

Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge Board of Directors

September 19, 2024

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1

Financial Report

Doug Blount, Treasurer

* Board Action Required

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2

New Visit VBR Partners
New Partners – 12*
Total Partners – 1630
New Partners: June 6, 2024 – June 30, 2024

<p>CITY OF ROANOKE (5) Apex Piano Showroom Straight Street Bass Financial Management Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia Machine Creek</p>	<p>CITY OF SALEM (2) Stave & Cork Edward Jones-Kenneth Berrios</p>
<p>BOTETOURT COUNTY (4) Forest Retreat Residential Consulting Services LLC Sycamore Place General Store The Wilson Warehouse</p>	<p>FRANKLIN COUNTY (1) Nezlife Studios</p>
<p>ROANOKE COUNTY (0)</p>	<p>OTHER – NON FUNDING JURISDICTIONS (0)</p>

***Executive Committee Action Required**


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3

New Visit VBR Partners
New Partners – 10*
Total Partners – 1631
New Partners: July 1, 2024 – August 25, 2024

<p>CITY OF ROANOKE (6) Jaybird Tavern Jeff Heveron Photography & Videos Ducks on a Mission Six and Sky Roof Top Grille Huddle Up Moms Star City Clamping</p>	<p>CITY OF SALEM (2) Shrewd Outdoors Firehouse Subs</p>
<p>BOTETOURT COUNTY (0)</p>	<p>FRANKLIN COUNTY (0)</p>
<p>ROANOKE COUNTY (2) Civil War Trails Branch Group</p>	<p>OTHER – NON FUNDING JURISDICTIONS (0)</p>

***Executive Committee Action Required**

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4

Review Minutes *

Kim Blair, Secretary

* Board Action Required

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5

Chair's Report

Lee Wilhelm, Chair
"Pass the Torch"

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6

REVISION DRAFT: FY24-25 Nominating Committee Report

Board of Directors (Action Required):*

Bart Wilner 1st Three-Year Term

Executive Committee (Action Required):*

Mark Lucas Chair
Sunny Shah Vice Chair-Hospitality Representative
Bart Wilner Appointee

Executive Committee (No Action Required):

Richard Caywood Vice Chair-Roanoke County Appointment
Kim Blair Secretary – Carilion Clinic Designated Appointee
Doug Blount Treasurer – Roanoke County
Lee Wilhelm Past Chair
Susan Short Virginia Tech Designated Appointee
Dr. Lydia Patton City of Roanoke Appointment
Chris Dorsey City of Salem Appointment
Gary Larowe Botetourt County Appointment
Chris Whitlow Franklin County Appointment

* Board Action Needed on Thursday, September 19, 2024

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President's Report

Landon Howard

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Virginia's Blue Ridge TWENTY24 Team



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[My Home Virginia S3 E2: Nicola Cranmer](#)
[youtube.com](#)



9



Virginia's Blue Ridge TWENTY24 Team Member



Jennifer Valente Double Gold



10



NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Host Venue Agreement Approval Pending MoUs Approved by City of Roanoke & Roanoke County

2025-2026 Endurance & Marathon Mountain Bike National Championships

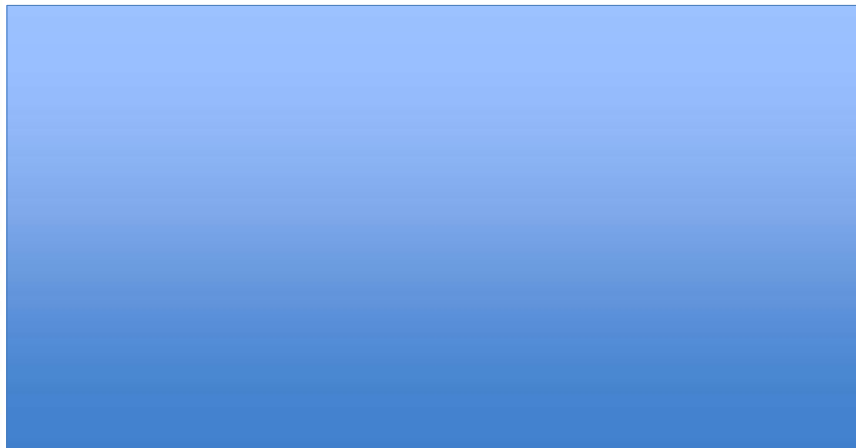
- Two year contract with option to renew another two years
- Mid-July
- (6) days of endurance racing (XC & STXC), (1) day of marathon race
- Non championship races for local and regional athletes
- 1,600+ competitors
- Estimated \$2.2 million in direct economic impact
- Site Visit Completed: April 17-20, 2024

