

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING**  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
September 21, 2021  
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on September 21, 2021. The meeting was held in-person at Kingsmill Resort (Tazewell Room). A quorum was present.

**Tourism Council Members Present:**

CHAIR Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors  
VICE CHAIR Cliff Fleet, President and CEO, Colonial Williamsburg  
TREASURER Doug Pons, Mayor, City of Williamsburg  
Neal Chalkley, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association (WHMA)  
Michael Claar, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association (WARA)  
Chad Green, Chair, York County Board of Supervisors  
Denise Kellogg, Director, Development, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation  
Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA  
Rita McClenny, President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation

**Staff Members Present:**

Victoria Cimino, CEO  
Miranda Jarrell, Communications Director  
Julie O'Neil, Marketing Director  
Tamara Paris, Partnerships & Content Director  
David Turner, Finance Director

**I. Call to Order**

- Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- Bill McKay, Vice President of Sales, Kingsmill Resort, was introduced as the host

**II. Public Comment**

- No public comments were presented

**III. U.S. Travel Association (USTA) – Treon Glenn, Senior Director, Government Relations**

- Victoria Cimino introduced Treon Glenn
- Treon provided an update on government relations and public policy
  - The Biden administration announced plans to reopen borders to vaccinated international travelers

- Brand USA – Seen as key to travel recovery; planning a robust marketing program to communicate new rules and regulations
  - Bill introduced in Senate and House to provide \$250 million in emergency funding
- Democrats introduced a continuing resolution (H.R. 5305) to extend government funding and deliver emergency assistance through December 3
- Business travel remains a legislative priority; it is down 57% with a full recovery forecast for 2024; Let's Meet There Coalition working to promote business meetings and events; advocating for H.R. 1346 - Hospitality and Commerce Job Recovery Act
  - Cimino noted that Congresswoman Luria had signed on as a sponsor of H.R. 1346
- Federal vaccine mandates were announced for employers with 100 or more employees; details regarding non-profit mandates have yet to be announced

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

- Rita McClenny provided an update on visitor volume; down 33%
- McClenny stated that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund disbursement process will begin with an educational webinar on October 14
  - A portal will open on October 29; first round applications are due by December 31
  - Final application deadline is December 31, 2022
  - There will be incentive plans for meetings and sports
- Hospitality workforce challenges across Virginia were reiterated by McClenny

#### **V. Board Updates**

- Larson asked board members for updates
  - Kevin Lembke stated that Busch Gardens continues to have staffing challenges
  - Michael Claar echoed similar trends across the restaurant sector
  - Neal Chalkley reported that hotel/motel occupancy is up for the next two months
  - Chad Green noted that Yorktown's waterfront businesses are seeing strong visitation

#### **VI. Minutes**

- Larson requested a motion to approve the July 20, 2021, meeting minutes
- Claar abstained as he was not present at the July 20 meeting
- Minutes were unanimously approved

#### **VII. Chair Report**

- Larson noted that WTC has signed a lease for office space with the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance

- Cimino and Larson met with Senator Norment; noted positive dialogue re: destination marketing program
- WTC has selected a firm to provide audit services after completing a procurement process
- Larson noted that Cimino has made great strides in hiring staff
  - Cimino introduced Partnerships and Content Director, Tamara Paris, and provided an update on forthcoming new hires
- Larson will be reaching out to board members about Cimino's performance evaluation

## VIII. Treasurer's Report

- Pons shared financial statements through July 31, 2021
- Total July 2021 revenues were \$1.3 million
  - Over budget by \$170K
  - May sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$1.1 million, over budget by \$70K
  - Transient tax receipts totaled \$196K, over budget by \$102K
  - Maintenance of Effort (MOE) revenue was \$0
- July expenses were \$330K, under budget by \$922K
  - Destination Marketing expenses were \$218K, \$891K under budget for the month
  - Sales activities are under budget by \$13K due to the timing conference expenses/invoices
  - Staffing costs were \$9K below budget due to new hire timing
- 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 \$123K
  - Cash on Hand for Product Development is over budget by \$1K
- Sales tax revenue
  - June increased \$716K or 133% year-over-year
    - \$1.3M in 2021 versus \$540K in 2020
  - The 3-month moving average increased 81.5% versus the same period in 2020
- Transient tax revenue
  - June increased \$71K or 125% year-over-year
    - \$127K in 2021 versus \$57K in 2020
  - The 3-month moving average increased 232% versus the same period in 2020

