

ATTACHMENT A
WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL MEETING
Williamsburg, Virginia
November 16, 2021
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council (WTC) was convened at 1:00 p.m. on November 16, 2021. The meeting was held at Williamsburg Winery (Westbury Hall). 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)
Mickey Chohany, Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association (WARA)
Christy Coleman, Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Chad Green, Chair, York County Board of Supervisors
James Horn, President and Chief Officer, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation
Kevin Lembke, President, Busch Gardens/Water Country USA

Staff Members Present:

Victoria Cimino, CEO
Julia Smyth-Young, Sales Director
David Turner, Finance Director
Melissa Hall, Accountant
Deana Zaharopoulos, Sales & Services Coordinator
Glen Butler, Executive Assistant

I. Call to Order

- Cliff Fleet called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
 - Noted that Ruth Larson will join the meeting mid-way
 - Chad Green was not present at the time of roll call
- Patrick Duffeler, Owner, Williamsburg Winery, was introduced as the host and provided opening remarks

II. Public Comment

- Ron Kirkland, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association, introduced himself and was recognized to speak
 - Kirkland acknowledged the planned additions to sales staff, remarked on the importance of increasing group and sports tourism business
 - Software recently adopted by Visit Williamsburg will aid in the booking process and provide performance tracking data
 - Suggested that Visit Williamsburg consider financial incentives in attracting new group and sports business

III. Sports Complex Briefing – Mayor Doug Pons, City of Williamsburg

- Mayor Pons provided a sports complex briefing
 - James City County Board of Supervisors voted to support the formation of the Historic Triangle Recreational Facilities Authority, which will be made up of two members from each of the three municipalities: James City County, City of Williamsburg, and York County
 - The Authority will have the ability to convene on the complex's construction, location, leasing, and financing
 - Pons stated that funding will not be the responsibility of any one of the jurisdictions
 - York County Board of Supervisors convening to vote on November 16
- James Horn inquired about cost estimates, visitation/revenue projections
 - Pons stated the budget to be \$60M
 - The facility will be 150,000 square feet
 - Based on data from 2019, the complex will bring an additional 200K visitors, thus providing residual spending and increased tax revenue
- Christy Coleman asked if residual spending is typical behavior for sports groups
 - Pons stated that sports tourism creates extended visitation for a destination like Williamsburg, as exemplified by the National Softball Association tournament
 - Chad Green noted that the complex will create opportunities for area attractions

IV. Roundtable Discussion

- No updates were provided

V. Minutes

- Fleet requested a motion to approve the September 21, 2021 meeting minutes
- Pons motioned
- Chalkley provided a second
- Minutes were unanimously approved

VI. Treasurer's Report

- Pons shared financial statements through September 30, 2021
- Total September 2021 revenues were \$1.4M
 - Over budget by \$196K
 - Sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$1.3M, over budget by \$212K
 - Transient Tax receipts totaled \$137K, under budget by \$14K
 - Maintenance of Effort (MOE) revenue was \$0
- September expenses were \$809K, under budget by \$619K
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$686K, \$540K under budget for the month
 - Sales activities are under budget by \$41K due to the timing conference expenses/invoices
 - Administrative costs were \$39K below budget
 - Staffing costs were \$17K below budget due to delays in staff hiring
- Fiscal Year to Date (FYTD) 2022 revenues were \$4.1M, over budget by \$654K
 - FYTD sales tax receipts (58.1-603.2) totaled \$3.6M, over budget by \$1M
 - FYTD Transient Tax receipts totaled \$472K, over budget by \$50K
 - FYTD MOE revenues were \$0, over budget by \$428K
- FYTD 2022 expenses were \$2.4M, under budget by \$1.6M
 - Destination Marketing expenses were \$2M, under budget by \$1.5M
 - June activity billed in FY22; accrued to June 2021 for year-end closing
 - Sales activities were \$40K, under budget by \$86K due to reduced sales events and expenses
 - Staff costs were \$248K, under budget by \$55K due to timing of hiring
 - Administrative costs were \$72K, under budget by \$25K
- Cash on Hand
 - The Tourism Council has \$11.2M in the bank; \$7.5M for operations and \$3.7M reserved for product development
 - Cash on Hand for Operations is over budget by \$515K as of the month of September
 - Cash on Hand for Product Development is under budget by \$425K, due to timing of invoices
- Sales tax revenue
 - August increased \$179K or 20% year-over-year
 - \$1.1M in 2021 versus \$890K in 2020
 - The 3-month moving average increased 29.7% versus the same period in 2020
- Transient tax revenue
 - August increased \$99K or 102.7% year-over-year
 - \$196K in 2021 versus \$97K in 2020
 - The 3-month moving average increased 137.8% versus the same period in 2020
- Green noted budget/actual discrepancies, recognized the challenges throughout the last fiscal year
 - Victoria Cimino reminded Green that all contractors are paid on a reimbursable basis, destination marketing discrepancies are due to the timing of invoices

