

ATTACHMENT A

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

January 15, 2019
Williamsburg Tourism Council

**WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL
MEETING
STRYKER CENTER, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA**

January 15, 2019
Meeting Notes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council was convened at 1:00 p.m. on January 15, 2019 at the Stryker Center, City of Williamsburg. A quorum was present with the following attendees:

Tourism Council Members Present:

Honorable Jeffrey D. Wassmer, Honorable Ruth Larson, Kevin Crossett,	District 4 Supervisor, York County Board of Supervisors Chair, James City County Board of Supervisors Vice President of Strategic Communications, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Doug Pons, Neal Chalkley, Philip G. Emerson, Kevin Lembke,	Vice Mayor, City of Williamsburg President, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation President, Busch Gardens Williamsburg
Jeanne Zeidler, Rita McClenny,	Chair, Board of Directors, Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance President & CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Staff Members Present:

Jody Puckett, Dave Potter,	Administrator, Tourism Council Director, Marketing Communications, Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance
Joanna Skrabala,	Associate Director of Digital Marketing, Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wassmer called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and shared a list of recent destination accolades. Mr. Wassmer proceeded to do roll call.

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Minutes

The Council members unanimously approved the December 18 minutes.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Ruth Larson reviewed the current revenues/expenses, cash projections, tax collections (through October). Budget information will be updated every month for the Council meeting.

Ms. Larson also reported that WADMC is officially closed out and the debt with the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance should be close to even. At this time, Ms. Larson introduced the Council to John Heck, CPA, who is assisting the GWCTA during the transition.

V. Committee Reports

a. Bylaws Committee

Mr. Wassmer reported that the GWCTA bylaws cannot be finalized until the Tourism Council and Business Council bylaws are adopted. The Alliance Board of Directors is expected to be formed in March. This board will be comprised of 3 Tourism Council members, 3 Business Council members, and 3 other positions at large. Mr. Wassmer said the Tourism Council positions will be appointed at the next meeting.

b. Search Committee

Doug Pons reported that the search for a new Executive Director was narrowed to 7-8 candidates. The committee will receive the candidate packets to review and cull down to 3 or 4. Mr. Pons said he hopes to bring the candidates to Williamsburg in February for interviewing.

Phil Emerson asked if the group confirmed a salary for this position and Mr. Pons reported that it should be within the \$180,000 – \$220,000 range. Mr. Emerson asked if the Tourism Council was the one to confirm the Executive Director’s contract. Mr. Pons replied that the search firm conducted a survey on salary range.

VI. Marketing Director Update

Dave Potter reported on the topline public relations initiatives for the first quarter, including: a “What’s New” press release, a media familiarization tour, hosting journalists, and a broadcast surge. Dave said planning is underway for the second quarter, including a New York media tour and additional media destination tours and visiting journalists.

Mr. Potter reported on what’s new in social media and influencers. Mr. Potter also reported that Visit Williamsburg has contracted a local photographer to assist with additional assets.

For search engine optimization (SEO), Mr. Potter informed that the destination owns the term “Williamsburg” organically and is looking to do more with state keywords.

Mr. Potter Dave reported the first campaign media starts on March 4 and everything is on schedule. He then presented a graphic of the media budget broken down by medium: digital (59%), TV (27%), print (10%), and others (4%). Kevin Lembke said it was good to see the percentage number for digital, but also saw more opportunity with paid search. Mr. Potter said because our organic numbers are working so well, paid search is not needed as much.

Considering the discussion at the December Council meeting, Mr. Potter said he wanted to make sure the creative was done right. He reported that Luckie & Co. continues to work on additional examples for the “Funexpected” campaign. Luckie plans to attend the Marketing Advisory group later in January to fine tune the message.

Mr. Potter also reported that the Public Relations Advisory Group (PRAG) will meet on January 22.

Kevin Crossett reiterated that it will be up to the consumer to tell us if the campaign is working. Mr. Crossett also asked what the primary feeder market was for TV. Mr. Potter replied that the majority of TV is around Washington, DC, and Raleigh.

Phil Emerson asked the team to compare the campaign with competitors to make sure Williamsburg is on trend for messaging and spending. Mr. Wassmer said he would share a chart that was done last year that compared Williamsburg to various competitors in budget and staffing.

Ms. McClenny said that Northern Virginia is currently #1 and Hampton Roads is #2. Virginia Beach is a major standout for international visitors and #1 for China. Ms. McClenny also reiterated that she thought the “Funexpected” campaign was fun and worked for the family audience.

Mr. Lembke expressed concern over the creative and the timing of the media. Mr. Potter reiterated that everything is still on track. The team is working with current assets and the advisory groups to ensure touchpoints during the process. Mr. Potter also reported that a brand study would be conducted later this year and Mr. Wassmer stated that the new Executive Director would need to be on board before the Council determines goals for the project.

VII. Administrator Update

Jody Puckett reported that the Visitor Research/Economic Impact RFP was narrowed down from 5 to 3 firms. Interviews will be held January 23, with one in place in March.

Ms. Puckett said that staff resources are okay for now, but when the new Executive Director begins, the team can reevaluate to see if anything else is needed.

Ms. Puckett presented room night stats through November and the destination is down 1.7% from 2017. She also said the Smith Travel report, which does not include timeshares, actually had Greater Williamsburg up by 1.4%.

At this time, Lisa Pacheco, Sports Williamsburg, Director of Sports Development, presented. Ms. Pacheco shared the background for Sports Williamsburg, including the board, a grant fund, the importance of local partnerships, and three previous feasibility studies. Ms. Pacheco said she would like to grow the economic impact of sports by 5%.

Ms. Pacheco reported that she would be attending 7 sports conferences in 2019 and that she currently has 66 different events on the calendar for this year, totaling \$9 million in economic impact.

In 2019, Sports Williamsburg plans for more involvement in new sports (i.e. fishing, tennis, cornhole), building a relationship with Virginia High School League, exploring ad opportunities, and hosting the Ironman VA with an economic impact of \$1.5 million.

Mr. Lembke asked what the bottom line was for the feasibility studies. Ms. Pacheco said that one flagged item is the number of attractions Greater Williamsburg has and that it makes it unique to other destinations. She also shared that the diversifying of sports was recommended and James City County showed an ROI for a large indoor sports facility.

Ms. Pacheco shared Sports Williamsburg packet with everyone, including a sports calendar for 2019.

VIII. Chair Report

Mr. Wassmer reported that there will be a Community Tourism Forum in April with partners as a kickoff for the campaign and the new Executive Director.

Data suggests that tourism funding for 2019 may reach \$16.5 million (this includes taxes and municipality funding) and the municipalities encourage money to go to a product development fund. Mr. Wassmer suggested creating a reserve fund at 5% (approximately \$750K). Of the money collected from the state, \$2 million will be moved to a money market.

Phil Emerson shared concerns over creating a product development fund and suggests looking at the competitive spend market first. Mr. Pons agreed, but also thought it was a disservice to not think about product development.

There was also discussion about whether the reserve would be maintaining or growing, and how the product development fund would work. Mr. Wassmer said all is up for discussion, but everyone would need to be involved. Ms. McClenny said that the VTC hired a firm to research community needs.

A motion was presented and passed to move \$750K to an operating fund. Another motion was presented and passed to move \$1.6 million to a tourism reserve with product development in mind.

There was no other new business.

IX. Old Business

The next meeting is February 19, 2019, 1:00 pm at the Stryker Center.