

**ATTACHMENT A**  
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
September 20, 2022  
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1 p.m. on September 20, 2022. The meeting was held at the Busch Gardens Human Resources Training Center. 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  
Michael Claar, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association  
Chad Green, Chair, York County Board of Supervisors  
Denise Kellogg, Director – Development, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation  
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  
Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director  
David Turner, Finance Director  
Rob Larson, Sports/Group Sales Manager  
Lori Ottarson, Accountant  
Daniela Owen, FAM Tour Coordinator  
Traci Tacker, Executive Assistant

**I. Call to Order**

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- Larson noted that Christy Coleman would be joining the meeting remotely due to personal reasons; remote participation was unanimously approved

**II. Public Comment**

- No public comments were presented

### III. Longwoods International Briefing – Amir Eylon, President and CEO

- Victoria Cimino introduced Amir Eylon, noting that Longwoods International is a respected leader within the travel and tourism industry, conducting market research for public and private sector clients throughout North America, Europe, and the Pacific Rim
- Eylon provided a briefing entitled “The Crystal Ball is Less Cloudy”
  - Highlights from most recent travel sentiment research
    - Sample of 1,000 adults, 18+
    - 90 percent of travelers have travel plans within the next six months
    - Inflation/cost of travel is the highest-ranking hesitation about travel
    - 19 percent of travelers indicated that COVID-19 would greatly impact their decision to travel
    - There was a spike in the percentage of travelers who indicated that transportation costs would greatly impact their decision to travel throughout the summer months
    - 52 percent of travelers expect the same level of service as before the pandemic; 28 percent expect a higher level of service than before the pandemic
  - Trends and expectations
    - Larger party size
    - Longer trips – remote work allows for longer trips
    - Planning cycles are longer for “bucket list” destinations, shorter otherwise
    - Although urban interest is back, outdoor recreation remains strong
    - Road trips continue to dominate due to gas prices, inflation, lingering pandemic fears, and ongoing airline issues
    - Economic downturn equates to an increase in “day trippers”
    - Cleanliness and flexibility continue to be an expectation
    - Rate sensitivity to increase
    - Surge in fuel prices cause reallocation of travel spend, but travelers continue to vacation

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

- Larson introduced Rita McClenny
  - Advertising campaign, which launched in April, will continue to run through November
  - Virginia is experiencing strong gains
  - Northern Virginia is seeing a significant rebound
  - VA1 Governor’s Tourism Summit to take place November 13 – 15, in Norfolk

### V. Roundtable Discussion

- Larson introduced the roundtable discussion

- Neal Chalkley stated that hotel occupancy looks strong through the end of the year, it may meet or exceed 2019
- Michael Claar commented on continued workforce challenges
- Mike Rock made note of a successful 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Shrimp Feast; previewed several upcoming Chamber of Commerce events

## **VI. Minutes**

- Larson requested a motion to approve the September 20, 2022 meeting minutes
- Fleet motioned
- Chalkley provided a second
- Minutes were unanimously approved

## **VII. Chair Report**

- Bylaws – Approve Proposed Amendment
  - In accordance with the Tourism Council’s bylaws, the Bylaws Committee, which is comprised of Larson, Fleet, and Chad Green, proposed amendments found in Attachment B during the July 19 board meeting
    - 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
  - Larson asked for a motion to approve
    - Green motioned
    - Doug Pons provided a second
  - Amended bylaws were unanimously approved
- Product Development Fund – Transfer Request
  - Larson noted that the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) has received a request from the Historic Triangle Recreational Facilities Authority
    - The Authority requests that current and any future balance of the WTC’s product development fund be transferred to the Authority to pursue a regional sports center to be constructed at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center site
    - According to the Authority, the funding will serve as a partial match to the City of Williamsburg’s annual commitment
  - Larson reported that the WTC will defer action on the matter – to be taken up at a future meeting
    - This will provide staff the time necessary to ensure a thoughtful process be developed to transfer dollars
    - This will also provide each locality sufficient time to address the matter amongst themselves
  - Green inquired about timing/need for full amount

- Scott Stevens, County Administrator – James City County, responded to Green’s question, indicating the matter should be addressed at the WTC’s November meeting to ensure scheduling goals are met

