

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING**  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
July 9, 2024  
Meeting Minutes

The Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) meeting was convened at 12 p.m. on July 9, 2024. The meeting was held at the Busch Gardens Training Center—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

Neal Chalkley, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association

Mickey Chohany, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association

Christy Coleman, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF)

James Horn, Jamestown Rediscovery Historic Jamestowne

Kevin Lembke, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA

Sheila Noll, York County Board of Supervisors

Dr. Porter Brannon, Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce, Ex Officio

**Staff Members Present**

Edward Harris, CEO

Josue Ayala, Executive Assistant

Jennifer Case, Chief Marketing Officer

Selena Coles, Public Relations Specialist

Morgan Cordle, Sports Sales Manager

Lori Ottarson, Accountant

Daniela Owen, Familiarization Tour Coordinator

Ally Ramello, Group Sales Manager

Julia Smyth-Young, Chief Sales Officer

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**

- Ron Kirkland mentioned that the sports complex is one of the keys to raising occupancy in the area. Would like to talk about providing incentive money to sports groups.

III. **Roundtable Discussion**

- Larson introduced Dr. Porter Brannon
  - Mickey Chohany shared that even though May traffic was low, June was up significantly

- Kevin Lembke shared that performance is doing well but not seen much growth since 2022
  - Partnered with Coke to bring two influencers to the park to provide content
- Sheila Noll shared that the local concerts and market days are packed;
  - Yorktown recently signed a contract with American Cruiselines
- Cliff Fleet III, shared the economy is impacting spending
  - Visitation numbers are not as strong as Colonial Williamsburg would like
  - Would like visitation pace to increase on the ending half of the year; approaching end of the year with caution
- Larson thanked everyone who went to Edward Harris' reception and Colonial Williamsburg for hosting
- Doug Pons shared upcoming events in the month throughout Williamsburg
  - Comedy Festival was a success and will be coming back in January
- Neal Chalkley agreed with Fleet and Lembke regarding the softness in numbers but has been experiencing it since March
- Christy Coleman shared that June numbers started strong but softened at the end of the month
  - *Susan Constant* set sail for repairs on June 15
- James Horne shared that Historic Jamestowne had recent discoveries that helped to receive good press
- Dr. Brannon shared that the Chamber is working on increasing membership to create more extensive networks in the Historic Triangle area
  - Looking to host events to support local businesses

#### IV. **Chair Report**

- Thanked the board members for coming
- Participated in the *Susan Constant* event

#### V. **Minutes**

- Pons requested a motion to approve the May 21, 2024 meeting minutes
- Chalkley motioned
- Fleet provided a second
- Minutes unanimously approved

#### VI. **Treasurer's Report**

- Pons shared financial statements through May 2024
  - May 2024 Revenue was \$1.3M, over budget by \$147K
    - Sales tax receipts totaled \$1.2M, over budget by \$84K
    - Transient tax receipts totaled \$112K, over budget by \$35K
    - Other revenue totaled \$31K, over budget by \$28K
  - May 2024 expenses were \$1.7M- over budget by \$182K
    - Destination Marketing expenses were \$1.4M, over budget by \$92K
    - Sales and marketing activities were \$139K, under budget by \$73K
    - Total Administrative expenses were \$132K, under budget by \$92K
      - Other Administrative expenses were \$32K, under budget by \$2K,
- FYTD Revenue and Expenses
  - FY 2024 revenue was \$15.3M, over budget by \$681K

- Sales tax was \$13.5M, over budget by \$506K
    - Transient Tax was \$1.5M, over budget by \$60K
    - Other revenue was \$162K, over budget by \$125K
  - FY 2024 expenses were \$15M, under budget by \$1.3M
    - Destination marketing was \$12.8M, under budget by \$829K
    - Other Sales and Marketing was \$540K, under budget by \$52K
    - Labor and benefits were \$1.6M, under budget by \$402K
    - Admin was \$340K, under budget by \$89K
- Cash on Hand
  - WTC has \$6.3M in the bank for operations
  - Cash on Hand for Operations as of May 31 was over budget by \$405K, with accounts payable liabilities of \$2.6M, leaving free Cash on Hand for Operations at \$3.7M
- Sales Tax Revenue
  - April sales tax was \$1.2M
    - The 3-month moving average increased by 2K or .1 % year over year
    - YTD sales tax receipts decreased \$2.7K or 2.4% vs. the same period in 2023
- Transient Tax Revenue
  - April transient tax was \$184K
    - The 3-month moving average increased by \$61K or 18.1% vs the same period in 2023
    - Year-to-date tax receipts increased \$73K or 16.4% versus the same period in 2023

