

ATTACHMENT A
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
July 20, 2021
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on July 20, 2021. The meeting was held in hybrid format with an in-person presence at Williamsburg Lodge (Tidewater Room). A quorum was present.

Tourism Council Members Present:

CHAIR Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors
TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg
Mickey Chohany, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association (WARA)
Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Chad Green, Chair, York County Board of Supervisors
Denise Kellogg, Director, Development, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation
Ron Kirkland, Executive Director, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association (WHMA)
Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA
Rita McClenny, President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Chris Smith, Chair, Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance – Business Council

Staff Members Present:

Victoria Cimino, CEO
Miranda Jarrell, Communications Director
Julie O’Neil, Marketing Director
Jill Pongonis, FAM Tour Coordinator
Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director
David Turner, Finance Director

I. Call to Order

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- James Horn was represented by Denise Kellogg

II. Public Comment

- No public comments were presented

III. Virginia Restaurant Lodging Travel Association – Eric Terry, President

- Victoria Cimino introduced Eric Terry, President of the Virginia Restaurant Lodging Travel Association
- Terry provided an overview of business challenges across the Commonwealth
 - Destinations with strong business/government travel have been severely impacted
 - Traditional leisure areas (such as Virginia Beach) have realized a stronger rebound, especially in recent months
- Average Daily Rate (ADR) is strong when compared to 2019, especially in the Historic Triangle
 - In part, ADR has been driven by inventory compression related to labor challenges
- Across all areas of hospitality, labor continues to be the most significant challenge, with a sizable portion of the workforce having moved to other industries and/or retired

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

- Rita McClenny provided an update on additional relief funds
 - \$30 million will be distributed to Virginia's regional destination marketing organizations
 - Funds intended to support marketing programs, new market expansion, sports/group tour, etc.
 - Application deadline is expected to be late-2021
- McClenny noted that the VTC has expanded its marketing program in new markets, including Boston, citing increased flight inventory
- Hospitality workforce challenges across Virginia were reiterated by McClenny

V. Board Updates

- Larson asked board members for updates
 - Kevin Lembke stated Busch Gardens reported strong demand, in-line with 2019 levels
 - Mickey Chohany echoed similar trends across the restaurant sector with strong demand, but labor and food supply continue to be challenges
 - Christy Coleman indicated the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation has successfully pivoted its promotional efforts focusing on nearby markets; Coleman noted that the organization will evolve its messaging away from "History is Fun" to a "Convergence in Cultures"
 - Ron Kirkland reported that hotel/motel occupancy is slightly behind 2019 levels, noting visitors are purely leisure – group tour and business travel have yet to rebound; Kirkland pointed out that ADR is incredibly strong
 - Chad Green noted that Yorktown's waterfront businesses are seeing strong visitation

VI. Minutes

- Larson requested a motion to approve the May 18, 2021 meeting minutes
- Minutes were unanimously approved

VII. Chair Report

- Larson thanked the WTC staff for their efforts
- Larson confirmed that continued office space lease negotiations are taking place
- Chris Smith of The Virginia Beer Company was introduced, Chris will represent the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance – Business Council in an ex-officio role; Larson noted the statute that created the Williamsburg Tourism Council will need to be amended to reflect the ex-officio seat represents the “Business Council” rather than the “Alliance”

VIII. Treasurer’s Report

- Pons shared financial statements through May 31, 2021
- Total May 2021 revenues were \$1.2 million
 - Over budget by \$165K
 - May sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$1.1 million, over budget by \$290K
 - Transient Tax receipts totaled \$86K, over budget by \$3K
 - Maintenance of Effort (MOE) revenue was \$0, under budget by \$121K
- May expenses were \$947K, under budget by \$712K
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$841K, \$642K under budget for the month
 - Sales activities are under budget by \$28K due to the timing of sales events and association membership fees
 - Staffing costs were \$27K below budget due to delays in staff hires
 - Other administrative expenses were \$16K under budget due to lower office expenses
- Fiscal Year to Date (FYTD)
 - 2021 FYTD revenues were \$12.2M, over budget by \$3.2M
 - FYTD sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$10M, over budget by \$2.6M
 - FYTD Transient Tax receipts totaled \$722K, under budget by \$238K
 - FYTD MOE revenues were \$1.45M, over budget by \$846K
 - Reminder: MOE balance activity was removed from the budget in CY20 at the Board’s request
- 2021 FYTD expenses were \$13.3M, under budget by \$2.5M
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$12M, under budget by \$1.8M
 - May advertising expenses of \$1M were received in June
 - Sales activities were \$224K, under budget by \$266K due to reduced sales events and canceled tradeshows
 - Staff costs were \$973K, under budget by \$320K due to changes in hiring plans and other cost reductions
 - FY21 budget was intended to utilize the carry-over savings from FY2020 – FYTD net position is positive to the budget by \$5.7M