## VIII. Treasurer’s Report

- Pons shared financial statements through July 31, 2022
  - Total July 2022 revenues were \$1.4M – over budget by \$46K
    - July sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$1.2M, over budget by \$67K
    - Transient Tax receipts totaled \$177K, \$22K under budget
    - Other revenue was in-line with budget
  - Expenses were \$1.0M – under budget by \$190K for July
    - Destination Marketing expenses were \$941K, \$100K under budget for the month
    - Sales activities were \$13K, \$35K under budget
    - Total administrative expenses were \$96K, \$54K under budget
      - Staffing costs were \$81K, \$31K under budget
      - Other administrative expenses were \$15K, \$24K under budget
- Cash on Hand
  - The Tourism Council has \$11.8M in the bank; \$6.6M for operations and \$5.2M for product development
    - Cash on Hand for operations is over budget by \$324K as of the end of June due to an increase in accounts receivable for marketing grants
    - Cash on Hand for product development is in-line with budget at \$5.2M
- Sales tax revenue
  - June decreased \$6K or 0.5% year-over-year
    - \$1.25M in 2022 versus \$1.26M in 2021
    - The 3-month moving average increased 6.5% versus the same period in 2021
    - Year-to-Date sales tax receipts are up 9.2% versus the same period in 2021
- Transient tax revenue
  - June decreased \$20K or 14.5% year-over-year
    - \$119K in 2022 versus \$139K in 2021
      - Pons noted a timing difference in James City County remittances; it is anticipated this will realign in the near term
    - The 3-month moving average increased 10.9% versus the same period in 2021
    - Year-to-Date tax receipts are up 20.7% versus the same period in 2021

## IX. CEO Report

- Cimino announced recent staff updates
  - Introduced new additions to staff: Traci Tacker, Daniela Owen, and Lori Ottarson

- Noted that Miranda Jarrell will soon move on to another industry; thanked her for her contributions throughout the past two years
- Key Performance Indicators
  - STR Report data
    - July 2022 occupancy totaled 68%, on par with 2021 and just one point below 2019
    - YTD 2022 is above YTD 2019 occupancy levels by 0.4%
    - July 2022 average daily rate totaled \$161.52, below 2021 levels (\$165.04); Cimino noted that rate is beginning to soften nationwide
  - The destination is realizing an increase in out-of-state visitors (53.2%)
    - New York showing gains, ranking the #6 origin market
    - Bulk of visitors continue to originate from metro-Washington D.C.
- Marketing and Communications, Public Relations, and Sales
  - Campaign overview
    - WTC has transitioned to fall creative; 17% of the media buy is spent August – October
    - Television advertising has concluded
    - Sirius XM PGA partnership will run through the end of October
  - July/August digital advertising performance (results attributed to advertising)
    - 29,000+ hotel searches
    - 1,000+ hotel bookings
    - \$451,000+ hotel revenue
    - 3.3% conversion rate
  - July/August Web Performance
    - YTD page views in new markets showing significant gains compared to 2019
      - New York increased 473%
      - Massachusetts increased 294%
        - Fleet asked Cimino if the destination is seeing an increase in visitors from this market; Cimino responded that it will take 2-3 years before significant jumps in visitation are realized
      - Maryland increased 112%
      - Ohio increased 436%
      - Pennsylvania increased 46%
  - *The WilliamsBLOG*: July/August Performance
    - 72K sessions
    - 116K pageviews
    - 86% new users
  - Influencer Program
    - Launched paid TikTok creator content, boosting organic posts
    - Influencer Partnership Spotlight: Tamera Mowry-Housley
      - Garnered more than 141.3K engagements across Instagram and Facebook posts
      - Produced nearly 300 new @visitwilliamsburg social media followers during post dates

- July/August Social Media Performance
  - Engagement rate: 5.2% (+1.5% YoY)
  - Engagements: 17K (+34% YoY)
  - Shares and saves: 1.2K (+168% YoY)
  - Post clicks: 6.2K (+216% YoY)
- Public Relations (July/August)
  - 440.8M impressions; 15 placements
  - Key media placements included *Southern Living*, *TODAY*, and *Travel + Leisure*
- July/August Accolades
  - *Travel + Leisure*
    - World's Best Awards 2022 Readers' Survey
  - Public Relations Society of America
    - Commonwealth Award
      - Reputation/Brand Management – "Life. At Your Pace."
    - Capital Awards
      - Influencer Marketing
      - Sponsored Content – *Bon Appetit* Partnership
      - Blogs – *The WilliamsBLOG*
  - North Carolina Motorcoach Association
    - WTC Sales Director, Julia Smyth-Young, recognized as 2022 Associate of the Year
- Sales (July/August)
  - Participated in three trade shows
    - Connect Specialty and Sports
    - Motorcoach Association Regional Meeting
    - Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA) Annual Conference
      - Noted pre-conference familiarization tour took place in region
  - Visit Williamsburg issued 13 new business leads (represents 2.9K room nights)
  - Confirmed three pieces of business
    - Equates to 1,592 definite room nights
  - Helms Briscoe has converted 3,161 room nights, totaling \$633,338 in definite booked business
  - Three upcoming trade shows and events
    - Small Market Meetings
    - Capital Region USA Global Market Exchange
    - TEAMS

**X. Old Business**

- None

**XI. New Business**

- None

**XII. Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on November 15, 2022