

**ATTACHMENT A**  
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
July 19, 2022  
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on July 19, 2022. The meeting was held at the Embassy Suites Williamsburg. A quorum was present.

**Tourism Council Members Present:**

CHAIR	Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors
VICE CHAIR	Cliff Fleet, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
TREASURER	Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg
	Neal Chalkley, Williamsburg Hotel and Motel Association
	Mickey Chohany, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association
	Chad Green, Chair, York County Board of Supervisors
	James Horn, President and Chief Officer, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation
	Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA
	Rita McClenny, President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation
	Mike Rock, Chair, Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce

**Staff Members Present:**

Victoria Cimino, CEO  
Miranda Jarrell, Communications Director  
Tamara Paris, Partnerships & Content Director  
Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director  
David Turner, Finance Director  
Rob Larson, Sports/Group Sales Manager  
Rachel Burch, Sales and Service Manager

**I. Call to Order**

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
  - Noted the meeting serves as the organization's planning meeting

**II. Public Comment**

- No public comments were presented

### **III. Travel Market Insights Briefing – Scott Johnson, President and CEO**

- Victoria Cimino introduced Scott Johnson, noting that predeparture testing requirements for passengers traveling from a foreign country were lifted on June 12, 2022
  - A positive step forward re: international travel rebound
- Johnson provided a briefing
  - U.S. Pre-COVID Forecast: International travel to the U.S. was forecast to surpass 90.3 million visitors, a 14% increase from 2019 to 2024
  - High-level overview of international travel market research pre-and-post-COVID
    - Top 20 overseas tourist-generating countries to U.S. regional markets (January-April 2022) are trending at or above 50% of 2019 numbers
  - Virginia Forecast: Checkmark recovery, with pre-COVID numbers rebounding by 2024
  - U.S. Forecast: Overseas visitors expected to exceed 2019 record numbers by 2025
  - Mickey Chohany asked about international visitor spending; Johnson responded that international visitors spend three to four times the amount of a domestic visitor

### **IV. Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Briefing - Rita McClenny, President and CEO**

- Larson introduced Rita McClenny
  - International travel insights
    - Virginia is known for history, art, culture, and outdoor attractions; Williamsburg is uniquely positioned
    - Majority of overseas visitors traveling to Washington, D.C., overnight in northern Virginia
  - Williamsburg was recipient of two ARPA Sports Meeting Awards, totaling \$64K
    - \$400K still available for meetings; application information can be found on [VATC.org](http://VATC.org)
  - Job totals are currently 17K jobs below 2019 numbers
  - Advertising campaign launched in April (will run through November); accounted for 16K hotel room nights
  - Northern Virginia's occupancy has improved; business and weekday travel improving
  - Average Daily Rate (ADR) is dropping off as travelers cut back on spending

### **V. Roundtable Discussion**

- Larson introduced the roundtable discussion
  - Neal Chalkley stated that hotels are experiencing a drop in ADR and occupancy is tapering off; wage rate increases and inflation are impacting profit margin

- James Horn echoed Chalkley's comments; stated Historic Jamestowne is experiencing increased wages and cost of product, but the attraction has realized a significant increase in ticket sales, resulting in the highest ticketing revenue on record (higher than 2019)
- Chohany discussed recession challenges as it relates to the region's restaurants
  - Restaurants seeing pullback on extra luxuries; reminiscent of 2008/09
  - Looking at alternatives with partners to increase affordability
- Kevin Lembke stated that Busch Gardens is seeing decrease in longer haul visitors
  - Gas prices affecting outer market travel
  - Labor challenges remain
  - Overall volume looks good and pricing is still aggressive for summer
  - Howl-O-Scream planning to begin in next two weeks
- Cliff Fleet noted that Colonial Williamsburg's 2022 numbers are slightly behind 2019
  - More than 5K visitors attended Juneteenth events
  - July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend saw more than 20K visitors in the historic area
  - Labor increase has enabled some closed assets to reopen
- Larson noted the Business Leader Community Breakfast will feature Fleet and Governor Youngkin
- Mike Rock made note of upcoming Chamber events
  - ASPIRE Young Professionals guest speaker Tyler Adams of the Vacation Channel to speak at an event
  - Oktoberfest will take place on October 5
  - Personally involved in the Kiwanis Club, the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Shrimp Feast will take place on September 10, at Jamestown Settlement

## VI. Minutes

- Larson requested a motion to approve the May 17, 2022 meeting minutes
- Fleet motioned
- Chohany provided a second
- Minutes were unanimously approved

## VII. Chair Report

- Larson turned the meeting over to Lembke, Nominations Committee Chair
- Lembke stated:
  - The committee met on June 29; it was comprised of Lembke, Kirkland, and Chad Green
  - Received one nomination for each Executive Committee position
    - Chair: Ruth Larson
    - Vice-Chair: Cliff Fleet
    - Treasurer: Doug Pons

- The committee recommended moving forward with the slate of officers
- The term will begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2024
- Lembke requested a motion to approve the committee's recommendation
- Chohany motioned to approve
- Chalkley provided a second
- All in favor; slate of officers unanimously approved
- Larson provided a Bylaws Committee update
  - The committee met on June 29; it was comprised of Larson, Fleet, and Green
  - The committee proposed amendments outlined in Attachment B
    - The amendments address:
      - Housekeeping items, including the organization's name
      - The month the 'planning meeting' takes place (May vs. July)
      - Clearly defines the Executive Committee
  - In accordance with the Tourism Council's bylaws, these amendments are provided in advance of the meeting in which the revisions will be voted upon (September 20)

