Holland applauded the efforts for the process.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Board Member Recognition: Chairman Schmitt acknowledged Mr. Tom Silvestri who has served the board from 2015 – 2021 in the at large board appointed seat and has been a tremendous asset to the board. Mr. Scott Jones will also be terming off the board as his seat is for the President of the Richmond Region Hospitality Association and Mr. John Cario will be the new President of the Association. Mr. Cario will join us in January.

Mr. Schmitt also acknowledged the three new Vice Presidents that are on the call for the meeting today:

- Ms. Jerrine Lee, Vice President of Sports
- Mr. Matt Robinette, Vice President of Visitor Experience
- Mr. J.C. Poma, Vice President of Community Relations

The new Vice Presidents were welcomed and thanked for the work that they continue to do for Richmond Region Tourism.

- B. **MOTION Governance Committee:** Lisa Sims, Chair of the Governance Committee, made a motion to appoint John Cario to the board to replace Scott Jones with the Richmond Region Hospitality Association seat and to appoint Ms. Jennifer Wakefield, President & CEO of the Greater Richmond Partnership for the At-large seat appointed by the board that Tom Silvestri has held for the past six years. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry Miller. The vote passed.
- C. **President's Report:** Mr. Berry reported on the financials through June, and which have concluded the fiscal year end 21. With the pandemic there was a tremendous savings in the fiscal year. The audit has just concluded and there was approximately a \$1 million savings in FY21. Also, with the Payroll Protection Program loans totaling over \$1 million we anticipate adding \$2 million into reserves after the audit is complete. The first PPP loan has been forgiven and the second loan forgiveness is being prepared now.

The Vice President of Marketing position is underway and the process to recruit is being handled by Fahrenheit Advisors. Four candidates will be interviewed the last week of September. There has been national interest in the position.

Market Trends – For July, the occupancy and REVPAR numbers are substantially up, even higher than 2019, which was a record year. Leisure travel has returned, and it is expected that meetings and conventions will return in 2022 and business travel in 2023. The first part of August was strong, but the Delta variant may affect the remainder of August and early fall. Two large conventions were hosted at the Convention Center in August, Police Fleet and Offshore Wind. Both conferences were a success. Mr. Perry Miller with the Airport noted that they saw the same trends in July with some slight decreases for August.

- D. **Future of Tourism Master Plan:** Chairman Schmitt reported that he and Dennis Bickmeier recently met with Jack Berry and Katherine O'Donnell to discuss the progress of the Tourism Master Plan and the work of the four separate committees. The Executive Committee has also met and discussed the work that has been accomplished to date. Over the past year, the committees have been advancing the tourism master plan in four initial focus areas and have accomplished a great deal of work. Committees have been advancing the tourism master plan in four initial focus areas: experience development, infrastructure and investment, industry advancement and advocacy and place branding. Ms. O'Donnell recapped the highlights of each including their accomplishments:

- Image and Perception study led by the Place Branding Committee.
- The Infrastructure and Investment Committee has engaged on long-term development projects including the City Center Plan, the VCU Athletics Village, ONE Casino and the James River Center.
- The Experience Development Committee has been discussing prioritizing action steps in the areas of Cultural, Adventure and Sports Tourism. Some tactical wins include a new microsite design for sports tournament attendees with visitor experience info and collaboration with the airport on increased welcome signage.
- With support of the Industry Advancement and Advocacy Committee, RRT staff has advanced several tourism master plan priorities: community engagement particularly, the digital I Am Tourism program; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: work with Delores and DEI Task Force, complementing BLK RVA and OutRVA;

and targeted business development with the launch of the Meaningful Meetings program.

Chairman Schmitt thanked the committees for this great work. Some overlap is starting to occur with the groups so a refocus will occur and three key priority areas have been identified going forward:

- Headquarter Hotel Downtown
- Collaborative image marketing campaign in partnership with ChamberRVA and Greater Richmond Partnership
- Workforce development within the tourism industry

The previous committees will be disbanded, and we will refocus into these three priorities. The Board was divided into three groups and went into zoom break out rooms to discuss the three areas. After the breakout rooms, it was noted that staff will gather the notes and share with the board.

III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

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

- Sports Backer events and softening after the pandemic for attendees to events
- ChamberRVA InterCity Visit – Charlotte
- Folk Festival and 2 Street Festival for the fall
- Downtown Taskforce and recommendations to the City
- Stone Bridge Project as well as other Shamin hotel projects
- American Rescue Plan funds
- Workforce issues
- RMA Valor Awards Breakfast Dec 2nd
- Kings Dominion staff issues throughout summer and increased pay rates per hour
- Upcoming Chesterfield events
- Colonial Heights – renovation of baseball field as well as Pepper Fest and Colonial Heights Day October 2nd at Keystone Tractor Museum
- Airlines are hiring at RIC
- Hanover – Sept 25 Autumn Festival at Hanover Tavern; Ribbon cutting on new museum of history and culture
- Concerts at the Richmond Raceway upcoming
- NASCAR 2022 race dates – April 3 & August 14, 2022
- Virginia Center Commons Sports Complex - \$38 million project should be ready Spring/Summer 2023 opening
- Pedestrian and Bike Trails
- Glover Park additional fields
- Perry Miller was recognized for being awarded as the Airport Manager of the Year from Virginia Aviation

There being no new business to discuss, the next meeting will be held Thursday, November 18th at Noon. The location will be announced soon. Chairman Schmitt noted that the Golf Tournament will be September 24th and the Holiday party will be December 1st at Kings Dominion as part of WinterFest. The meeting adjourned at 1:26 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
Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy
Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers
Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
Tom Silvestri, Retired, Richmond Times Dispatch
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association

Guests Present

John D. Watt, Chesterfield County
Doug Smith, Colonial Heights
Angela Wright, Hanover County
Dawn Miller, Henrico County
Matt Smolnik, New Kent County
Scott Zaremba, Chesterfield County

Absent:

Scott Jones, Richmond Region Hospitality Association
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
Patricia Paige, New Kent County
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Staff Present

Jack Berry
Katherine O'Donnell
Michelle Lovatt
Matt Robinette
Erin Bagnell
J.C. Poma
Jerrine Lee
Lauran Peoples
Liana Acevedo