

**MINUTES**

**VISIT VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**JUNE 26, 2025 – 8:00AM**

A meeting of the Visit VBR Board of Directors was held on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 8:00am at The Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center at Explore Park.

**In Attendance:**

Mark Lucas, Chair	Jennifer Eddy
Richard Caywood, Vice Chair	Christopher Dorsey
Doug Blount, Treasurer	John Shaner
Valmarie H. Turner	Gary Larrowe
Malcolm Quigley	Kim Blair, Secretary
Sunny Shah	Susan Short
Lee Wilhelm, Past Chair	Bart Wilner
Ryan Bell	Ken Lanford
Jim McAden	John Carlin
Whit Ellerman	Peter Lewis
Ann Blair Miller	

**Not in Attendance:**

Randy Clements	Allison Oakey
Christopher Whitlow	Eric Sichau
Lisa Garst	John Williamson
Kirtesh Patel	Sam Lionberger
Annette Lewis	Michael Maxey
Stephen Lemon	William Farrell
David Robertson	
Lynne Boone	

**Staff:**

Landon Howard, President	Cheryl Morales, Director of Community Relations
Debora Wright, Chief Strategist Vice President	Jennifer Hayward, Social Media & Content Manager
John Oney, VP of Sales & Sports	Danielle Hart, Office Manager/Assistant to the President
Kathryn Lucas, Director of Public Relations	

**Guests:**

Marc Nelson, City of Roanoke

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

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer Blount presented the financial report for May 2025. For May 2025, income was at 101% and expenses were at 76%. These expenses are expected to go up significantly in the final month of the year due to major campaign spending. Sports Presolds has a balance of commitments at \$601,200 with a shortfall of (\$23,946.57). Convention Presolds has a balance of commitments at \$159,88.00 with a shortfall of (\$106,718.39). Treasurer Blount reminded Board members that the bigger the shortage of presolds, the better and that commitment funds were being held in a money market account to cover these costs. Malcolm Quigley asked about budget categories that were overspent or underspent and inquired what the plan was for unspent funds. President Howard clarified that the 'overspend' in Public Relations included the new Board Strategic Plan costs and that rollover funds would be used to cover expenses in the first few months of the fiscal year. No further questions were raised, and Bart Wilner made a motion to accept the financial report. Gary Larowe seconded the motion. All agreed and the May financial report passed unanimously.

### **Review of Minutes:**

Secretary Blair presented minutes from the 3/27/25 Board of Directors meeting. Malcolm Quigley shared concerns that his request for a work plan for the Board Strategic Plan were not included in the minutes from the previous meeting and requested that this be added to the meeting minutes. John Shaner made a motion to approve the minutes, with the requested change. Bart Wilner seconded the motion. All agreed and the motion passed unanimously.

### **FY24/25 Departing Board Members & FY25/26 Nominating Report:**

As of the end of FY24/25, Lynne Boone, Lisa Garst, Ann Blair Miller, Kirtesh Patel, Ken Randolph, John Williamson, and Malcom Quigley will be departing as Board members. Chair Lucas thanked the departing Board members for their years of service with Visit VBR's Board, and those in attendance were presented with plaques. Chair Lucas then introduced the FY25-26 Nominating Report, which included the addition of Sherman Lea, Mike Stewart, Lucas Thorton, and Alexander Boone for their 1<sup>st</sup> three-year term. Ryan Bell, Ken Lanford, Sam Lionberger, and Jim McAden were nominated for 2<sup>nd</sup> three-year terms. Dr. Randy Clements, James Smith, Jennifer Eddy, and Allison Oakey were appointed by the City of Roanoke for one-year terms. Malcolm Quigley questioned how new board members were added, including industry representation and diversity. President Howard explained that the new Board appointees were investors in the travel and tourism industry and that their voices would be important as Visit VBR moved forward with their new strategic plan. Chair Lucas also added that the Governance Taskforce was looking at Board nominations and clarity on that process moving forward. Lee Wilhelm made a motion to approve the Board nominations, and Sunny Shah seconded the motion. All approved except for Malcolm Quigley. The motion passed.

There were no proposed changes to the FY25/26 Executive Committee composition. Malcolm Quigley inquired why there were two representatives from Roanoke County on the Executive Committee and notated that the representation was imbalanced for Roanoke City's representation. Richard Caywood commented that there is work to do on the nominating process and that this year would be the last year of the 'historic process' for nominations. Valmarie Turner stated that she agreed with Richard but ultimately would like to see more balance in locality representation as well. Chair Lucas thanked them for their comments and agreed that these concerns were being addressed, and the process will look different in future years. Ken Randolph made a motion to approve the nominees, and John Shaner seconded the motion. All members voted to approve, except for Malcolm Quigley. The motion passed.

### **President's Report:**

President Howard gave an overview of KPIs for May 2025. He noted that room revenue is up for all localities, with a regional increase of 6.2% from 2024 and a 2% increase in room demand. May was a very strong month, especially compared to other destinations in our competitive set. This was thanks to a combination of meetings and events, as well as success from marketing campaigns. June and July look strong as well and this increased demand speaks to the need for planning for increased hotel and meeting space. Howard also presented data on tax savings generated for the region's residents by tourist spending and noted that Visit VBR staff are looking at how to better present data on how their efforts impact the region.

