

ATTACHMENT A
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
March 21, 2023
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1 p.m. on March 21, 2023. The meeting was held at DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Presidents Ballroom. A quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

CHAIR Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors
TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg

Neal Chalkley, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association
Mickey Chohany, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association
Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA
Rita McClenny, President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Staff Members Present:

Victoria Cimino, CEO
Josue Ayala, Executive Assistant
Jennifer Case, Chief Marketing Officer
Rob Larson, Sports/Group Sale Manager
Jennifer McConnell, Sales and Service Coordinator
Lori Ottarson, Accountant
Daniela Owen, Familiarization Tour Coordinator
Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director
David Turner, Finance Director

I. Call to Order

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

II. Public Comment

- No public comments were presented

III. **U.S. Travel Association (USTA) Policy Update – Tori Emerson Barnes**

- Victoria Cimino introduced Tori Emerson Barnes, U.S. Travel Association, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs and Policy, noting that Barnes is the leading voice for all segments of U.S. travel and tourism industry
 - Barnes manages a portfolio of domestic businesses and international travel issues, focusing on transportation and infrastructure, tax policy, Brand USA, National parks, and public lands
- Discussed USTA Strategic Priorities
 - Establishing travel as essential and responsible
 - Advancing seamless and secure travel
 - Shaping solutions to operational challenges
 - Build strong business by providing engagement, team, and culture
- Highlighted that travel is both essential and responsible
 - Economic powerhouse
 - Top job creator
 - Number one service export
 - Sustainability leader
- Provided overview of areas of focus
 - End visa delays
 - Eliminate COVID-era policies
 - Fund Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism
 - Expand H2B visa program
 - Address CBP, TSA, ATC staffing shortages
 - Upgrade air travel experience
- Save the Date
 - Global Meetings Industry Day (March 30, 2023)
 - Destination Capitol Hill (April 18-19, 2023)
 - National Travel and Tourism Week (May 7-13, 2023)
- Q&A
 - Larson asked if the Biden Administration is eager to expedite processing visas; Barnes explained that the State Department and Secretary Raimondo (Department of Commerce) is very aware of USTA's concern, but would like to see the White House and State Department put a stronger emphasis on the issue and its economic consequences
 - Larson asked when federal employees might return to the office; Barnes responded that this might occur once COVID-19 emergency orders are lifted in May

IV. **Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) – Rita McClenny, President and CEO**

- McClenny expressed gratitude for support during the legislative session
- McClenny announced that VTC is about three percent off of 2019 numbers; consumer response to travel is still strong
- Launched advertising on February 6; Boston and Chicago provided strong results
- United luxury campaign is performing well

V. Roundtable Discussion

- Larson introduced the roundtable discussion
 - Christy Coleman announced Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation had second strongest February since 2007 (off by only 800 visitors); discussed rebranding retail operations; school groups have rebounded faster than expected; provided overview of Reign and Rebellion exhibition; working to develop program with Ruth Carter, costume designer for film and television
 - Kevin Lembke shared that Busch Gardens will be open daily beginning March 24 for a four-week period of time; will soon make an announcement about a new attraction; demand is strong and numbers are up
 - Doug Pons announced that the city council approved a special events contract
 - Larson shared that James City County is in the midst of budget season; discussed the National Park Service parkway pass
 - Neal Chalkley announced that February's occupancy year-to-date (YTD) increased 29.9% over 2022 and 5.5% ahead of 2019
 - Mickey Chohany stated the Williamsburg Restaurant Association held its annual meeting; there is an insurgence of new members from the industry; Restaurant Week was a strong success; noted observation that the area has become a year-round destination; discussed slight uptick in labor

VI. Minutes

- Larson requested a motion to approve the January 17, 2023 meeting minutes
- Pons motioned
- Coleman provided a second
- Minutes were unanimously approved

VII. Chair Report

- Larson announced the May meeting will include 2024 budget planning and closing out the Fiscal Year
- Sign-up sheet passed around to plan interviews with Coraggio Group for strategic planning
- Cimino will be holding a staff retreat on April 27-28 with Coraggio Group

