

ATTACHMENT A

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

September 15, 2020
Williamsburg Tourism Council

WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING

Williamsburg, Virginia

September 15, 2020

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on September 15, 2020, by zoom/conference call. A quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

CHAIR Jeffrey D. Wassmer, York County Board of Supervisors

TREASURER Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors

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

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

Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

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

Mikey Jasiczek, Marketing Manager

Julie O'Neil, Marketing Director

Joey Pierce, Content Manager

Jill Pongonis, Familiarization Tour Coordinator

Dave Potter, Industry Relations Manager

Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director

David Turner, Finance Director

I. Call to Order

- Jeff Wassmer called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- Wassmer 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."
- Cliff Fleet was not in attendance
- Mickey Chohany was represented by Michael Claar
- James Horn was represented by Denise Kellogg

II. Public Comment

- Ron Kirkland from the Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association introduced himself and was recognized to speak
 - Kirkland noted that with the area moving into Phase 3 and Busch Gardens having recently hosted successful events, it may be time for the Tourism Council and area attractions to approach the Governor about allowing Busch Gardens to increase capacity beyond one thousand people

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

- McClenny emphasized that statewide economic revival won't occur without recovery of the tourism industry
- VTC is in Phase 3 of their recovery plan with the Wonder Love campaign
 - \$866K has been awarded to localities to take part in the campaign
- The American Evolution App has been refaced and will roll out as the Virginia is for Lovers App in October
- Three videos will be produced for the Fall Wonder Love campaign; one of those videos will feature the region
 - Videos are primarily used in social media channels
- 2019 economic impact data from U.S. Travel Association will soon be released by Governor Northam
- Small Business Development and Supplier Diversity Agency will relaunch the \$70 Million Rebuild Virginia Grant Program
- Wassmer asked board members to share updates from their attractions
 - Kevin Lembke shared that Busch Gardens opened on a limited basis in August and will soon announce October events; responses from guests has been positive
 - Lembke noted they are working with other in-state partners to request movement on the restriction of one thousand visitors
 - Christy Coleman reported strong visitation at Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation over Labor Day weekend; visitor numbers were 90 percent from the same weekend in 2019
 - Wassmer noted that Mickey Chohany had shared positive observations about Labor Day Weekend
 - Neal Chalkley shared hotels were seeing an Average Daily Rate (ADR) down by double-digits; however, Labor Day was a bright spot with a large amount of walk-in guests
 - Denise Kellogg also noted that Labor Day numbers were positive for Historic Jamestowne, but reminded everyone that Hurricane Dorian was approaching over the same weekend in 2019

IV. Minutes

- Wassmer requested a motion to approve the July 21, 2020 meeting minutes
- Doug Pons motioned
- Neal Chalkley provided a second
- All in favor; minutes were approved

V. Treasurer's Report

- Larson shared financial statements through July 31, 2020
- July starts the 2021 fiscal year; there are no year-to-date (YTD) comparisons to the budget
- The Tourism Council is currently undergoing an audit; when the audit is complete, year-end financials will be shared
- The monthly finance meeting takes place on the Thursday preceding the Tourism Council meeting (typically the second Thursday of the month); all are invited to attend
- Revenue/expenses
 - July total revenue \$766K; over budget by \$506K
 - July sales tax receipts totaled \$736K; \$506K over budget
 - Transient tax receipts totaled \$25K; \$2K under budget
 - Expenses are \$1.3M under budget
 - Destination marketing expenses are \$1.2M under budget due to changes in media purchases and timing of invoices
 - Sales activities are \$48K under budget due to conference cancellations
 - Administration staff costs were \$37K under budget due to delays of staff hires and program evaluations; other expenses were \$9K under budget due to lower office expenses and less business travel
- Cash on Hand
 - Totals \$12.3M
 - \$10.3M for operations; \$6.5M over budget
 - \$2M for product development; on budget
- Transient tax revenue
 - Information shows the month the activity took place; not when it was received
 - May 2020 totaled \$22,765
 - A 77.8 percent decrease from May 2019
 - Three-month moving average shows a 67.2 percent decrease versus the same timeframe in 2019
- Sales tax revenue
 - May 2020 totaled \$735,768
 - A 24.6 percent decrease from May 2019 (\$975K)
 - Three-month moving average shows a 26 percent decrease versus the same timeframe in 2019
- Cimino presented Smith Travel Research (STR) slide
 - Occupancy in July 2020 was 33 percent versus 70 percent in July 2019
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR) in July 2020 was \$89.77 versus \$132.39 in July 2019
 - YTD Occupancy in July 2020 was 24 percent versus 51 percent in July 2019
 - Occupancy in April was 10.5 percent, May was 14.6 percent, June was 22.7 percent, and July is 33

