

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING**  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
January 16, 2024  
Meeting Minutes

The Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) meeting was convened at 1 p.m. on January 16, 2024. The meeting was held at the Great Wolf Lodge—a quorum was present.

**Tourism Council Members Present:**

CHAIR Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors  
TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg

Neal Chalkley, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association  
Doug Pons, City of Williamsburg  
Michael Claar, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association  
Christy Coleman, Jamestown/Yorktown Foundation (JYF)  
Denise Kellogg, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation  
Ben Ellington, Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce, Ex Officio  
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Ex Officio

**Staff Members Present:**

Victoria Cimino, Contractor  
Josue Ayala, Executive Assistant  
Jennifer Case, Chief Marketing Officer  
Lori Ottarson, Accountant  
Daniela Owen, Familiarization Tour Coordinator  
David Turner, Finance Director  
Sandra Vazquez, Talent and Culture Manager

**I. Call to Order**

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

**II. Public Comment**

- No public comments presented

**III. Capital Region USA (CRUSA) Briefing – Scott Balyo**

- Larson introduced Scott Balyo, Executive Director of CRUSA, an international marketing consortium among Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C.
- Key Services
  - Work with Travel Trade and Press through their overseas representatives
    - Tour operator marketing co-ops
    - Sales calls and staff training
    - Sales and media missions
    - Public relations outreach
    - Consumer travel shows
    - Media and trade familiarization tours
  - Brand USA and Miles Partnership

- Miles: Digital and print marketing with a completely updated website in seven languages; including a Holiday Guide in three languages and a consumer e-newsletter seven times a year
  - Market research
  - Allied and Affiliate membership programs
  - Global Travel Exchange and IPW

#### IV. **Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Briefing – Rita McClenny, President and CEO**

- McClenny announced that VTC received a \$45 million grant for media and episodic television
  - Generated by the Virginia Production Association
  - Legislation added supporting sports and major entertainment to HB1267
- Bill HB814 was created for historically accurate advertising

#### V. **Roundtable Discussion**

- Larson introduced the roundtable discussion
  - Ben Ellington stated the annual Christmas parade achieved record attendance, with more than 23,000 people present
    - Chamber hosted its third speaker series with B.K. Fulton
  - Michael Claar shared that the Williamsburg Restaurant Association’s “Restaurant Week” began on January 16 with nine confirmed participating restaurants
    - Restaurants report a strong closing to the year with record catering volume every weekend despite staffing shortage
  - Christy Coleman shared that the new Ruth E. Carter exhibit opens on May 11, 2024
    - In June, the *Susan Constant* will be in dry dock for repairs for 18-20 months; the amendment provides \$4.7 million General Fund the first year to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation to dry-dock and renovate the *Susan Constant*, a reconstruction of the 17th century vessel
  - Neal Chalkley stated that January occupancy is slow, and Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) is \$52.10
    - The Williamsburg Hotel Motel Association looks forward to the new sports complex and new sports tourism opportunities it presents
  - Doug Pons shared that the Historic Triangle Recreational Facilities Authority (HTRFA) received support from the municipalities to build the sports complex
    - City council approved \$100,000 in 2024 and 2025 to fund the planning of a live performance venue located adjacent to the sports complex
    - The city hosted a jazz festival the previous week and will be hosting the Last Word Comedy Festival from January 26 - 28
  - Larson stated James City County hired a lobbyist to engage on its behalf with the general assembly
  - Denise Kellogg shared that Jamestown discovery continues to excavate multiple artifacts
    - Flooding is worsening at Historic Jamestown; leadership is working with state and federal government to address the issue
    - Visitation is down 15%. Creating a ticket package with NPS to encourage visitation

#### VI. **Minutes**

- Larson requested a motion to approve the November 20, 2023 meeting minutes
- Chalkley motioned
- Coleman provided a second
- Minutes unanimously approved

## VII. **Chair Report**

- Larson shared that a representative from York County will be announced on January 16, 2024
  - Update: Sheila Noll appointed as representative for York County
- Rescheduling March board meeting due to “A Common Cause to All” event

## VIII. **FY 23 Audit Report**

- Pons introduced Sean Walker, principal of Clifton Larson Allen LLP
- WTC’s total net position was \$3.3M, a decrease from \$7.3M due to the funding of the sports complex
- Total revenue total \$16.5M, 7% below 2023
- Destination marketing expenses were \$16.6M, 88% of total 2023 operating expenses and a 13% increase over 2022
- Other sales and marketing expenses were \$586K, 3% of the total operating expenses and an 83% increase over 2022
- Report identified no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in financial reporting