VII. CEO Report

- Cimino welcomed Steve Connelly, president, and Michele Capasso, director of media services, Connelly Partners
- Introduced recent additions to staff, and announced two new sales positions will soon be posted
- Provided an update on ARPA funding distribution by municipality, as announced by VTC on October 29
 - City of Williamsburg will receive \$670K
 - James City County will receive \$570K
 - York County will receive \$300K
 - Noted that the DMO recommends that funds are used to strengthen Visit Williamsburg's media buy
 - Each locality will inform Cimino of its intention for funds by November 30
- Cimino presented the Smith Travel Research reports
 - September 2021
 - Occupancy was 44.1% versus 45.3% in September 2019
 - Pure leisure travel, almost no business, group, and international travel
 - U.S. Travel forecasts group travel improvement in 2022, but still below 2019 levels
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR) was \$134.03 versus \$108.88 in 2019
 - Year-to-Date
 - Occupancy totaled 44.7% in 2021 versus 51.2% in 2019
 - \$138.57 ADR in 2021 versus \$125.22 in 2019, an increase of \$13.35
- Cimino shared U.S. Travel Association forecast slides
 - COVID-related hotel demand rebound is outperforming the 2007 financial crisis
 - ADR is recovering quickly, and is consistent with or exceeding 2019 levels
 - Cimino shared a comparison of the recovery time after September 11, 2007 financial crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic
 - RevPAR is forecast for a two-year recovery versus five years in previous economic downturns
- Marketing and Communications
 - Adara Impact Performance
 - September bookings were down and can be attributed to the COVID variant and reduced advertising spend
 - Top markets remain steady
 - Washington, D.C.
 - New York
 - Philadelphia
 - Baltimore
 - October 2021 is on pace to exceed 2019 and 2020
 - Campaign Overview
 - Holiday campaign began in November; 11% of 2021 advertising budget
 - Cimino shared holiday creative

