

ATTACHMENT A
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
January 21, 2025
Meeting Minutes

The Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) meeting was convened at 1 p.m. on January 21, 2025. The meeting was held at York Hall, where 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 (CW)
TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg

Ron Kirkland, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association
Michael Claar, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association
Christy Coleman, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF)
Denise Kellogg, Jamestown Rediscovery Historic Jamestowne
Kevin Lembke, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA
Sheila Noll, York County Board of Supervisors

Terry Banez, Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce (GWCC)

Staff Members Present

Edward Harris, CEO
Josue Ayala, Executive Assistant
Selena Coles, Public Relations Specialist
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 1 p.m.

II. **Public Comment**

- No public comment

III. **Roundtable Discussion**

- Larson requested for a moment of a silence in remembrance of Neal Chalkley
- Larson announced that Sheila Noll is the chair of the York County Board of Supervisors
- Larson introduced the roundtable discussion;
 - Cliff Fleet shared that visitation finished well for the year

- Lowered the admission fee to Colonial Williamsburg (CW) but raised the Good Neighbor pass to \$35
 - Expanded the geography to all three counties
- Sheila Noll shared the Cabin Fever concert series has started on Thursday evenings at the Freight Shed
 - Winter Markets start on February 22
 - York County's restaurant week starts February 22 to March 2
- Michael Claar shared the Restaurant Association's January board meeting was postponed due to snow
 - Restaurant Association's restaurant week went well
- Denise Kellogg stated Historic Jamestowne raised \$8.5M to fight flooding issue
 - Working on building for 250th anniversary
 - Received funding through the state to help being ABA compliant
- Ron Kirkland shared occupancy for the year was ok but Williamsburg was down 4% in Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)
- Terry Banez shared the attendance for Williamsburg's Christmas parade was sold out and had over 19,000 people attend with 95% of people attending came between Richmond and Virginia Beach
 - Announced the next Commonwealth Conversations speaker is Abigail Spanberger
- Kevin Lembke shared Busch Garden's December numbers were good and are reopening for 2025 later in the week
 - New rollercoaster opening later in the Spring
- Christy Coleman shared second quarter finished stronger than the first
 - The Ruth Carter exhibit went very well and drove diverse visitation
- Doug Pons shared the Williamsburg Comedy festival is kicking off on January 30 to February 2
 - The sports complex construction progress is going well, with the HTFRA opening discussion for a concert venue in the near future
- Larson announced James City County's budget season kicked off in their previous meeting with a lot of America 250 events starting to come up

IV. **Minutes**

- Larson requested a motion to approve the November 19, 2024 meeting minutes
- Pons motioned
- Kirkland provided a second
- Minutes unanimously approved

V. **Chair Report**

- Larson shared Ron Kirland will be taking Neal's place as the representative of the Williamsburg Hotel/Motel Association

VI. **Treasurer's Report**

- Pons shared financial statements through November 2024
 - September 2024 Revenue was \$1.4M, over budget by \$14K
 - Sales tax receipts totaled \$1.2M, under budget by \$42K
 - Transient tax receipts totaled \$163K, over budget by \$33K

- Maintenance of Effort Funds was \$0, in line with budget
 - November 2024 expenses were \$1.2M over budget by \$7K
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$976K, over budget by \$216K
 - Sales and marketing activities were \$79K, under budget by \$118K
 - Total Administrative expenses were \$173K, under budget by \$92K
 - Fiscal Year 25 Activity
 - Revenue was \$ 7.5M, under budget by \$65K
 - Sales tax receipts were \$6.6M, under budget by \$108K
 - Transient tax receipts totaled \$770K, under budget by \$14K
 - Maintenance of efforts was \$63K, in line with budget
 - Fiscal Year 25 expenses were \$5.2M, under budget by \$416K
 - Destination Marketing Expenses were \$4M, over budget by \$69K
 - Sales activities were \$325K, under budget by \$257K
 - Total administrative expenses were \$852K, under budget by \$228K
- Cash on Hand
 - WTC has \$6.4M in the bank for operations
 - Cash on Hand for Operations as of November 2024 was under budget by \$329K, with accounts payable liabilities of \$1.3M, leaving free Cash on Hand for Operations at \$5.1M
- Sales Tax Revenue
 - October sales tax
 - Increased to \$66K or 5.5 % year over year
 - 3-month moving average decreased \$61 or .16% vs same period in 2023
 - YTD sales tax receipts increased \$1.3M in 2024 vs. \$1.2M in the same period in 2023
- Transient Tax Revenue
 - October Transient Tax was increased by \$7K or 5.3% YoY
 - The 3-month moving average increased by \$167K or 17.6% vs the same period in 2023
 - Year-to-date tax receipts increased \$81K versus the same period in 2023

