

ATTACHMENT A
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
September 17, 2024
Meeting Minutes

The Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) meeting was convened at 1 p.m. on September 17, 2024. The meeting was held at the Williamsburg Community Building — a quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

VICE CHAIR Cliff Fleet III, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg

Neal Chalkley, 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

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

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**

- Cliff Fleet called the meeting to order at 12 p.m.

II. **Public Comment**

- No public comment

III. **Roundtable Discussion**

- Fleet introduced the roundtable discussion
 - Denise Kellogg shared that visitation has been declining since March
 - Kevin Lembke shared that the summer performance was steady; preparing for Howl-O-Scream
 - Sheila Noll shared upcoming events in Yorktown including Yorktober and Yorktown Folk Festival

- Michael Claar shared that Alewerks had a decline in traffic with average spend significantly lower
 - The Williamsburg Restaurant Association is seeing a 15% decline in traffic
- Fleet shared that visitation is consistent and steady but could be better
- Doug Pons shared upcoming events like BurgQuest
 - The city is looking at RFPs for remodeling the library
- Christy Coleman shared that visitation has softened
 - Retail operations are down 17%, with visitation down at 8%
- Neal Chalkley shared that June and July occupancy has been down, but RevPAR had spikes in the last few weeks
- Dr. Porter Brannon shared that the Greater Williamsburg Chamber is hosting a Commonwealth Conversation with Admiral
 - Working with Busch Gardens to host “Jingle Fest” on November 21
 - In discussions with Visit Williamsburg about the pancake industry and organizing a program to help co-promote it

IV. **Chair Report**

- Cliff presented an amendment to the by laws to extend the officer's consecutive terms from 2 to 3 years. The vote will take place during the annual meeting in November

V. **Minutes**

- Fleet requested a motion to approve the July 09, 2024 meeting minutes
- Pons motioned
- Chalkley provided a second
- Minutes unanimously approved

VI. **Treasurer’s Report**

- Pons shared financial statements through July 2024
 - July 2024 Revenue was \$1.5M, over budget by \$13K
 - Sales tax receipts totaled \$1.3M, over budget by \$51K
 - Transient tax receipts totaled \$129K, under budget by \$41K
 - Maintenance of Effort Funds was \$39K, in line with budget
 - Other revenue totaled \$11K, over budget by \$4K
 - July 2024 expenses were \$875K under budget by \$241K
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$678K, under budget by \$179K
 - Sales and marketing activities were \$31K, under budget by \$23K
 - Total Administrative expenses were \$21K, under budget by \$28K
- Cash on Hand
 - WTC has \$5.9M in the bank for operations
 - Cash on Hand for Operations as of July 31 was over budget by \$861K, with accounts payable liabilities of \$2.5M, leaving free Cash on Hand for Operations at \$3M
- Sales Tax Revenue
 - June sales tax was \$1.4M
 - The 3-month moving average increased by 90K or 5.1 % year over year
 - YTD sales tax receipts decreased \$358K vs. the same period in 2023
- Transient Tax Revenue

- June Transient Tax was \$1.2M
 - The 3-month moving average increased by \$61K or 2.5% vs the same period in 2023
 - Year-to-date tax receipts increased \$97K versus the same period in 2023

VII. CEO report

- **Macro Travel Landscape – 2024**
 - Travel Industry normalizing after record spikes coming out of COVID
 - Leisure markets have softened, business travel showing signs of growth
 - U.S. consumer sentiment fell to an 8-month low
 - Credit card debt is at record-high levels
 - Some travelers are pulling back on spending, while more affluent travelers are opting for international trips
 - The excellent news is that occupancy is improving
- **YTD Compared to 2023**
 - YTD Occupancy
 - 2024: 50.44% vs 2023: 52.59% (-4.1%)
 - YTD ADR: 2024: 136.02 vs 2023: \$141.94 (-4.2%)
 - YTD RevPAR: 2024: \$70.31 vs 2023: 76.61 (-8.2%)
- **Top 10 Origin Markets**
 - Washington, D.C., Richmond-Petersburg, Raleigh-Durham in top 3
- **Marketing**
 - **Value Messaging Integration**
 - Paid Social Advertising
 - Priceline.com
 - Email Marketing
 - Organic Social
 - WilliamsBLOG/Influence Marketing
 - Paid Search (SEM)
 - Podcast Scripts
 - CTV video
 - **Influencer Recap**
 - 1.4M+ Impressions
 - 87.4K+ Engagements
 - 18 Influencers
 - 200+ Social Posts
 - **FOX 5: Washington D.C.**
 - Five segments shot in market
 - Little Confectionary & Yorktown
 - Historic Jamestowne
 - Shields Tavern
 - Merchant Square
 - Freedom Park & Go Ape
 - **Marketing: Upcoming Events**
 - Ruth E. Carter Exhibit
 - Howl-O-Scream
 - BurgQuest
 - Yorktown Folk Festival
 - Yorktober

- Williamsburg Fall Festival
 - Virginia Cat Festival
 - **Marketing: Agency of Record Presentations**
 - MMGY Global
 - Connelly Partners
 - Miles Partnership
 - Madden Media
 - Padilla
- **Public Relations**
 - July 1 – August 31, 2024
 - 844.6M Global Impressions
 - **Public Relations: Fall Media Event**
 - October 1, 2024, - Philadelphia, PA
 - Secured 20 RSVP's from media
 - Partners attending
 - Busch Gardens
 - Colonial Williamsburg Resorts
 - Jamestown Yorktown Foundation
 - Muscarelle Museum of Art
 - Silver Hand Meadery
 - Williamsburg Symphony
 - Williamsburg Winery
 - **Public Relations: Agency Presentations**
 - Fahlgren Mortine
 - Lou Hammond Group
 - Percepture
 - Padilla
 - MMGY Global
 - Finn Partners
- **Sales**
 - **Sales Recent Tradeshow**
 - Student & Youth Travel Association: August 9-13
 - Connect Sports: August 27-29
 - Virginia Motorcoach Association: August 27-30
 - New England Bus Association: September 8-10
 - **Sales: Site Visits**
 - Meritz Site Visit: August 23-24
 - American Tour Guide Association Site Visit: August 24-27
 - Jane's Journey Site Visit: August 25-27
 - Uniglobe Red Carpet Travel Site Visit: August 28-29
 - Virginia Motorcoach Association: August 27
 - **Sales: Definite Bookings**
 - **7K+ room nights**
 - **Sales: New Incentive Plan**
 - Allocation of funds to develop a new incentive plan to secure groups
 - Meetings and Conventions
 - Sports Groups
 - **Meetings & Sports Marketing**
 - AENC E-Blast
 - Delivered to 905 meeting planners
 - 44% open rate

- Connect Sports E-blast
 - Delivered to sports Event Planners
 - **Sports**
 - **Sports: Tradeshows**
 - Connect Sports
 - Teams 2024
 - S.P.O.R.T.S. – The Relationship Conference
 - **Sports: Branding Agency Presentations**
 - JMI Sports
 - White 64
 - **Sports: Building the Team**
 - Visit Williamsburg will be adding another new position to the team to strengthen sports group sales efforts
 - Will be posted in 4th quarter
 - **Sports: Advisory Committee**
 - Meeting on October 9
 - **What's Next?**
 - Capital Region Travel Exchange: September 17-18
 - Agency Partners Selection: By end of September
 - Brand USA CEO International Summit (London): October 21-24
 - W&M Corporate Field Consulting Project: October 29 kickoff
 - VA-1 Governor's Tourism Summit: November 13-15
 - Travelability Summit: November 13-15
 - Holiday 2024 Marketing Push: November

VIII. **Old Business**

- None

IX. **New Business**

- None

X. **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned
- Next Meeting on November 19, 2024