## IX. **Treasurer’s Report**

- Pons shared financial statements through November 2023
  - November 2023 Revenue was \$1.4M - over budget by \$89K
    - Sales tax receipts totaled \$1.2M, over budget by \$31K
    - Transient tax receipts totaled \$127K, over budget by \$34K
    - Other revenue totaled \$27K, over budget by \$24K
  - November 2023 expenses were \$781K- under budget by \$375K
    - Destination Marketing expenses were \$621K, under budget by \$329K
    - Sales and marketing activities were \$22K, under budget by \$17K
    - Total Administrative expenses were \$138K, under budget by \$29K
      - Staffing costs were \$129K, under budget by \$27K
      - Other Administrative expenses were \$26K, under budget by \$2K
- FYTD Revenue and Expenses
  - FY2024 revenue was \$7.3M, over budget by \$363K
    - Sales tax was \$6.5M, over budget by \$229K
    - Transient Tax was \$768K, over budget by \$93K
    - Other revenue was \$57K, over budget by \$41K
  - FY2024 expenses were \$5.8M, under budget by \$662K
    - Destination marketing was \$4.9M, under budget by \$481K
    - Other Sales and Marketing \$177K, under budget by \$61K
    - Admin was \$714K, under budget by \$121K
- Cash on Hand
- WTC has \$6.2M in the bank for operations
  - Cash on Hand for Operations in November is over budget by \$2.1M, with accounts payable liabilities of \$1.3M, leaving free Cash on Hand for Operations at \$4.9M
- Sales Tax Revenue
  - October increased \$38K or 3.2% year-over-year
    - The 3-month moving average increased by 7% vs. the same period in 2022
    - YTD sales tax receipts increased 7.5% vs. the same period in 2022
- Transient Tax Revenue
  - October decreased \$10K or 7.1% year-over-year,
    - The 3-month moving average decreased by 6.3% vs. the same period in 2022
    - Year-to-date tax receipts are up 2.4% versus the same period in 2022

## X. Executive Director and CEO report

- Key Performance Indicators
  - STR Report data
    - November 2023 occupancy 43.8% vs November 2022 occupancy 44.8%
    - Year to Date
      - Average Daily Rate (ADR): \$142
      - Revenue: \$165.1M
      - Demand: 1.14M rooms sold
  - November 2023 YTD comparison to 2022
    - Occupancy increased by 3.5%
    - ADR decreased by .4%
    - Demand increased by 3.8%
    - RevPAR increased by 2.7%
  - November 2023 YTD comparison to 2019
    - Occupancy increased by 1.4%
    - ADR increased by 16.5%
    - RevPAR increased by 19.3%
- Top Origin Markets
  - Washington, D.C. remains number one
  - New York is number seven
  - 70% of visitors are from out of state
- Average Visitor Daily Spend Per Month
  - December's average visitor spend totaled \$152
  - 48% of on-site credit card swipes were food purchases
- Visitor Spend by Age Group
  - 72% of visitor spend were made by people 45 or older
- Marketing (November and December)
  - Flighting Strategy
    - 10% of the media was executed in November and December
      - Utilized lower funnel booking sites
    - Tactics continue to include:
      - TV
      - Connected TV
      - Streaming Audio
      - Blog Support
      - Paid search and social
      - Consumer emails
  - Market Strategy
    - Launched in 23 markets in January, new this year: Atlanta (digital only)
  - Audience
    - Millennial/Gen X families and couples, as well as active mature couples
  - November/December YTD Digital Advertising Performance
    - Increased 29% in November but saw a decline in search demand YoY however, ad conversion rate increased
    - VistaGraphics was the second most significant driver of site traffic, with a 72% engagement rate
  - November/December: Influencer Familiarization Tours
    - Visit Williamsburg hosted Taryn Newton, Travis Levius, Britny McKibben, and Charlotte Simpson
  - November/December: Influencer Program Highlights
    - Content included topics that covered accessibility, outdoor activities, multi-generational travel, and couples getaways
  - November/December: Organic Social Highlights
    - The holiday season brought two record-setting posts

- “Wreaths of Colonial Williamsburg”
    - “Hallmark Christmas Towns”
  - 2023 Advertising Highlights
    - Digital media drove over 5K ad-attributed hotel bookings and over 150K hotel searches
    - Negotiated \$796K in value-add spots in Broadcast and \$1.2M added-value exposure in Out of Home (OOH) experience
    - Visit Williamsburg won the gold award from the Out of Home Advertising Association of America (OAAA) for the out-of-home and Experiential Activation that drove 230MM impressions across 430 units
  - *The WilliamsBLOG*
    - Outperformed in 2022 with 667K site sessions
  - YTD Website Performance
    - VW website continues to outperform pre-pandemic levels and 2022
    - Site sessions and users increased by 9%
- Public Relations
  - Sales November/December 2023 Performance
    - Shows/Events
      - Connect Corporate: November 27 – 29
      - Travel South International Showcase: December 3 – 7
      - Emerge 2024: January 9 – 11
      - American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace: January 13 - 16
    - November/December: Site Visits
      - Viajes: December 2 - 3
      - Virginia Motorcoach Association (VMA): December 13 - 15
      - North Carolina Motorcoach Association: December 28 - 30
    - November/December: New Business Leads
      - Sales issued 16 leads representing 4,268 potential room nights
      - Sales closed on ten pieces of business, totaling 1,690 room nights
    - Upcoming tradeshow and events
      - Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) Summit: February 2 - 5
      - Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Showcase: March 20 - 22

XI. **Old Business**

- None

XII. **New Business**

- None

XIII. **Closed Session**

- Pons motioned to enter into Closed Session
  - Pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel matters
- All were in favor
- Pons motioned to exit the Closed Session
  - We at this moment certify that to the best of our knowledge, (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which closed the meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by this body in the closed meeting just concluded
- All were in favor

XIV. **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned