

ATTACHMENT A
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
March 12, 2024
Meeting Minutes

The Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) meeting was convened at 1 p.m. on May 21, 2024. The meeting was held at the Williamsburg Fire Station—a quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

CHAIR Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors
VICE CHAIR Cliff Fleet III, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg

Michael Klaar, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association
Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA
Denise Kellogg, Jamestown Rediscovery Historic Jamestowne
Neal Chalkley, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association
Sheila Noll, York County Board of Supervisors

Staff Members Present

Julia Smyth-Young, Interim CEO
Josue Ayala, Executive Assistant
Jennifer Case, Chief Marketing Officer
Lori Ottarson, Accountant
Daniela Owen, Familiarization Tour Coordinator
Ally Ramello, Group Sales Manager
David Turner, Finance Director
Sandra Vazquez, Talent and Culture Manager

I. **Call to Order**

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 12 p.m.

II. **Public Comment**

- Debbie Schaeffer – James City County – Thanked Visit Williamsburg for dedication to efforts to the community

III. **Regional Indoor Sports Complex Update – Andrew O. Trivette, Williamsburg City Manager**

- Larson introduced Andrew Trivette to update the board on the sports complex
- Sports Center
 - Cost - \$80M
 - Completion date – First quarter 2026
 - Approximately 200,000 square feet
- The Coastal Region represented a 27% share of sports spending in Virginia in 2022, generating a total economic impact of \$1.2B

- \$364.3M in total labor income
- Supports 11,135 part-time and full-time jobs
- Generated \$94.7 million in state and local tax revenues
- Projected annual local economic and fiscal impacts
 - 245+ Sustainable annual jobs
 - \$10M in associated annual wages
 - \$1.3M in sales, rental, and transient occupancy taxes
 - 42,000+ annual room nights at hotels/motels
 - \$21M in net annual economic output
 - 560,000 annual visitors
- Construction costs
 - City of Williamsburg: 64%, or \$2.5M annually
 - HTRFA: 36% or \$1.5M annually
- Operating Costs
 - James City County and York County
 - Year 1: \$400,000 each
 - Years 2-5: \$800,000 each
 - Years 6-30: Between \$300,000 and \$800,000 annually depending on the facility's need
- Live Performance Venue
 - Estimated cost - \$35M
 - Completion date - 2026

IV. **Roundtable Discussion**

- Larson introduced Sheila Noll, Vice Chairman of the York County Board of Supervisors
 - Cliff Fleet shared that Colonial Williamsburg's is well but could be stronger
 - Kevin Lembke shared performance is doing well but could be stronger
 - Thanked Julia for Loch Ness Monster launching
 - Denise Kellogg shared that visitation and revenue are down, impacting fundraising
 - Michael Klaar traffic is steady with restaurants but staffing is still in issue with restaurants
 - Neal Chalkey stated numbers are down throughout the Hotel/Motel Association, but other regions are affected
 - Sheila Noll didn't have anything to share

V. **Minutes**

- Larson requested a motion to approve the January 16, 2024 meeting minutes
- Pons motioned
- Chalkey provided a second
- Minutes unanimously approved

VI. **Chair Report**

- Larson shared to the board that the July board meeting will be changed to July 9 or 11 due to a conference scheduled when the meeting was to take place
- Larson will be rescheduling the annual meeting to November

VII. **Treasurer's Report**

- Pons shared financial statements through March 2024
 - March 2024 Revenue was \$1.1M - over budget by \$20K
 - Sales tax receipts totaled \$946K, in line with budget
 - Transient tax receipts totaled \$117K, over budget by \$12K
 - Other revenue totaled \$12K, over budget by \$8K
 - March 2024 expenses were \$2M- over budget by \$105K
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$1.9M, over budget by \$257K
 - Sales and marketing activities were \$9K, under budget by \$48K
 - Total Administrative expenses were \$110K, under budget by \$104K
 - Other Administrative expenses were \$15K, under budget by \$63K,
- FYTD Revenue and Expenses
 - FY 2024 revenue was \$12.8M, over budget by \$351K
 - Sales tax was \$11.3M, over budget by \$251K
 - Transient Tax was \$1.2M, over budget by \$12K
 - Other revenue was \$117K, over budget by \$87K
 - FY 2024 expenses were \$11.6M, under budget by \$1.3M
 - Destination marketing was \$10M, under budget by \$902K
 - Other Sales and Marketing was \$321K, under budget by \$191K
 - Labor and benefits was \$1m, under budget by \$201K
 - Admin was \$225K, over budget by \$279K, under budget by \$34K
- Cash on Hand
 - WTC has \$7.4M in the bank for operations
 - Cash on Hand for Operations as of March 31 was over budget by \$4.5M, with accounts payable liabilities of \$2.9M, leaving free Cash on Hand for Operations at \$4.5M
- Sales Tax Revenue
 - February sales tax was \$1.M
 - The 3-month moving average decreased by 42K or negative 1.2% year over year
 - YTD sales tax receipts increased \$14K or 1.4% vs. the same period in 2023
- Transient Tax Revenue
 - February transient tax was \$103K
 - The 3-month moving average increased by \$39K or 13.5% vs the same period in 2023
 - Year-to-date tax receipts increased \$15K or 16.6% versus the same period in 2023

VIII. **FY 2025 Budget**

- Cash Position Forecast
- David Turner presented the FY25 Budget
 - Projecting to be over \$800K in revenue
 - Projecting to be under \$181K in expenses
 - Favorable by \$989K vs what was originally planned for the year
 - Revenue budgeted to be \$17.2M or 2.9% increase over the FY24 forecast
 - Sales tax revenue is budgeted at \$15.3M or \$475K over FY24 sales revenue
- Larson requested a motion to approve FY25 budget
 - Pons motioned
 - Chalkley provided a second

- The FY25 budget was unanimously approved

IX. **Executive Director and Interim CEO report**

- Larson shared that a space study has been done to better utilize the space Visit Williamsburg leases
- **Key Performance Indicators**
 - STR Report data
 - April 2024 occupancy 42.3% vs April 2023 occupancy 44.78%
 - Year to Date
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR): \$128.71 vs \$134.33 in 2023
 - RevPAR: \$55.94 vs \$61.92 in 2023
- **Hotel Performance**
 - Hotel Average Stay Value is \$276 vs 2023 at \$262
- **Top Origin Markets (First Quarter)**
 - Washington, D.C. remains number one
 - Increased digital marketing in Roanoke and Raleigh
- **Hotel Pacing**
 - Current demand comparison to last year's demand
 - Hotel average stay value in 2024 is \$467 vs \$304 in 2023
 - Hotel average daily rate in 2024 is \$169 vs \$141 in 2023
 - Hotel average length of stay is 2.5 days vs 2.1 in 2023
- **Smyth-Young introduced new team members:**
 - Selena Coles – Public Relations Specialist
 - Morgan Cordle – Sports Sales Manager
 - Alejandra Ramello – Group Sales Manager
- **Marketing**
 - Performance: Media
 - For every \$1 spent in 2024 Media, is garnering more ad-attributed hotel bookings than in 2023
 - Q1 Media performance surpassed ad-attributed hotel bookings forecast by 5% and at 99% to-goal
 - Conversion rate on hotel bookings rose 15% from 3.3% in Q1 2023 vs. 3.8% in Q1 2024
 - Performance: Site
 - 2024 Media and the new website are both driving more engaged site traffic compared to 2023
 - Q1 engaged site sessions are significantly surpassing both forecast and goal at 54% over goal
 - Expedia Group: Performance Summary for Williamsburg VA CVB (April – May 2024)
 - Attraction ad spend was \$6.5
 - Over 258K impressions
 - 850 Clicks
 - Garnered 1.1K room nights
 - Gross bookings were are \$185.2k, retuning \$28.5 on advertising spend
 - Out of Home
 - Online searches leading to the website increased by 15% in OOH markets during flight