### **FY25/26 Budget Overview:**

President Howard moved to giving an overview of the proposed budget for the new fiscal year, noting that revenue amounts this year were less as ARPA funds have all been expended and economic downtown concerns. This will be a concern in years going forward and Visit VBR staff are moving to zero-based budgeting to account for this. Budgetary focuses this year include strong funding for Marketing initiatives to continue expanding revenue markets, reducing Administration's budget to the minimum, as well as continuing to fund strong Sports and Sales initiatives. Malcolm Quigley inquired how the anticipated reduction in fund would impact operations. President Howard explained that staff did not expect operations to be significantly impacted by this reduction and expected to see more of an impact as they look to rollover funds for the FY26/27 year. He also explained that staff hope to find ways to continue to diversify income to make up for these shortfalls. Peter Lewis made a motion to approve the budget, and Jim McAden seconded the motion. All approved with the exception to Malcolm Quigley and the motion passed.

### **FY25/26 Program of Work Overview:**

President Howard introduced Chief Strategist Vice President Debora Wright to give an overview of the proposed program of work for the upcoming year, noting that all budget line items corresponded to activities within the program of work.

### **Marketing:**

Debora Wright shared that marketing efforts will continue to focus on Richmond and NOVA markets, and that the current spring campaign broke records in terms of website traffic and other metrics. Attribution reports for this campaign will be available soon with data from Tourism Economics and this should help better guide efforts. Marketing will also be adding a holiday campaign in, focusing on local events and partner offerings to generate tourism during this time. Wright noted that KPIs for the upcoming year were reduced slightly from the previous year to account for funding decreases. Richard Caywood commented that we should be aware of what metrics are being set as goals as we move forward, noting that things such as website impressions can't always be counted on to determine the success of a campaign. Wright agreed and added that this is part of why staff are moving to Tourism Economics for data analytics, to better understand the attribution from campaigns and to demonstrate the value of marketing activities. There was also discussion among board members regarding civic center and hotel facilities, and the need to look at upgrading or expanding these facilities to accommodate the traffic being driven to the region.

### **Public Relations:**

Wright introduced Kathryn Lucas, Director of Public Relations, to give an overview of anticipated activities. Lucas shared that PR would continue to focus on generating media and travel coverage for the region. Specifically, this will include targeted broadcasts in key markets to complement marketing campaigns. PR will also continue to host travel media during key events and travel seasons, to provide positive travel coverage for the area, uplifting partners and their regional efforts. KPI goals for the new year will stay the same, but Lucas noted that the department was exceeding their set goals for the current year.

### **Sports:**

John Oney, Vice President of Sports & Sales gave an overview of the goals and plans for this department, which includes continuing to drive non-traditional sporting events to the area and fostering strong relationships with sporting event organizers through familiarization tours and national conference attendance. This has been a record-breaking year for the Sports department, but KPIs for the upcoming year will remain the same as the department is beginning to face capacity issues as they book and plan events.

### **Sales:**

Oney shared that the focus and goals for the Sales department were very similar to Sports. They will continue to focus on drawing in meetings and conventions, using their incentive program to help bolster competitiveness as a host. KPIs for this department will stay the same for similar reasons as Sports – capacity of regional

facilities limits the number of events and meetings that can be brought into the region.

**Community Relations:**

Cheryl Morales, Director of Community Relations did not present her section of the Program of Work due to time constraints of the meeting, but President Howard strongly encouraged Board members to review the slides and meeting materials and to reach out with any questions or comments.

**USA Cycling Championship Update:**

John Oney introduced Whit Ellerman, Visit VBR Board Member and owner of Cardinal Bicycle, to provide an update on the upcoming USA Cycling Championship being hosted in the region. Ellerman commended the vision and leadership shown by John Oney in bringing this event to the region, and commended Board members for their support and regionalism that went into making this happen. Such a large event could not be pulled off by any one locality, and public support and regionalism was what drove this to be a success. He also noted that this event is special because it is the first time that multiple events are hosted in the same week and there is much excitement in the cycling community. This will drive thousands of competitors and spectators to the region and will allow them to immerse themselves in the area for an entire week. While public support for this event is strong, Ellerman noted that private support is not as strong as they had hoped but that it is hard to demonstrate the importance of such a large event until it's been seen and hopes that following years see more support. Ellerman encouraged Board members to be advocates for this in their community and thanked them for their support and efforts thus far.

**Regional Destination Alignment Plan Update:**

President Howard stated that information regarding the Destination Alignment Plan and efforts would be shared with Board members after the meeting and requested that they reach out with any comments or questions.

**Old or New Business:**

Chair Lucas shared that target actions from the Board Strategic Plan were included in Board packets and encouraged members to review. The Executive Committee did not act on proposals made by the Governance Taskforce since Valmarie Turner was not present at the last meeting and that they would pick up the efforts at the next Executive Committee meeting. He thanked the taskforce for their efforts.

**Adjournment:**

With no other business to be conducted, Chair Lucas thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and encouraged Board members to stay over for a tour of Explore Park immediately following the meeting. John Shaner made a motion to adjourn, and Sunny Shah seconded the motion. All agreed and the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 am.

  
Kimberly P. Blair (Jul 7, 2025 21:34 EDT)

Kimberly P. Blair

07/07/2025