## VII. CEO report

- Harris thanked the board members for coming to the meeting
- Acknowledged Julia Smyth-Young for making the transition as smooth as possible
- **YTD Compared to 2023**
  - YTD Occupancy
    - 2024: 44.6% vs 2023: 46.7% (-4.5%)
  - YTD ADR: 2024: 131.30 vs 2023: \$136.38 (-3.7)
  - YTD RevPAR: 2024: \$60 vs 2023: 65.26 (-8.1)
- **Hotel Performance in May**
  - Occupancy: 54%
  - ADR: \$145.51
  - RevPAR: \$78.52
- **First Two Weeks**
  - Got to know the team
  - Learned internal processes, systems, and policies
  - Financial review
  - Met with key stakeholders
  - Agency partners/vendors
  - Thanked the board members for their availability to meet with him
- **What's Next?**
  - Will be reviewing agency RFP's, making selection by the end of the week
    - Will be inviting selected agencies to present in the first two weeks of September
  - Will be looking for an Agency of Record, Public Relations, and Sports to help occupancy

- Review/Refine department goals
- Finalize Fiscal Q1 and Q2 plans
  - Messaging/Media placement
- Continue to meet with key stakeholders
- **Marketing**
  - People are still very interested in planning trips to the area
  - Website
    - Q1 engage site sessions are significantly surpassing both forecast and goal; at 47% over goal
  - Website: Top Pages By Site Sessions (May – June)
    - +89K Sessions; 83% increase in engagement rates
    - Increased 22% in Visitor Guide Downloads
    - Increased 264% in Newsletter Sign-ups
  - Spotlight: Juneteenth
    - As a direct result of marketing efforts, Juneteenth Events Page saw the most significant number of engaged sessions across entire website from June 1 - 19
  - Content Partnership Launch: Travel Noire
    - Display and social will be promoting the content and driving users to the site, delivering an estimated 2.8M impressions
  - Content Partnership Launch: Essence
    - Display ads, email, and social content across Essence/VW channels will drive traffic to content for two months with projected number of 6.8M impressions
  - May/June Influencer Program Highlights
    - 9 IG Reels and TikTok videos garnered:
      - 176.5K+ Impressions
      - 9.5K+ engagements
      - 1.1M Views
- **Public Relations**
  - Washington, D.C. Media Event – June 18, 2024
    - 24 journalists attended, including:
      - Washington Post
      - Washingtonian
      - DC News Now
      - National Geographic Traveler
      - PBS
      - Arlington Magazine
      - FOX 5 DC
      - Forbes
    - Ten partners displayed
  - May 1 – June 30, 2024
    - 616.6M Global Impressions
    - 44 Placements
- **Sales**
  - Sales Leads (May 11 – June 28, 2024)
    - Visit Williamsburg converted definite nearly 5,000 definite room nights
  - Shows/Events
    - Small Market Summit: May 21 – 24 (DuPage, IL)
    - Military Reunion Network Summit: June 21 – 24 (Washington, D.C. )
  - Client Events and Site Visits
    - Grand Classroom: May 29 (Charlottesville, VA)

- WorldStrides: May 30 (Charlottesville, VA)
- Mann Travels: June 12, 2024 (Charlotte, NC)
- Burke Christian Tour: June 13 (Maiden, NC)
- Upcoming tradeshow and events
  - SYTA Annual: August 9 – 13 (New York, NY)
  - Destination Southeast: August 18 – 20 (Point Clear, AL)
  - Connect Sports: August 27 – 29 (Milwaukee, WI)
  - Virginia Motorcoach Association: August 27 – 30 (Williamsburg, VA)
  - Capital Region USA GTE: September 16 – 18 (Charlottesville, VA)
- **Sports**
  - Working with Kemper Sports (Management company working with sports facility)
    - Design is 85% complete
    - Are on target to open doors on Q1 of 2026
    - Will be meeting with Kemper Sports monthly
  - Pons reminded everyone the groundbreaking ceremony will be on September 2

VIII. **Old Business**

- None

IX. **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

X. **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned