

MINUTES
VISIT VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
September 25, 2025 – 8:00AM

A meeting of the Visit VBR Board of Directors was held on Thursday, September 25 2025, at 8:00am in the Bella Vista Room at the Berglund Center.

In Attendance:

Mark Lucas, Chair
Doug Blount, Treasurer
Allison Oakey
Chris Dorsey
Gary Larrowe
Eric Sichau
Lucas Thorton
Bart Wilner
Jim McAden
Whit Ellerman
Ryan Bell

Richard Caywood, Vice Chair
Kim Blair, Secretary
Lee Whiteilm, Past Chair
John Shaner
Sunny Shah
Stephen Lemon
Alexander Boone
Sam Lionberger
James Smith
Peter Lewis
Ken Lanford

Attending Virtually:

Randy Clements
Susan Short
Annette Lewis

Chris Whitlow
David Robertson

Not In Attendance:

Mike Stewart
Ken Lanford
Sherman Lea
Mike Maxey

Valmarie Turner
John Carlin
William Farrell
Jennifer Eddy

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| Staff: | Landon Howard, President | Debora Wright, Senior Vice President Chief Strategist |
| | David Aldridge, VP of Marketing (Virtual) | John Oney, VP of Sales & Sports |
| | Kathryn Lucas, Director of PR | Cheryl Morales, Director of Community Relations |
| | Danielle Hart, Office Manager/Assistant to the President | |

Chair Lucas called the meeting to order at 8:02am.

Treasurer’s Report:

Treasurer Blount presented the financial report for August 2025. Bart Wilner made a motion to accept the financial report. Chris Dorsey seconded the motion. All agreed and the August 2025 financial report passed unanimously.

Review of Minutes:

Secretary Blair presented amended minutes from the 3/27/25 Board of Directors meeting as well as the minutes from the 6/26/25 meeting. John Shaner made a motion to approve the minutes; Lee Wilhelm seconded the motion. All agreed and the motion passed unanimously.

President’s Report:

President Howard gave an overview of KPIs for August 2025. He noted that room revenue is still seeing an upward trend regionally, with an increase of 5.9% in revenue from 2024 and a 2.5% increase in room demand. August was another strong month of performance, especially when benchmarking amongst other competitive markets. President Howard covered KPIs for all departments as well as new initiatives undertaken by Visit VBR staff, including the upcoming Holiday Marketing Campaign for the 2025 Holiday Season.

Old Business – 2025-2029 Strategic Action Plan:

Chair Lucas began by thanking Susan Short for her work on the Governance Taskforce, particularly their request for additional task forces to handle special topics as it relates to the strategic plan. Chair Lucas then began by asking Board Members to give their feedback on the top four action items that they had identified in previous meetings, and how they envisioned this being carried out in terms of task forces and where they might see themselves being a part of this effort.

Erich Sichau spoke up and noted that he would like to be involved with Transportation Advocacy, as he is already on a taskforce for transportation issues with RVARC and Roanoke Regional Chamber. President Howard noted that transportation includes not only

airport and Amtrak travel, but also transportation solutions such as increased bike lanes and shuttles to popular hikes or trail heads, as examples.

Chris Dorsey spoke up and noted that the Salem Civic Center is in review from a building and operational standpoint and acknowledged the need for a sporting complex in the region. John Shaner agreed that a sporting complex is essential and spoke to the need for expertise for whoever oversees the facilities. Lucas Thornton said that he would be very interested in being a part of any task force regarding sports.

Alexander Boone agreed that he too would be interested in being a part of a sports task force and would also be interested in a task force as it relates to larger regional investments for hotels or other facilities. President Howard shared that he had been given permission by the Town Manager of Vinton to share that Vinton was considering going after a casino license during the next legislative session, which could spur the need for even more facilities development down the road. Several Board Members noted the difficulties still facing hotel developers in the region but that the need is recognized.

Kim Blair noted the need for data informed decision making when it comes to whatever action is taken, especially to help us remain competitive amongst other markets. President Howard and Debora Wright agreed and spoke to the efforts being made with the Destination Alignment Plan and eventual gap analysis and that the results from this work will inform decisions going forward.

New Business:

No new business was raised during this meeting.

Adjournment:

With no other business to be conducted, Chair Lucas thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and encouraged Board members to stay for the press conference and check presentation celebrating the success of the USA Cycling event from this summer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40am.

Kimberly P. Blair
Kimberly P. Blair (Nov 17, 2025 10:29:42 EST)

11/17/25







Board Meeting Minutes 092525

Final Audit Report

2025-11-17

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