VI. Executive Director Report

- Staffing Updates
 - Jodie Lumley and Vivian Bunting are no longer with the organization; their last day was August 28
 - Cimino thanked both for their years of service
 - Joey Pierce has been hired to fill the Content Manager role
- Marketing/communication activities
 - Cooperative marketing program
 - Six participants to date
 - 15 percent of the \$500,000 budget has been utilized
 - Shop and dine local campaign ran for three weeks
 - Achieved 1.3M+ impressions
 - Reached the high-end of the industry benchmark with a .10 percent engagement rate
 - Summer 2020 Campaign
 - 154M+ Impressions as of September 6
 - .26 percent click through rate; industry benchmark is .04-.10 percent
 - Video completion rate is 94.2 percent; industry benchmark is 85 percent
 - Adara ads have resulted in 1,377 hotel bookings since June 10
 - August bookings were up 56 percent YOY
 - Washington DC, Norfolk, Philadelphia, and Baltimore are the top performing markets
 - 41 percent of bookings were families; 33 percent were couples
 - 82 percent of website visitors were first time visitors
 - Overall YOY site sessions since June 10 are down 4 percent; August 23 – September 6 site sessions are up 70 percent
 - Seven marketing emails have been distributed
 - 24 percent increase in open rate compared to 2019
 - 77 percent increase in click rate compared to 2019
 - Partnerships
 - Three content producers and contributors from GOLF.com will experience the area in early October and will launch content to consumers in early February
 - National Geographic will produce a 48-hour passport experience and a one-day takeover of their Instagram account; content production will begin in October and will be activated in early February
 - Influencers
 - Six social media influencers brought exposure to 2.6M followers
 - Media Highlights
 - YOY the region had ten fewer placements but several hundred million more impressions

- SMARInsights Ad Awareness Study Overview – David Seiferth, President
 - Cimino introduced Seiferth, providing a brief overview of SMARInsights
 - Indianapolis-based research partner
 - Focus is tourism destinations
 - 20 state tourism offices
 - 38 convention and visitors bureaus/destination marketing organizations
 - 23 attractions
 - COVID-19 Context
 - Customers are confused
 - 34 percent strongly agree “they need to get away now more than ever”
 - 33 percent strongly agree “the thought of traveling scares me right now”
 - Consumer Perception Change
 - Customers likelihood to travel has doubled since mid-April from 33 percent to 66 percent
 - COVID-19 Impact on Leisure Travel
 - 36 percent of travelers have not taken a trip since Spring 2020 and don’t plan to in 2020
 - June/July Campaign: Cost Per Household
 - 15M+ households targeted
 - 31 percent awareness
 - Media spend \$1.9M
 - Cost per aware household is \$0.41; industry benchmark is \$0.67
 - 2019 campaign cost per household was \$1.08
 - Awareness Change
 - Awareness level achieved in June/July was similar to last year’s campaign with \$3M less spend
 - Ad Impact
 - Familiarity, rating, and intent all increased
 - Intent to visit more than doubled after viewing the ads
 - More impact and larger increases in expansion markets
- Fall 2020
 - Fall 2020 Campaign
 - Aim is at families (Gen-X/millennials), couples (Gen-X/millennials), and active mature
 - Media focus will continue to be on proven markets and drivable markets
 - Media channel included influencers, linear TV, digital, social, and pay-per-click
 - Educational Campaign
 - Targeting parents in drive markets through promotion of virtual experiences and family field trips
 - Seeking key partnerships with media partners such as Scholastic
- Sales Update
 - Sales Activities
 - Attended virtual conferences
 - Added and renewed memberships
 - Secured sponsorship for Small Market Meetings Conference
 - Sales leads available on visitwilliamsburg.com

VII. Chair Report

- Wassmer noted that Senator Norment continues to support the Tourism Council and has an expectation that it will take the industry around two years to return to normal
- Wassmer shared appreciation to members of the Council and staff for the continued work and support

VIII. Old Business

- None

IX. New Business

- None

X. Closed Session

- Wassmer requested a motion to go into closed session
- Larson motioned
 - “I move that we convene in closed session pursuant to Va.Code Section 2.2-3711A.8 for consultation with retained legal counsel for advice regarding legal compliance matters.”
- Pons provided a second
- All in favor; meeting went into closed session

XI. Return from Closed Session

- Wassmer requested a motion to reconvene in open session
- Larson motioned
 - “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 provided a second
- All in favor; meeting reconvened in open session

XII. Chair Statement

- The Williamsburg Tourism Council officially acknowledges its status as a public body and will continue to operate as one
- The staff has been directed to perform the necessary tasks to ensure compliance with the actions of a public body
 - Establish a separate Employee Identification Number
 - Clarify financial auditing and oversight relationship with state government
 - Suspend current bylaws; revise and adopt new bylaws
 - Ensure that current memorandums of understanding with external organizations are in compliance of that of a public body

XIII. Adjournment

- The next meeting will take place on November 17, 2020