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11

Virginia's Blue Ridge 2024 Room Demand (Hotels Only) August 2024 Source: STR, Inc.



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12

Virginia's Blue Ridge

2024 Room Revenue

August 2024

Source: STR, Inc.



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13

ARPA Funds Received

Total = \$700,000

- **Botetourt County**
- Received \$30,000
- **Roanoke County**
- Received \$200,000
- **Roanoke City**
- Received \$440,000

Thank you!

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14

Virginia Restaurant Lodging & Tourism Association

Annual Ordinary Awards

September 12, 2024

The judges' results are in, and we are pleased to announce the finalists for the 2024 Ordinary Awards, honoring the superb businesses and amazing employees of Virginia's tourism and hospitality industry.

Hospitality Hero – Business

Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge

PJ Cheese, Inc

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15

Roanoke City Council Presentation

Tuesday, September 3, 2024

10:30 AM

Municipal Building 4th Floor

City Council Chambers

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16



17

Visit VBR Performance Highlights (July/August/September 2024)

Marketing:

- Submitted all reporting for ARPA Funding.
- Received all ARPA funding from Roanoke City, Roanoke County and Botetourt County for a total of **\$700,000**.
- Completed Final Report for VTC Marketing Leverage Grant to receive **\$20,000**.
- Concluded the 2024 spring advertising campaign in Northern VA/Washington DC at the end of June – initial tracking data from Zartico indicates a 10% YOY increase in average visitor spend from the Washington DC DMA.
- Partnered with Ride with GPS to launch the Intergalactic Gravel Getaway contest, promoting gravel cycling and featuring a free trip to VBR as part of the prize – contest ran through 9/1 and generated approximately 85,000 entries
- Partnered with the City of Salem and Franklin County in co-op advertisements (print & digital) with Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine and participate together as the featured prize for the Biking Sweepstakes in the September issue
- Targeted e-mail campaign with Vista Graphics on 8/15 to 500,000 prospective visitors to VBR; e-mail generated 96,694 opens and 10,126 clicks to the Visit VBR website
- New website content and blog posts featuring the Harvester Performance Center, Beaver Dam Farm Sunflower Festival, Best Glamping Experiences, Non-Alcoholic Beers, Standup Paddleboarding, 4th of July Fireworks & Celebrations, Labor Day Weekend Guide, Fall Festivals & Events, Fall Color Schedule and VBR Twenty24's Jennifer Valente Winning Double Gold at the Paris 2024 Olympics
- Leveraged social media stories and posts from MATPRA Conference attendees for collaborations and shares on Visit VBR's social media channels, showcasing unique local businesses and experiences throughout the region.
- Utilizing AI tools to update and add new listings for partners on the Visit VBR website, incorporating best practices regarding search engine optimization.