VIII. Treasurer's Report

- Pons shared financial statements through January 31, 2023
 - Total January 2023 revenue was \$1.3M - under budget by \$57K
 - Sales tax receipts totaled \$1.2M, under budget by \$88K
 - Transient tax receipts totaled \$132K, over budget by \$27
 - Other receipts totaled \$7K, over budget by \$4K
 - Expenses were \$1.1M - over budget by \$66K for January
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$892K, over budget by \$136K
 - Other sales and marketing expenses were \$52K, under budget by \$36K
 - Labor and benefits expenses were \$90K, under budget by \$45K
 - Administrative expenses were \$40K, under budget by \$11K

- 2023 Fiscal YTD revenues were \$10M, over budget by \$250K
 - YTD sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$8.6M, under budget by \$31K
 - YTD transient tax receipts totaled \$1M, under budget by \$16K
 - YTD Maintenance of Effort (MOE) totaled \$77K, over budget by \$14K
 - YTD ARPA Grant receipts totaled \$249K, over budget by \$249K
 - Other revenue was \$52K, over budget by \$34K
- 2023 Fiscal YTD expenses were \$12.7M, over budget by \$4.4M
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$6.4M, under budget by \$177K
 - Other sales and marketing expenses totaled \$314K, under budget by \$22K
 - Historic Triangle Recreational Facilities Authority (HTRFA) Product Development costs were \$5.2M, over budget by \$5.2M
 - Labor and benefit costs were \$555K, under budget by \$346K
 - Administrative expenses were \$220K, under budget by \$48K
- Cash on Hand
 - The Tourism Council has \$8.9M in the bank for operations
- Sales tax revenue
 - December increased \$66K or 4.6% year-over-year
 - \$1.52M in 2022 versus \$1.45M in 2021
 - The 3-month moving average increased 2.1% versus the same period in 2021
 - Year-to-Date sales tax receipts are up 7.5% versus the same period in 2021
- Transient tax revenue
 - December decreased \$17K or 14.7% year-over-year
 - \$98K in 2022 versus \$115K in 2021
 - The 3-month moving average decreased 2.3% versus the same period in 2021
 - Year-to-Date tax receipts are up 10.1% versus the same period in 2021

IX. CEO Report

- Key Performance Indicators
 - STR Report data
 - January 2023
 - Occupancy totaled 29.3%, exceeding 2019 occupancy (23.9%)
 - February 2023
 - Occupancy totaled 37.3% exceeding 2020 (32.7%) and 2019 (27.6%)
 - February's Average Daily Rate (ADR) (\$124.37) increased 12% when compared to 2019 (\$110.72)
 - January's RevPAR (\$35.35) increased by 37.3% when compared to 2019 (\$25.75)
 - January's total revenue reached \$7.2M when compared to:
 - January 2019 (\$5.4M)
 - January 2020 (\$5.9M)
 - February's total revenue was \$8.5M when compared to:
 - \$2.7M increase over 2019
 - \$1.1M increase over 2022
 - Rooms sold:
 - In January, 59,500 rooms were sold; 9,400 rooms more than January 2019
 - In February, 68,300 rooms were sold; 16,100 more than February 2019 and 6,300 more than February 2020