## VIII. Treasurer's Report

- Pons shared financial statements through May 31, 2022
  - Total May 2022 revenue was \$1.2M; over budget by \$264K
    - Sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$1.2M, over budget by \$244K
    - Transient tax receipts totaled \$83K, over budget by \$21K
    - Maintenance of Effort (MOE) revenue was \$0, in-line with budget
- May expenses were \$2.1M, over budget by \$874K
  - Destination Marketing expenses were \$1.9M, \$892K over budget for the month
    - Variance due to timing of invoices
  - Sales activities were \$20K, under budget by \$4K
  - Administrative costs were \$120K, under budget by \$14K
    - Staffing costs were \$86K, under budget by \$26K
    - Other administrative expenses were \$34K, over budget by \$12K
      - Variance due to general office expenses, staff travel costs, and staff recruitment costs
  - Fiscal Year to Date (FYTD) 2022 revenue was \$15.6M, over budget by \$2M
    - FYTD sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$12.6M, over budget by \$1.7M
    - FYTD transient tax receipts totaled \$1.4M, over budget by \$169K
    - FYTD MOE revenues were \$1.6M, in-line with budget
  - FYTD 2022 expenses were \$13.6M, under budget by \$489K
    - Destination Marketing expenses were \$12M, under budget by \$328K
    - Sales activities were \$272K, under budget by \$29K
    - Total administrative expenses were \$1.3M, under budget by \$132K
- Cash on Hand
  - The Tourism Council has \$12.8M in the bank; \$7.6M for operations and \$5.2M for product development

- Cash on Hand for operations is over budget by \$1.3M as of the end of May
  - Cash on Hand for product development is in-line with budget at \$5.2M
- Sales tax revenue
  - April increased \$113K or 10% year-over-year
    - \$1.2M in 2022 versus \$1.1M in 2021
    - The 3-month moving average increased 12.4% versus the same period in 2021
- Transient tax revenue
  - April increased \$30K or 25% year-over-year
    - \$148K in 2022 versus \$118K in 2021
    - The 3-month moving average increased 32.2% versus the same period in 2021

## IX. CEO Report

- Cimino announced recent staff updates
  - Introduced Rob Larson and Rachel Burch as new members of Visit Williamsburg's sales team
  - Noted that Jill Pongonis and Julie O'Neil had moved on to other opportunities and thanked them for their contributions
- Key Performance Indicators
  - STR Report data
    - May 2022 occupancy totaled 52.3%, up 6 points over 2021 and just 2 points below 2019
    - April 2022 occupancy totaled 59.2%, up 15 points over 2021 percentages and less than a point below 2019
    - June 2022 occupancy totaled 64%, up 4 points over 2021 and less than 2 points below 2019
    - YTD 2022 exceeds 2019 occupancy levels by 0.2%
    - Average daily rate of \$146.50 continues to outperform 2021 and 2019 (\$131.79 and \$126.76, respectively)
  - The destination is realizing an increase in out-of-state visitors (New York showing strong gains)
    - Bulk of visitors continue to originate from metro-Washington D.C.
- Marketing and Communications, Public Relations, and Sales
  - Extended television buy in all markets
    - Broadcast TV in newer markets
    - Cable TV in more established markets
  - Launched two new tactics: Sirius SM PGA Sponsorship and TikTok creator content
  - May/June Digital Advertising Performance
    - June hotel searches among advertising audience on pace to outperform May
    - June bookings among advertising audience are on pace to outperform May
    - Hotel booking conversion rates increased 11% from May to June
    - Flight booking conversion rates increased 9% from May to June

- June hotel revenue [directly attributed to advertising] has surpassed May (\$279K vs. \$277K)
  - Paid search volume increased 11% from May to June
- May/June Web Performance
  - YTD page views in new markets showing significant gains compared to 2019
    - New York increased 200%
    - Massachusetts increased 143%
    - Maryland increased 99%
    - Ohio increased 97%
    - Pennsylvania increased 65%
    - New Jersey increased 63%
  - Site sessions totaled 483K in May/June, more than 80% are new users
  - visitwilliamsburg.com site redevelopment targeted to launch in 2023
- *The WilliamsBLOG*: May/June Performance
  - Performance continues to improve
  - Sessions are up 12%
  - Pageviews are up 11%
  - New visitors are up 7%
  - Top posts include "7 Reasons Why Williamsburg is Great for Families," "15 Ideas for a Long Weekend Getaway With Your Kids," and "7 Charming Date Ideas in Williamsburg"
- Influencer Program
  - Recent trips: Mega Influencer Witney Carson McAllister (*Dancing with the Stars*) visited June 12-16
  - Jaime Chung will visit this summer
- May/June Organic Social Media Performance
  - Engagement rates across social channels were strong, ranging from 4.5% to 11.7%
- Public Relations (May/June)
  - 74.4M impressions; 18 placements
  - Key media placements included *Trips to Discover*, *Daily Press*, *Convention South*, and *Travel Awaits*
- Sales (May/June)
  - Participated in 3 trade shows, events, and site visits, including:
    - Connect Spring Marketplace
    - IPW
    - Society for Government Meeting Professionals
  - Visit Williamsburg issued 20 new business leads (represents 3.9K room nights) and 4 service leads
  - Confirmed 3 bookings
    - Equates to 537 definite room nights
  - Three upcoming trade shows and events
    - Connect Specialty and Sports
    - Motorcoach Association Regional Meeting

- Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) Annual Conference
  - Noted pre-conference familiarization tour to take place in region
  - Sales team completed SYTA Essentials course, earning a certification that will be recognized at the annual conference

**X. Old Business**

- None

**XI. New Business**

- None

**XII. Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on September 20, 2022