

ATTACHMENT A

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

November 17, 2020
Williamsburg Tourism Council

WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
November 17, 2020
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on November 17, 2020, by conference call. A quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

VICE CHAIR/

INT. CHAIR Cliff Fleet, President and CEO, Colonial Williamsburg

TREASURER Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors

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

Mickey Chohany, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association (WARA)

Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

Chad Green, Chairman, York County Board of Supervisors

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

- Cliff Fleet called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- Fleet 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."
- 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 thanked Rita McClenny for advocating on behalf of Busch Gardens in the matter of allowing an increased capacity
 - McClenny thanked Kirkland and Kevin Lembke for their efforts in this matter

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

- McClenny shared that the Governor announced \$1.9M in marketing grants; \$48,350 awarded to the Historic Triangle
- \$50M of the allotted \$100M in funds for Rebuild Virginia have been awarded
- JetBlue will begin non-stop flights from Richmond to Tampa, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles in December
- Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association has added tourism financing districts, which allows tax collection by locality, to its policy platform
- Fleet asked board members to share updates
 - Kevin Lembke shared that the increase in capacity is helping Busch Gardens and feedback has been positive
 - Lembke noted that Busch Gardens first marketing program of the year is now live
 - Fleet noted that Colonial Williamsburg's tickets sold per month were about 30% below last year
 - Fleet viewed this as a positive due to the current lack of group business
 - Mickey Chohany noted that the restaurant industry is down in sales around 20-50%; there is concern this will become worse in the winter months due to a lack of outdoor dining

IV. Minutes

- Fleet requested a motion to approve the September 15, 2020 meeting minutes
- Ruth Larson motioned
- Neal Chalkley provided a second
- Roll call; all in favor
- Minutes were approved

V. Interim Chair Report

- Election of Officers – Chair
 - Fleet introduced Neal Chalkley, Chair of the Nominations Committee
 - Chalkley thanked members of the committee
 - Chalkley motioned to approve Ruth Larson as Williamsburg Tourism Council Chair
 - Fleet noted that this is a vote for Chair, and if approved, the Tourism Council will seek a replacement for the Treasurer role
 - Doug Pons provided a second
 - Roll call; all in favor
 - Larson's appointment as Williamsburg Tourism Council Chair was approved

- By-Laws Revisions
 - Fleet introduced WTC legal counsel, Cynthia Hudson
 - Hudson shared that with the Tourism Council's status as a public body, Virginia common law rules would apply that establish powers that are necessary or implied from the expressed powers
 - Hudson walked through suggested revisions
 - Powers and Duties borrows heavily from the Virginia Tourism Corporation
 - Officers to be elected bi-annually
 - The Executive Director's performance is to be evaluated annually
 - Hudson addressed questions/suggestions
 - Changing "power to sue and to be sued" to "the power to take legal action and to defend against legal action"
 - The Council can have special meetings that may not fall within the usual schedule as long as the body gives reasonable notice under the exigent circumstances
 - Hudson concluded that once revisions are agreed upon, she suggests requesting an opinion from the Attorney General
 - Chohany asked for consideration of an amendment under Article Three, in regards to the appointment of the Treasurer, that any board member be eligible for the position
 - Chohany suggested creating a by-laws committee
 - Fleet agreed and asked Chohany and any volunteers to move forward, in consultation with WTC legal counsel
 - Larson and Chalkley volunteered to serve on the committee

VI. Treasurer's Report

- Larson shared financial statements through September 30, 2020
- Revenue/expenses
 - September revenues totaled \$1.4M; \$563K over budget
 - September sales tax receipts totaled \$1.36M; \$596K over budget
 - September transient tax receipts totaled \$51K; \$33K under budget
 - Fiscal Year-to-Date (FYTD) 2021 revenues totaled \$2.79M; \$1.26M over budget
 - FYTD sales tax receipts totaled \$2.64M; \$1.3M over budget
 - FYTD transient tax receipts totaled \$132K; \$78K under budget
 - September expenses are \$878K under budget
 - September destination marketing expenses are \$863K under budget due to changes in media purchases and timing of invoices
 - September sales activities are \$9K over budget due to pick up in sales conferences
 - September administration staff costs were \$33K under budget due to delays in staff hires
 - Other expenses were \$9K over budget due to increases in legal consulting expenses
 - Fiscal Year-to-Date (FYTD) 2021 expenses are \$1.6M under budget; primarily due to changes in campaign media purchases (\$1.4M), and \$106K in reduced staffing cost
- Cash on Hand
 - Totals \$12M
 - \$9.5M for operations; \$5.8M over budget
 - \$2.5M for product development; \$450K over budget

- Transient tax revenue
 - Information shows the month the activity took place, not when the revenue was received
 - Transient tax totaled \$45K in July 2020
 - A 72.4% percent decrease over July 2019
 - Three-month moving average shows a 73.1% decrease over the same timeframe in 2019
- Cimino presented Smith Travel Research (STR) slide
 - Occupancy in September 2020 was 31.3% versus 46.9% in September 2019
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR) in September 2020 was \$94.62 versus \$107.76 in September 2019
 - YTD occupancy is 26.3% versus 52.3% in 2019
- Sales tax revenue
 - July 2020 totaled \$1,362,062
 - Commonwealth of Virginia withholds a portion of June tax receipts in order to close the fiscal year; funds are then released the subsequent month
 - Three-month moving average shows a 13% decrease over the same timeframe in 2019
- Budget recommendation presented by David Turner
 - Budget period is for Fiscal Year 2021, covering July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021
 - Original FY21 budget was a 6-month budget to allow time to evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism in the community
 - This budget recommendation is for the second 6-months of FY21
 - Revenue is budgeted to be \$10.1M versus \$13.4M, a reduction of 24.6% due to the impact of COVID-19 on sales tax and occupancy tax revenues
 - Marketing and sales budget will be increased to align with “normal” activities
 - Employee expenses will be increased, but are lower than originally planned due to adding fewer positions
 - Cash position is projected to be \$4.9M at the close of June 2021
 - Pons motioned to approve the budget
 - Larson provided a second
 - Roll call; all in favor
 - The budget was approved

VII. Executive Director Report

- Marketing/communication activities
 - Fall Campaign
 - Launched in 20 Markets
 - \$1.7M spend with 89% dedicated to broadcast TV, connected TV, and digital
 - Display click through rate is .26%; above the industry benchmark of .04% - .10%
 - Video click through rate is very high at 1.63%
 - Adara platform bookings show that average length of stay has increased from 3.25 nights to 5.35 nights in September and October (year over year)
 - 78% of visitors to the website are first-time visitors

- Holiday Campaign
 - Launched this week; \$838K dedicated to this campaign
- Video/Photo Shoot
 - Shot at 14 locations over four days
 - Captured still photography, video, 360 video, and drone footage
 - Several board members commented on the sizzle reel music
- New Website Development
 - Redesign in progress; features a new Customer Relationship Management platform, industry content, and more
- Cross-Functional Content Strategy
 - Engage with influencers and turn content into blog and social posts that are pushed out in a curated manner through Visit Williamsburg's owned channels
 - Just three influencers drove 3.3M impressions and 285K engagements
- Media Relations
 - Hosted three press trips; 30 locations visited
 - September through October PR efforts realized 63 placements and 1.8 Billion global impressions
- Sales Activities
 - Attended five conferences and five virtual sales calls
 - Those activities resulted in 13 sales leads representing 6,521 room nights

VIII. Old Business

- None

IX. New Business

- None

X. Adjournment

- The next meeting will take place on January 19, 2021