## IX. CEO Report

- Cimino presented the Smith Travel Research report
  - June 2021 occupancy was 60% versus 65.8% in June 2019
    - Very strong ADR over the course of the summer, second highest in Virginia behind Virginia Beach
  - July 2021 occupancy was 67.3% versus 69% in July 2019
    - Pure leisure travel; very little business and group travel

- Rate was \$162.62 versus \$133.78 in 2019
- August 2021 occupancy was 60% versus 69.2% in August 2019
  - Rates stayed strong at \$160 versus \$135 in 2019
- YTD occupancy down 8% - 44% in 2021 versus 52% in 2019
  - \$139 ADR in 2021 versus \$127 in 2019
- Zartico: Memorial Day Weekend versus July 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend research report
  - Zartico analyzes location device data from Uber Media to identify visitor behavior patterns
  - Memorial Day Weekend saw 61.6% of visitors staying overnight versus July 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend at 64.5%
  - 60% of July 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend visitors were out-of-state
  - More in-state visitors in 2021 versus 2019
  - Cimino shared a visualization that showed overlap during the two holiday weekends
  - Cimino presented an analysis of William & Mary's move-in weekend
    - 50% of observations at William & Mary were visitors
      - 68% of visitors were from Virginia
      - 59% of visitors stayed overnight
    - Out-of-state visitors were more likely to visit accommodations and restaurants while in-state visitors and residents were more likely to visit outdoor recreation and retail locations
- Marketing and Communications
  - 2021 target audiences
    - Active Mature, families (GenX/Millennials with children), and couples (GenX/Millennials without children)
  - Advertising in 20 markets; full campaign launched in February
  - Fall campaign began in August; 30% of total budget allocated August through December
    - Cimino shared fall creative
  - July/August digital performance
    - Produced 250 million impressions
    - .29% click through rate (CTR) versus .10% industry standard
    - Video completion rate increased 97%
    - Paid search increased by 548,000 impressions
  - Adara Impact Performance
    - July was a strong month and can directly attribute digital advertising to booking completion - close to 1,500 room nights in July
    - Top markets remain steady
      - Washington, D.C.
      - New York
      - Philadelphia
      - Baltimore
    - Less attribution in August due to less advertising volume and COVID-19 surge
    - Site traffic performance is outpacing 2019 and 2020

- *The WilliamsBLOG*
  - Sessions are up 359%
  - Number of users are up 132%
  - New user sessions are up 16% and average time on page is up 13%
  - Date night ideas, excavations, and Williamsburg's waterfronts, are examples of recently published content
- Influencers (July/August) produced:
  - Engagement across social channels increased by 41%
  - 290K impressions
  - 41K engagements
  - 62 industry partners featured
- Recent influencer familiarization tours
  - Buffaloe Family (310K followers combined)
  - Navy & Duke Corgis (80.1K followers)
  - Jackie Greaney (108K followers)
- Social Media
  - Facebook engagement is up 64%
    - Engagement rates continue to outperform industry standards
  - Instagram engagement is up 123%
- Content Partnership: Condé Nast's Bon Appetit
  - Producing long/short form video(s) and article about local food and beverage scene
  - October production; Q1 2022 launch
- Public Relations
  - 234.7M global impressions with 15 placements
- Awards
  - Etsy Award for Best Content Marketing Program - Large Budget
  - Four Virginia Public Relations Society of America Awards
    - Commonwealth Award: Reputation and Brand Marketing – "Life. At Your Pace."
    - Capital Awards (3): Blogs – *The WilliamsBLOG*; Sponsored Content – National Geographic Partnership; and Influencer Marketing
  - *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards
    - Top Cities to Visit category (#9)
- Sales (June/July)
  - Visit Williamsburg posted 15 new business leads
    - Represents 1500 room nights
  - Participated in 3 conferences, appointments, and site inspections
    - Virginia Motor Coach Association
    - Connect
    - Student & Youth Travel Association
  - Cimino shared new trade show booth

X. **Old Business**

- No old business was presented

XI. **New Business**

- Cliff Fleet
  - Colonial Williamsburg recently hosted a donor event; the organization is realizing its best fundraising year to date
  - Williamsburg Inn named one of the “Top 15 Resort Hotels in the South” in *Travel + Leisure’s* World’s Best Awards
- Kevin Lembke
  - Busch Gardens/Howl-O-Scream named #2 Halloween event by *USA TODAY*
  - The park was named the “Most Beautiful Theme Park in America” by the National Amusement Park Historical Association for the 31<sup>st</sup> year in a row

XII. **Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place in-person on November 16, 2021