- Top Origin Markets
 - Richmond continues to deliver largest visitor volume
 - Washington D.C. continues to deliver the largest visitor spend
 - New York is moving up the list of origin markets and continues to show strong progression in all marketing metrics
- Visitor-to-Resident Ratio
 - Busch Gardens and Merchant's Square ratio was two to one in March
 - Jamestown and Yorktown's ratio was one to one
 - Ratio based on cell phone data with 194K sample size
- Visitor Spend by Commodity
 - Source: Affinity, which measures on-site credit card swipes (99K sample size)
 - Visitors are spending their dollars on
 - Attractions
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Retail
 - Accommodations
 - Food
- Household Income – Half of the destination's visitors have a \$100K+ income; in-line with Visit Williamsburg's target audience
- Marketing
 - Market Evolution: Greater visibility in broadcast, integrating digitally in new test market (Atlanta)
 - Endemic Lean In: Leaning in on travel endemics like TripAdvisor and Priceline but increasing lower-funnel booking support by bringing in new travel endemic partners
 - KPI Refinement: Directing more site traffic to visitwilliamsburg.com versus partner sites
 - Cookieless Expansion: Working with digital partners (Adara and Sojern) to ensure continued personalization in targeted insights
 - Using new identifiers to include email and IP address or device ID's
 - Seasonal Visitation Trends
 - 56% of visitation takes place during spring and summer, closely aligning with Visit Williamsburg's flighting strategy
 - Flighting Strategy
 - 55% of the year's marketing takes place January – April, to ensure a strong spring break and summer season
 - Market Strategy
 - Launched in 23 markets in January
 - New this year: Atlanta (Digital only)
 - Audience
 - Gen-X and Millennial families and couples; Active Mature couples
 - Continuing to work with partners to determine new "identifiers" as cookies are phased out
 - January/February Digital Advertising Performance
 - Delivered close to 100M impressions
 - Website sessions increased by 106%
 - Hotel bookings three times the amount of 2022's bookings

- January/February Out of Home (OOH)
 - Digital retargeting of consumers exposed to units has driven more than 2.5M additional ad impressions
- January/February Experiential Activation
 - Launched in Boston, New York City, and Washington, D.C.
 - More than 1,500 interactions with units, averaging 50 per day
 - Site traffic increased 42% YOY
- January/February Podcasts
 - Smartless reached more than 1.5M listeners per episode
 - Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend averaged over 7M downloads per month
 - Pandora delivered 14M downloads per month
 - An cost-efficient tactic to achieve national exposure
- January/February Website Performance
 - Site sessions increased 61% year-over-year
 - New users increased six percent
 - New York is the #1 origin market with Atlanta at #4 and Boston at #5
 - 35% of site traffic is organic, demonstrating upper funnel tactics (television and OOH) are driving traffic
- January/February *The Williams*BLOG
 - Top content was family, couples, attractions and history
 - 16% increase year-over-year with 600K sessions
- January/February Organic Social Media Performance
 - Short form video continues to dominate
 - February 8 video was the top-performing social post with 157K impressions, 8.1K engagements, and 5.3K shares/saves
- January/February Influencer Marketing
 - Published content from three influencers
 - Seven influencers were engaged to preview experiential activations in Boston, Washington D.C., and New York
- January/February Public Relations
 - 580M impressions; 22 placements
 - On April 19, Visit Williamsburg will host a golf-themed media event in New York
- Sales (January/February)
 - Participated in three trade shows
 - Student and Youth Travel Association (SYTA) Summit (January 15-20)
 - Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) (January 24-26)
 - American Bus Association (ABA) (February 3-8)
 - Served as a lead sponsor, conducted 35 appointments
 - Booth participants included Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation and Great Wolf Lodge
- January/February New Business Leads
 - Issued 19 leads (represents 7,042 potential room nights)
 - Visit Williamsburg facilitated a site visit for Collette Tours
 - Hosted 20 tour operators at a client dinner during ABA
- January/February Definite Bookings
 - Confirmed 15 pieces of new business
 - Equates to 1,602 definite room nights

- Seven upcoming tradeshows and events
 - African American Travel Conference (April 3-5)
 - Connect Spring Market Place (April 11-13)
 - Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Domestic Showcase (April 17-20)
 - Smart Meetings National (MICE/Associate/Corporate) (April 23-25)
 - Virginia Society of Association Executives (Association) (May 7-9)
 - Small Market Meetings Summit (MICE/Corporate/S.M.E.R.F.) (May 10-12)
 - U. S. Travel Association's IPW (May 20-24)
- Coraggio Group
 - Visit Williamsburg began work with Coraggio Group for vision/mission/values development, Clifton Strengths assessment, and strategic planning
 - Cimino noted that she'd like to engage the board via interviews focused on challenges and opportunities

X. Old Business

- None

XI. New Business

- None

XII. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on May 16, 2023