- Organic sessions and Engaged sessions were up Year over Year by 15% and 14%
 - Markets with OOF
 - Atlanta
 - Baltimore
 - Boston
 - Cleveland
 - New York City
 - Philadelphia
 - Washington DC
 - Tik Tok Channel Growth
 - Launched January 1
 - 1.7K followers
 - 1.1M Views
 - 10K Engagements
 - 78K Site visits
 - After just a few months into our paid campaign, TikTok has become the #6 driver of website traffic
 - TikTok is a huge area of opportunity for WTC
 - Influencer Program Highlights
 - 14 influencers based in priority markets covering family travel, summer travel, food & beverage, outdoor activities, active mature travel, free things to do, and Juneteenth activities
 - Looking Ahead: Recent Optimizations
 - Implemented multiple media optimizations to drive short-term bookings
 - Increasing reach and exposure in drive market with social media awareness
 - Gaining back market share from competitive researching showing Richmond stealing share in shoulder season
 - Updating paid social ads with timely book now messaging and events
 - Provided Priceline sponsorship and discount messaging with “Try Williamsburg instead of Richmond”
- **Black History Content Partnership**
 - Coordinate FAM tours with Travel Noire and Essence in April
 - Locations featured were:
 - Jamestown Settlement
 - American Revolution Museum
 - Powell Kitchen
 - First Baptist Church
 - Hearth Memorial
 - Topsy Beans
 - Launch will be in mid-June across websites and social media, via multiple digital articles and dedicated video
- **Navy Regional Effort: Morale Welfare and Recreation Advertising**
 - **Mid-may through Mid-july**
 - 1.44MM Advertising Impressions
 - 60+ digital monitors across all Hampton Roads Bases, reaching 485K patrons
 - Newsletter Drop targeting subscribers in the Hampton Roads area
 - Website advertising on NavyLifeMA website reaching 175,800 monthly site visitors in the full Mid-Atlantic Region

- Social Posts across Hampton Road and Mid-Atlantic-based pages with collective reach of 41,450 followers
- **Leisure Group Travel Magazine**
 - Audience: U.S.-based Tour & Receptive Operators, Bus Companies, Travel Agents, Alumni, Churches, Senior and Niche & Affinity Travel Groups
 - Edition: June's America 250Themed Issue
- **Public Relations**
 - March/April 2024 Media FAM trips
 - Visit Williamsburg hosted writers Ulrike Wirz, Michele Herrmann, Sherra Meyers, Madeline Weinfield, Tracey Teo
 - March 1 – April 30, 2024 Performance
 - 15.9M Global impressions
 - 9 Placements
 - Key media placements:
 - “Get out of Town – Williamsburg, VA” PBS
 - “Best Small Towns in Virginia” Southern Living
 - “Outdoor Adventures You Have to Try in Williamsburg, VA” Trazee Travel
 - Awards & Accolades March 1 – April 30, 2024
 - Williamsburg voted #8 in the Best Small Towns in Virginia by readers of Southern Living for 2024
 - Visit Williamsburg won the 2024 VIRGO Award by the Virginia Association & Promotion with budget of more than \$1M award category
 - Williamsburg voted #8 for 2024's 10 Best Readers' Choice travel awards in the category for Best Small College Town
- **Sales**
 - Leads (March 2 – May 10, 2024)
 - Visit Williamsburg converted definite nearly 3,000 definite room nights
 - Shows/Events
 - African American Travel conference pre-conference FAM – April 14 - 16 (DEI/MICE)
 - African American Travel Conference – April 16 – 18, 2024, Chesapeake, VA (DEI/MICE)
 - IPW – May 3 – 7, 2024, Los Angeles, CA (International)
 - VTC Visitor Center FAM – May 15 – 17, 2024, Williamsburg, VA
 - Client Events and Site Visits
 - CRUS UK Affair – May 16 – 17, 2024, Williamsburg, VA
 - Upcoming tradeshows and events
 - May 21 – 24: Small Market Summit
 - May 29: Grand Classroom
 - May 30: WorlStrides
 - August 9 – 13: SYTA Annual
 - August 18 – 20: Destination Southeast

x. **Old Business**

- None

XI. **New Business**

- Chalkley asked if any press release would be released for the sports center; i.e. ground breaking
 - Larson had Trivette answer that once site is prepared, all three localities will send press releases

XII. **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned