

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING**  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
January 19, 2021  
Approved Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on January 19, 2021, by zoom/conference call. A quorum was present.

**Tourism Council Members Present:**

CHAIR/

TREASURER Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors

VICE CHAIR Cliff Fleet, President and CEO, Colonial Williamsburg

Neal Chalkley, President, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association (WHMA)

Michael Claar, Chair, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association (WARA)

Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

Chad Green, Chair, York County Board of Supervisors

Cheri Green, Chair, Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance (GWCTA)

Denise Kellogg, Director, Development, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation

Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA

Rita McClenny, President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg

**Staff Members Present:**

Victoria Cimino, CEO

Miranda Jarrell, Communications Director

Julie O'Neil, Marketing Director

Joey Pierce, Content Manager

Dave Potter, Industry Relations Manager

Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director

David Turner, Finance Director

**I. Call to Order**

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- Victoria Cimino stated, "Due to the Governor's Declared State of Emergency due to COVID-19, it is impractical and unsafe for the Tourism Council to assemble in a single location; this meeting is being held electronically pursuant to 2020 Amendments to the 2019 Appropriations Act. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of the Tourism Council and the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. The public is welcome to use the Zoom link to attend

electronically. The Tourism Council will make available a recording or transcript of the meeting on its website in accordance with the timeframes established in Sections 2.2-3707 and 2.2-3701.1 of the Code of Virginia.”

- James Horn was represented by Denise Kellogg
- Mickey Chohany was represented by Michael Claar

## II. Public Comment

No public comments were presented.

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

- McClenny reported the General Assembly is in session with five bills related to the travel and tourism industry
  - Creating tourism improvement districts (TID)
  - A name change for the Heart of Appalachia
  - Bill discussing land donated in southwest Virginia for a new trail system
  - Two bills of technical nature
- VTC participated in a research study with MMGY on Black travel sentiment
  - Virginia is the 6<sup>th</sup> most attractive state to Black travelers; 3,500 people polled, including participants from the United States, Europe, Canada, South America, and Australia
- Larson asked board members to share updates
  - Kevin Lembke shared the year-round opening of Busch Gardens for weekend events has been received well, giving additional opportunities for park members
    - Lembke confirmed Busch Gardens anticipates maintaining and growing the year-round schedule in the future
  - Neil Chalkley reported hotel business is still soft at the moment, but group business has begun to return for May and June
  - Michael Claar mentioned WARA Restaurant Week runs Jan 21 – 31, with 25+ restaurants participating
    - Claar cited national statistics show a decline in restaurant sales throughout the fourth quarter and encouraged all eligible restaurants to apply for federal PPP loans

## IV. Minutes

- Larson requested a motion to approve the November 17, 2020 meeting minutes
- Chalkley motioned
- Cliff Fleet provided a second
- Roll call; all in favor
- Minutes were approved

## V. Chair Report

- By-Laws Revision/Adoption
  - Larson outlined the process by which the By-Laws Committee developed proposed revisions
  - Larson requested a motion to approve and adopt the revised By-Laws
  - Fleet motioned
  - Doug Pons provided a second
  - Roll call; all in favor
  - By-Laws were adopted
  
- Election of Officers – Treasurer
  - Larson introduced Chalkley, Chair of the Nominations Committee
  - Chalkley thanked committee members
  - Chalkley motioned to approve Pons as Williamsburg Tourism Council Treasurer
  - Christy Coleman provided a second
  - Roll call; all in favor
  - Pons' appointment as Williamsburg Tourism Council Treasurer was approved

## VI. Treasurer's Report

- Larson shared financial statements through November 30, 2020
- Revenue & Expenses
  - November revenues totaled \$1.0M; \$149K over budget
    - November sales tax receipts totaled \$922K; \$180K over budget
    - Transient tax receipts totaled \$90K; \$37K under budget
  - Fiscal Year-to-Date (FYTD) 2021 revenues totaled \$4.8M; \$1.5M over budget
    - FYTD sales tax receipts totaled \$4.4M; \$1.6M over budget
    - FYTD transient tax receipts totaled \$319K; \$136K under budget
  - November expenses were \$220K under budget
    - Destination Marketing expenses were \$153K under budget due to the timing of invoices
    - Sales activities were \$19K under budget due to shows/conferences/events timing and cost
    - Staffing costs were \$36K below budget due to continued delays in staff hires
    - Other administrative expenses were \$12K under budget due to reduced staffing and cancelled events
  - FYTD expenses were under budget by \$1.56M
    - Changes in media purchases; \$1.26M below budget
    - Staffing costs \$180K below budget

- Cash on Hand
  - Totals \$13.3M
    - \$10.5M allocated for operations
    - \$2.8M allocated for product development
  - Cash on Hand (operations) is \$7.5M over budget
  - Cash on Hand (product development) is \$750K over budget
- Transient tax revenue
  - Larson reminded attendees that tax revenue information illustrates the month the activity took place, not when the revenue was received
    - Transient tax totaled \$90K in September 2020
      - A 40.8% decrease from September 2019
  - Three-month moving average shows a 50.7% decrease versus the same period in 2019
- Cimino presented the Smith Travel Research slide
  - November's (most recent information available) occupancy was 26.3%, down by 42%
  - Year to Date occupancy is 27%, down by 48%
- Sales tax revenue
  - September 2020 totaled \$922K
    - A 1.3% decrease from September 2019
  - Three-month moving average shows a 4.3% decrease versus the same period in 2019

## VII. Closed Session

- Larson requested a motion to go into closed session
  - "Pursuant to Va.Code Section 2.2-3711A.8 for consultation with retained legal counsel for advice regarding contractual rights and legal compliance matters."
- Fleet motioned
- Pons provided a second
- Roll call; all in favor
- Meeting went into closed session

## VIII. Return from Closed Session

- Larson requested a motion to reconvene in open session
  - "We hereby 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."

- Pons motioned
- Fleet provided a second
- Roll call; all in favor
- Meeting reconvened in open session

**IX. Action re: Maintenance of Effort Funds**

- Larson requested a motion authorizing acceptance of \$200,000 of Maintenance of Effort funding due from the Alliance for the first half of Calendar Year 2020, subject to the amendment of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Alliance and the localities of Williamsburg, James City County, and York County
- Fleet motioned
- Chalkley provided a second
- Roll call; all in favor
- Acceptance of \$200,000 of Maintenance of Effort funds due from the Alliance approved

**X. US Travel Association Briefing - Erik Hansen, Senior Vice President of Government Relations**

- Hansen provided an update on COVID-19 relief and international travel advocacy
  - Expanded eligibility of PPP support to include destination marketing organizations
    - Working with the new administration on travel industry COVID relief
  - Extending relief past March
  - Tax credit to spur demand for business, leisure, and convention travel
  - Bill to provide \$2B in destination marketing funding
  - Advocating for reopening international travel
- McClenny thanked Hansen for this work and support of Dulles Airport's travel bubble with Air India

**XI. Director's Report**

- Public Body Compliance
  - Completed compliance tasks, include:
    - Established separate financial entity and tax ID number
    - Obtained directors and officers insurance
    - Revised and adopted new By-Laws
    - Clarified financial auditing and oversight relationship with state government
    - Opened new bank accounts
    - Obtained separate payroll

- Tasks to be completed, include:
  - Procure health, dental, and vision benefits
  - Procure retirement plan
  - Separate QuickBooks
  - Obtain risk management insurance
  - Establish a lease for office space
  - Update Memorandums of Understanding with external organizations
  - Obtain Attorney General opinion on Powers and Duties
  - Establish compliance training for board and staff
- Marketing and Communications
  - Personnel
    - Mikey Jasiczek resigned
    - Miranda Jarrell has joined as Communications Director
    - Administrative Assistant/Operations Manager position has been posted
    - Sales/Services Coordinator will be posted in the coming months
  - Fall and Holiday Creative
    - Despite market volatility, consumers were more engaged with content
      - Display click-through rate up 37%
      - Social click-through rate .88%
      - Web sessions up 4.7%
      - New Users represent 81.5% of web users
      - An all-time, single-day high of 18,500 web visitors was reached on December 29
  - Web Performance
    - Overall sessions down 9%, but this average includes the removal of paid media for three months (March-May)
  - The WilliamsBLOG
    - Launched in the fall to replace previous *"Trip Ideas"* and allows for additional ability for storytelling
    - Media Support: Mid-December launch with sophisticated digital targeting
      - Overall blog traffic is up 400%
  - Shop/Dine Local Campaign
    - December 14-January 31
    - 913K impressions and 6,300 clicks
  - Education Campaign
    - Promoting hybrid and in-person education programming in destination
    - Utilizes social, programmatic targeting of teachers and parents, and school-based media
  - Influencers
    - Hosted more than 10 influencers in the past two months
    - 7 million followers accessed

- Plan to diversify content and influencers that partner with Visit Williamsburg
  - Organic Social
    - Content focus surrounded the holidays and allowed for an increase in engagement
  - Public Relations
    - 2.96 billion global impressions with 55 placements
  - Visiting Journalist
    - Hosted James Barrett of Redbook, Woman’s Day, and Good Housekeeping
      - Coverage published in Redbook and Woman’s Day with potential for additional coverage
  - 2020 Media Plan
    - Target Audience
      - Remains the same – Millennials (couples and families), Gen-X (couples and families), and active mature (couples)
    - Geographic Targeting
      - Remaining the same as previous campaigns
    - Media Consumption and COVID Impact
      - Connected TV/Digital Video, Linear TV, Digital Display, Paid Social, and Streaming Radio have seen an increase in consumption
      - Broadcast radio has seen a decrease in consumption as daily commutes have reduced
    - Channel Approach
      - Channels included linear tv, connected tv, influencers, digital, social, and Pay-Per-Click
    - Flighting
      - Continuing the “always-on” approach, with an increased spend in peak demand periods and anticipation of a travel rebound in Q3/Q4
  - Sales
    - Completed six virtual conferences and five virtual sales calls, with two additional conferences coming soon
      - The resulting leads represent 3,364 room nights in 2021 and beyond

## XII. Old Business

- Claar expressed gratitude for the shop/dine local campaign on behalf of the Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association

**XIII. New Business**

- Pons provided a briefing on the COVID-19 vaccination process
  - Peninsula Health District is working on a plan to increase vaccination effort, and the city of Williamsburg has proposed opening a new clinic within the city
    - Access to the vaccine is an impediment
- Cimino noted that Kym Hall of the National Park Service has taken a new position with the Park Service in Washington, D.C.

**XIV. Adjournment**

- Pons motioned
- Chalkley provided a second
- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on March 16, 2021