VII. CEO report

- **Recent Performance – Q4 2024 RECAP**
 - Occupancy - increased 11 out of the previous 14 weeks of the year vs the same period in 2023
 - Demand – Rooms sold (Demand) increased by 18K vs the same period in 2023
 - Weekend Comparison (Rolling 28-day report - December 8, 2024, to January 4, 2025)
- **Historic Holiday Pass**
 - Mobile-based tours to give people more reason to visit the Historic Triangle by gamification, checking in different locations, working closely with Banez and the GWCC
- **Transient Tax**
 - 12-month trend comparison grew 6.9% YoY
- **2025 Vision**
 - Building momentum and preparing for the next big wave of tourism across the Historic Triangle

- The Semiquincentennial (250th Commemoration of the United States of America) is rapidly approaching
 - The way we attract visitors is evolving. At Visit Williamsburg, we are implementing a new approach to connect and re-connect with audiences
 - As we enter 2025, we see tremendous opportunities to reach new visitors and drawback past visitors to experience our new attractions and untold stories of our history
- Focus for the year is centered around three key areas:
 - Refreshing our advertising, media placement, and public relations efforts in key markets with a new group of agency partners
 - Making adjustments to our organizational structure to increase group business, service our clients more efficiently, and strengthen community relationships
 - Improving the visitor experience through new mobile-based tours and technology upgrades to make our website more user-friendly and accessible
- **FY 2024 – 2025 2025 Budget Update**
 - Revenue is trending very close to budget
 - Marketing will finish 2025 in line with budget
 - Group sales incentive program:
 - Commitments for \$175K have been made with more expected
 - Revised forecast shows the use of \$900K of the \$1.2M budgeted
- **Organization Chart**
 - Announced Brittany Alger is the new Senior Sales Manager
 - Josue Ayala will be in a new role as the Community Relations and Logistics Specialist, with a new Executive Assistant job listing posting later in the month
 - Two other positions have opened (Business Development Director and Destination Development Director)
- **2025 Agency Partner**
 - Miles Partnership
 - MMGY Global
 - Brand Federation
- **Sports Update**
 - Performed site visits for Phenom Hoops, Triple Crown, and ADIDAS Basketball
 - Attended Conferences and Tradeshows to solicit tournaments for the Historic Triangle
 - CONNECT Marketplace – Milwaukee, WI
 - TEAMS – Anaheim, CA
 - S.P.O.R.T.S – Wichita, KS
 - NSA/BSA Conference – Reno, NV
 - AVCA – Louisville, KY
- **Ripe**
 - Allows visitors to book a room on the visitwilliamsburg.com website
 - Rates are updated live
 - Ripe is also able to create custom pages for specific events and festivals
- **Statewide & Local Performance Trends – Dan Roberts, VTC**
 - 2023 Economic Impact Results in the Historic Triangle
 - Visitor spending in the Historic Triangle has grown beyond 2019 levels by 9%
 - Lodging, Food & Beverage, and Recreation captures the largest share of visitor spending

- **Hotel Performance Overview**
 - Virginia grew faster than the rest of the US in 2024
 - Williamsburg saw a tough first half of the year but performance improved markedly throughout 2024
 - Performance is not equal across segments – there are major differences in trajectory between price points and service classes

VIII. **Old Business**

- None

IX. **New Business**

- None

X. **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned
- Next Meeting on March 18, 2025, at American Revolution Museum Yorktown