

WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg Police Department
19 May 2026
Meeting Minutes

The Williamsburg Tourism Council (“WTC”) was convened at 1:01 p.m. on May 19, 2026, at the Williamsburg Police Department, where a quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors, Chair
Ron Kirkland, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association
Carly Fiorina, Colonial Williamsburg
Mayor Doug Pons, City of Williamsburg, Treasurer
Kevin Lembke, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA
Michael Claar, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association (“WARA”)
Denise Kellogg, Jamestown Rediscovery Historic Jamestowne
Sheila Noll, York County Board of Supervisors
Adria Vanhoozier, Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce

Staff Members Present

Edward Harris, CEO
Jackie Lavan, Executive Assistant
David Turner, CFO
Elisa Hernandez Campana, Destination Development Director
Brittany Alger, Sales Director

I. Call to Order

Chair Ruth Larson called the meeting to order.

II. Chair Report

Ms. Larson welcomed Carly Fiorina to the Williamsburg Tourism Council and noted that Mayor Pons will not be seeking reelection this winter. She thanked Mayor Pons for his service to the destination and expressed her appreciation for his invaluable contributions.

a. Action Items

Motion

Annual Meeting

Mr. Kirkland moved to defer the 2026 Annual Meeting to the November Board meeting. Ms. Kellogg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

Motion

Bylaws Amendment

Mr. Kirkland moved to amend the Bylaws to designate November as the month of the Annual Meeting. Ms. Kellogg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

b. Vice Chair

Ms. Larson canvassed the Board for nominations for Vice Chair for the remainder of the term and received one response.

Motion

Ms. Larson nominated Mr. Kirkland to serve as Vice Chair for the remainder of the term and moved to approve the nomination. Ms. Noll seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by the voting members, with Mr. Kirkland abstaining.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IV. Roundtable Discussion

Ms. Larson introduced the roundtable discussion.

Kevin Lembke:

Mr. Lembke reported a strong spring break at Busch Gardens, the reopening of the renovated Verbolten roller coaster, and the opening of Water Country USA. He also noted that a major summer announcement is forthcoming.

Adria Vanhoozier:

Ms. Vanhoozier noted that this would be her final WTC Board meeting and that Kristin Creasy would succeed her as Chair of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce. She thanked Visit Williamsburg and the WTC for the opportunity to serve.

Ron Kirkland:

Mr. Kirkland noted that room rates have remained flat but expressed optimism for the summer, citing recent destination investments, the TODAY Show, Williamsburg 250, and the opening of the Greater Williamsburg Sports and Events Center.

Sheila Noll:

Ms. Noll highlighted the success of York County's citizen government program, noting strong participation and its value in promoting transparency, civic engagement, and greater understanding of local government.

Ruth Larson:

Ms. Larson provided updates on James City County's budget, Revolutionary Rhythms, the upcoming Greater Williamsburg Sports and Events Center ribbon cutting, and the reopening of Two Rivers Country Club following renovations.

Mayor Doug Pons:

Mayor Pons provided updates on the City of Williamsburg's budget process, welcomed the Board to the new Police Station, and expressed optimism for the summer. He also noted that Michelle DeWitt is serving as Interim City Manager.

Michael Claar:

Mr. Claar reported that WARA membership has grown to 130 members and community gift certificate sales are up year over year. He noted continued local support and favorable weather, while staffing remains a challenge for restaurants seeking to operate seven days a week.

Carly Fiorina:

Ms. Fiorina introduced Dana Tomin, Community Engagement and Real Estate Vice President, who may attend future Board meetings on her behalf. She highlighted Colonial Williamsburg's upcoming July 4 programming and national PBS broadcast, which is expected to draw significant visitation.

Ms. Fiorina also shared that Colonial Williamsburg has begun a strategic planning process and emphasized opportunities to leverage its assets in collaboration with Visit Williamsburg and community partners to support future growth.

Denise Kellogg:

Ms. Kellogg highlighted upcoming summer programming, including the six-part *Unfolding Rebellion* series, and ongoing capital improvements to address flooding and infrastructure needs at Jamestowne. She noted that visitation has remained relatively flat, while fundraising is on track for a record-breaking year.

V. Minutes

Ms. Larson opened the floor to review the meeting minutes from March 10, 2026, included in the meeting packet. With no comments, she called for a motion to approve.

Motion

Mr. Kirkland moved to approve the minutes, and Ms. Noll seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

VI. Treasurer's Report

Financials

Mayor Pons noted that the monthly financials were provided to the Board and had been reviewed by the Finance Committee. He reported that the financials were in order.

FY 2027 Budget Presentation

Mr. Turner presented the proposed FY 2027 budget, highlighting key revenue and expenditure assumptions, continued investment in destination marketing and sales initiatives, and opportunities to increase operational efficiencies. He noted that the proposed budget is balanced and supports continued growth in leisure, group, and sports tourism.

The Board discussed marketing and sales investments, future tourism development, and opportunities to generate additional weekday visitation.

Detailed budget information is included in the meeting packet.

Motion

Mayor Pons recommended approval of the FY 2027 budget as presented. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

VII. CEO Report

Mr. Harris reported positive year-to-date tourism and lodging performance and encouraging booking trends heading into the summer. He highlighted ongoing marketing and public relations efforts supporting the 250th commemoration, including the "America's Journey Begins" campaign and the successful TODAY Show broadcast showcasing the Historic Triangle.

Mr. Harris reported that the strategic plan remains on schedule for completion prior to the new fiscal year and will be presented to the Board for review and finalization.

Mr. Harris also recapped the recent Tourism Summit, which focused on tourism trends, the 250th commemoration, and the Greater Williamsburg Sports and Events Center.

VIII. Events Update

Ms. Hernandez Campana provided an update on Visit Williamsburg's events initiatives, highlighting the Events Committee, the successful Great American Birthday Quilt reveal, and other activities supporting the 250th commemoration.

She reviewed upcoming events, including the opening of the Greater Williamsburg Sports and Events Center, the Pancake Festival, and Victory Weekend, as well as longer-term event development and the five-year “March to Victory” leading to the 250th anniversary of the victory at Yorktown in 2031.

IX. Sales Update

Brittany Alger, Sales Director, provided an update on group sales activity and recent booking successes, highlighting conferences, group tours, and familiarization tours that have generated new business opportunities.

Ms. Alger also discussed efforts to strengthen industry and community partnerships, pursue larger group business, and expand into new markets, with an emphasis on increasing weekday and shoulder-season visitation.

X. New Business

None.

XI. Old Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.