- Cash on Hand
 - The Tourism Council has \$11.4M in the bank; \$7.7M for operations and \$3.7M reserved for product development
 - Cash on Hand for Operations is over budget by \$3.9M as of the month of May
 - Cash on Hand for Product Development is over budget by \$1.7M
- Sales tax revenue
 - April increased \$501K or 79% year-over-year
 - \$1.1M in 2021 versus \$633K in 2020
 - The 3-month moving average increased 40.7% versus the same period in 2020
- Transient tax revenue
 - April increased \$80K or 212.3% year-over-year
 - \$117.9K in 2021 versus \$37.7K in 2020
 - The 3-month moving average increased 66% versus the same period in 2020

IX. CEO Report

- Cimino presented the Smith Travel Research report
 - April 2021 occupancy was 45% versus 60% in April 2019
 - Pure leisure travel – very little group tour and business travel
 - According to American Bus Association, group tour won't rebound until 2022
 - May 2021 occupancy was 47% versus 55% in May 2019
 - YTD occupancy down 8% compared to 2019
 - January, February, and March saw very little travel, April and May were the first months of increased leisure travel
- Zartico: Memorial Day Weekend report
 - Zartico analyzes location device data from Uber Media to identify visitor behavior patterns
 - 45% of Memorial Day Weekend visitors originate from out-of-state; visitation from Cleveland and Columbus is growing
 - Majority of in-state visitors originate from Richmond and Charlottesville
 - Accommodations, arts and entertainment, attractions, events, and retail, had high visitor-to-resident ratios
 - Useful data to illustrate visitors are frequenting shops, restaurants, etc. – not just locals
 - In-state visitors were more dispersed throughout the region
 - Out-of-state visitors had weaker cross visitation patterns, but more dispersion to the waterfronts
- Adara
 - In May, 1,500 hotel bookings (with Adara's partners) can be directly attributed to Visit Williamsburg's advertising; those bookings represent \$650K in hotel revenue
 - In April, 1,338 hotel bookings (with Adara's partners) can be directly attributed to Visit Williamsburg's advertising; those bookings represent \$467K in hotel revenue

- Since January, Visit Williamsburg's digital display ads drove 6,376 bookings, representing \$2.4M in hotel revenue
- Cimino noted that the use of cookies will change in 2023, but new technologies will likely provide workarounds or new versions of cookies
- Marketing and Communications
 - Life. At Your Pace Campaign
 - Launched full campaign in February, with much of the annual spend occurring February through July; fall campaign to launch in August
 - Advertising in 20 markets; expanded into Cleveland/Columbus and New York (digitally) in 2020
 - Tactics include linear TV, connected TV, digital display, paid social, paid search, influencer, content partnerships, and more
 - Working towards a food and beverage content partnership in 2022
 - New media partners
 - PushSpring targets consumers with travel planning apps on their phones
 - Valassis is an email data partner with a circulation of 1M+ consumers per email deployment
 - Digital Performance
 - Produced 177 million impressions
 - CTR (click through rate) increased 33% from previous two months
 - Video completion rate increased 39%
 - 50% increase in paid search click volume in first half of June versus second half of May
 - Sessions and users have increased 46% over 2019
 - The WilliamsBLOG – Performance YOY vs. Trip Ideas 2019
 - Sessions are up 425%
 - Number of users up 200%
 - New user sessions up 3.5% and average time on page is up 14%
 - Top performing content, i.e. "Seven Things to Do for First Time Visitors," reflects that 80% of site users are new users
 - FAMS
 - Hosted 20 familiarization tours in May and June 2021
 - WilliamsBLOG contributors = 7
 - LPGA Pure Silk golfers = 7
 - Mega Influencers = 2
 - Journalists = 4
 - Participants visited 90 locations throughout the destination
 - Influencers (May/June); engagement across social channels increased by 104%
 - Shawn Johnson (3.1M followers)
 - 17M impressions
 - 544K engagements
 - Picked up by *People* and *US Weekly*
 - Kristy Wicks (482K followers)
 - Evan Woodard (11.7K followers)

- Lanna Nguyen (39.4K followers)
 - Social Media
 - Top engagement rate on Facebook = 6.3%
 - Industry average engagement rate = 0.26%
 - Top engagement rate on Instagram = 8.3%
 - Industry average engagement rate = 1.39%
 - Public Relations
 - 1.7 billion global impressions with 41 placements
 - Cimino presented at Destinations International Annual Conference
 - Cimino/Connelly Partners presented during Association of National Advertisers conference
 - Sales (May/June)
 - Visit Williamsburg posted 17 new business leads and 4 service leads
 - Represents 3,900 room nights
 - Participated in 5 conferences, appointments, and sites
 - American Bus Association Marketplace
 - VTC/STS FAM Meeting
 - League of Women Voters
 - High Point Tours
 - Virginia Society of Association Executives (VSAE) Annual Conference
 - Visit Williamsburg booked 12 pieces of new business in May/June
 - Represents 14,142 room nights over the course of the next several years

X. Old Business

- No old business was presented

XI. New Business

- Chohany informed the group that golfer Jack Nicklaus visited Williamsburg to film a documentary

XII. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place in-person on September 21, 2021