Public Relations:

- Hosted press conference announcing USAC National Mountain Biking Championships in 2025 and 2026
- Hosted WJLA's Good Morning Washington in Virginia's Blue Ridge which resulted in 5 five-minute segments (one for each jurisdiction) that aired at the top of the show's hour for one week
- Hosted MATPRA (Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance) site visit
- Hosted MATPRA Media Marketplace August 27 – 29
 - 120 attendees, 55 travel writers
 - Planning included organizing six 3-hour tours, an opening reception and welcome dinner, media marketplace, maker's market, 12 dinner locations and more
 - Have already received hundreds of social media mentions through stories and posts
 - Multiple writers left with stories planned for publications
 - Multiple media shared that VBR's was the best MATPRA Marketplace they have attended in all 11 years
- Responded to leads for Virginia Tourism Corporation, Mid-Atlantic Events Magazine, AAA and more
- Notable articles generated by PR team:
 - Colorful Adventure Awaits: Top Attractions in Roanoke for an Unforgettable Experience (*MSN*)
 - The Appalachian Trail for All (*AAA World Magazine*)
 - Food Tours Offer a Delicious Way to Explore Virginia (*AAA Tidewater*)
 - This Hiking Route Has Stunning Fall Foliage Views (Triple Crown feature on *Travel + Leisure*)

Meetings & Sports Sales:

- **VBR Sports** staff attended the **Moyer Sports Complex** ribbon cutting. John Oney had a speaking role and discussed the power of sports tourism nationally and regionally.
- **VBR Sports** staff organized and attended a booth activation at the **2024 USA Cycling Mountain Bike National Championships** in Macungie, PA. Partners representing Roanoke County and Roanoke City attended to take notes and promote 2025.
- For the first time, **VBR Sports** hosted the **Fishers of Men – Legacy Series National Championship** at Smith Mountain Lake. The team secured Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce as the opening dinner sponsor. Catering provided by Rocky Mount Smokehouse and dinner was held at the Pigg River Community Center. Franklin County's Director of Tourism, Kevin Tosh was a huge help putting this event together. The event attracted 41 boats from throughout the region.

- **VBR Sports** staff assisted in the **AJSA VBR Jetski Race** in June at Smith Mountain Lake. Thanks to our partners at Goodhue Boats and Franklin County.

- **VBR Sports** supported the following events: Picklebrawl in Virginia's Blue Ridge, Go Noke MTB XC Race at Explore Park (Roanoke College), Fishers of Men Regional Championship at SML, Virginia's Blue Ridge Go Cross-Cyclocross race.
- John Oney met with Victor Morales, Director of Botetourt County Park & Recreation to explore ideas for future sports tourism opportunities. A focus on [REDACTED] just some of the lower hanging fruit.
- Antonio Gonzalez (Sports Sales & Services Manager) organized and co-planned (2) **NCAA National Championship** site visits (Women's BB & Women's and Men's VB) in collaboration with John Shaner and Carey Harvey with the City of Salem.
- Staff met with representatives from the **Congregation of Jehovah Witnesses** to recap their annual convention at the Berglund Center. Overall, this event is continuing to be a nice piece for business for our region during the peak of summer. Staff committed to future grants to assist with future conventions in Roanoke.
- **Paige Thompson** joined the sales team on September 4th as our new Meeting & Services Manager. She has tremendous planning, recruiting, and relationship building experience from her time at the Berglund Center. We're thrilled to begin working with Paige to continue our recruiting strategies for meetings, conventions, and conferences.
- VBR once again sponsored the **2024 Judicial Conference of Virginia for District Courts** held at the Hotel Roanoke 8/18 – 8/21. Along with welcome bags for attendees, our sponsorship went towards a lively reception at the O. Winston Link Museum/VBR Visitor Center lobby (catered by Hotel Roanoke).

Staff has been working on additional incentives for new meetings business that will help fill need periods for hotels and drive additional dollars into our region. [REDACTED]

- Amanda Koury (Sports Sales & Services Coordinator) identified and implemented a new standard for welcoming all groups to VBR. A welcome email complete with links, QR codes is now being delivered to incoming groups to inform, educate and drive attendees to make the most of their time in VBR. Things to do, places to eat will be featured to all.

Community Relations:

- **Second Quarter Visitor Center (1/1/24 – 6/30/24) KPI's:**
 - 4,019 Visitors at Visitor Center
 - 1,730 Visitors to booths at Outside Events
 - 12,516 Visitor Guide Distributions to AAA/Website Requests/Inquiries
- **Mailings/E-Newsletter:**
 - 914 Visitor Guides were requested from our Website and Mailed out (6/4/24-8/5/24)
 - June and July Buzz Newsletters
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Month of June we displayed models of local buildings around Roanoke at our Visitor Center created by Kids Soar, a faith-based organization decided to empowering children and families through literacy education.
 - On July 18th we hosted students from Virginia Institute of Autism who assembled 140 welcome bags and engaged in role-playing activities with our Visitor Center Specialist
 - On August 20th we assisted the Roanoke County Police Department with their Community Cuts with Cops event along with our partners Tuco's Taqueria Garaje and Mission BBQ. Free backpacks, school supplies, sneakers and haircuts were given to hundreds of kids for a great start for their school year
- **Presentations**
 - Planning has started for the 37th Annual Meeting that will be held at 5:00pm on October 10, 2024 at the Salem Civic Center then an After Party from 7:30-9:30pm at the James I. Moyer Sports Complex.
- **Training/Conferences**
 - Visit VBR has been selected as a finalist for the Hospitality Hero-Business/Organization category for the Virginia Restaurant Lodging Travel Association's (VRLTA) Ordinary Awards. Winner will be announced during the VRLTA Ordinary Awards Banquet on September 12th.

Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge
Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Report
August 2024 - Revised
(Industry Standard Measures)

Marketing and Communications:	FY2024-25	FY2024-25	FY2023-24	FY2023-24
	Goals	Actual YTD	Goals	Actual
Website Unique Visitors	1,600,000	357,279	1,600,000	1,884,650
Website Visitors	2,200,000	471,943	2,200,000	2,512,423
Website Pageviews	3,250,000	862,324	3,250,000	4,544,413
E-Newsletter Engagement	250,000	46,680	220,000	262,963
Social Amplification/Engagement	3,000,000	1,204,875	2,750,000	5,569,318
Media Outreach/Pitches	190	27	175	215
# of Articles/Mentions	300	54	325	325
Local Media Coverage (Number of Articles)	50	10	75	60
Number of Media Hosted/Visited	160	60	150	182

Meetings & Conventions	FY2024-25	FY2024-25	FY2023-24	FY2023-24
	Goals	Actual YTD	Goals	Actual
Qualified Leads	50	8	58	63
Bookings & Assists	34	18	40	50
Room-Nights Booked	8,500	2,562	12,750	16,394
Serviced Events	37	14	N/A	N/A

Sports	FY2024-25	FY2024-25	FY2023-24	FY2023-24
	Goals	Actual YTD	Goals	Actual YTD
Qualified Leads	88	44	86	88
Bookings & Assists	55	37	52	65
Serviced Events	35	8	N/A	N/A
Hosted Participants	75,000	2,906	N/A	N/A

Public Affairs & Local VBR Branding	FY2024-24	FY2024-25	FY2023-24	FY2023-24
	Goals	Actual YTD	Goals	Actual YTD
VBR Tourism Presentations	20	8	20	14
Special Events attended spotlighting VBR	20	7	14	21

Partnership / Marketing Services:	FY2024-25	FY2024-25	FY2023-24	FY2023-24
	Goals	Actual YTD	Goals	Actual YTD
Partner/Prospect Visits	100	17	-	108
Total Partners	1,700	1,640	1,650	1,641
Partners - Funding Jurisdictions	1,630	1,577	1,585	1,574
Partners - Non Funding Jurisdictions	70	63	65	67
Partnership Dues - Non Funding Jurisdictions	\$5,600	\$ 825	\$5,600	\$ 5,082

General Variables (Quarter to Date through August 21	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Winter-Heat Weather Warning (8/24)	0			
Winter-Heat Weather Advisory (8/24)	7			

**Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge
Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Report
August 2024 - Revised
(Industry Standard Measures)**