- September/October Digital Advertising Performance
 - Produced 257 million impressions
 - .26% click through rate (CTR) versus .10% industry standard
 - Paid search increased by 380,000 impressions
 - Less advertising inventory, but stronger booking conversion rates
- Content Partnership: Condé Nast's Bon Appétit
 - Partnership is intended to highlight local food and beverage scene
 - Produced October 18 – 19, 2021
 - Participants included Mobjack Bay Coffee Roasters, Rockefeller Room at Williamsburg Inn, Culture Cafe, Alewerks Brewing Company, Pierce's Pitt Bar-B-Que, Amber Ox Public House, Blue Talon Bistro, Williamsburg Winery
 - Talent cast is Ben Hon (@stuffbeneats)
 - Content will be posted via Condé Nast's and Visit Williamsburg's owned channels, launching in Q1 2022
- *The WilliamsBLOG* (September/October Performance)
 - Sessions are up 170%
 - Number of users are up 47%
 - New user sessions are up 25% and average time on page is up 4.3%
 - Seasonal splendor, Halloween events and family weekend getaway ideas are examples of recently published content
- Familiarization Tours (September/October Performance)
 - Worked with more than 40 hospitality suppliers to host:
 - Myscha Theriault (Tribune News Service)
 - Ciara Johnson (*WilliamsBLOG* contributor)
 - Julia Dzafic (Macro Influencer)
- Influencers (September/October) produced:
 - 1M+ impressions
 - 75K engagements
 - 41 industry partners featured
 - Cimino shared examples of Instagram content
- Social Media (September/October Performance)
 - 3,382 new Facebook followers
 - Cimino noted that two-thirds of target audience are Facebook users
 - 306 new Instagram followers
 - Noted examples of top posts
 - 59 new Twitter followers
 - Engagement rates continue to outperform industry standards
- Public Relations (September 1 – October 31)
 - 721.5M global impressions with 22 placements
- Accolades/Awards
 - *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards 2021 Readers' Survey
 - "Top 15 Cities in the United States" category (#9)

- *Travel Weekly* Magellan Awards
 - Destination Marketing – Campaign – Advertising/Marketing
 - Gold – “Life. At Your Pace.”
 - Destinations – Overall – Blog
 - Silver – *The WilliamsBLOG*
 - Visit Williamsburg has now won seven awards for the “Life. At Your Pace.” campaign
 - Sales (September/October)
 - Participated in 12 trade shows, events, and sites
 - IPW
 - Small Market Meetings Conference
 - Virginia Youth Soccer Association
 - Virginia Tourism Corporation – STS Domestic Showcase FAM Meeting
 - American Bus Association (ABA)
 - Virginia Society of Association Executives (VSAE) Fall Conference
 - Partners participated in Visit Williamsburg booth (at no charge): Busch Gardens, Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Kingsmill Resort, Great Wolf Lodge, and DoubleTree by Hilton
 - Produced three requests for proposals that were distributed to the industry
 - National Tour Association
 - Visit Williamsburg posted 18 new business leads and 4 service leads
 - Represents 4,589 room nights
 - Confirmed four bookings
 - Represents 974 room nights
 - National Softball Association named Williamsburg its host city for 2022
 - Cimino thanked the municipalities for their collaboration in securing this piece of business
 - Smyth-Young stated the event would provide 2,100 room nights
 - Seven upcoming trade shows and events
 - Accent on the East
 - National Tour Association Travel Exchange
 - Connect Association
 - Capital Region U.S.A. (CRUSA)
 - Complimentary space offered to the industry
 - American Bus Association
 - Complimentary space offered to the industry
 - Southeast Tourism Society
 - Sponsored by Visit Williamsburg
 - African American Travel Conference
 - Sponsored by Visit Williamsburg

- 2022 Media Strategy
 - Cimino provided information on post-COVID consumer habits
 - Consumers spend 13+ hours a day with media, 60% digital
 - Traditional TV will decline with younger audiences, broadband only (BBO) homes will see expansion in local options
 - New social platforms will continue to emerge
 - Digital audio has surpassed terrestrial radio, driven by podcasts
 - eComm platforms will expand and dominate, creating retargeting opportunities
 - Federal government has extended Google's cookie depreciation until late 2023
 - Overarching strategy: Continued emphasis on lower funnel tactics (to drive bookings) while expanding upper funnel tactics (target new audiences/market)
 - Cimino noted the utilization of new tactics, expanded reach, and a new market (Boston)
 - Boston is the sixth largest designated market area (DMA) in the country, large percentage of population is in-line with Visit Williamsburg's target criteria, direct air-lift into regional airports, Uber Media data shows strong mobile phone data, organic interest has grown, and it is a cost-efficient DMA
 - Carryover tactics include: linear TV, connected TV, influencer, digital, social, pay-per-click, and travel endemics
 - New tactic: out-of-home advertising in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C.
 - Sixty-five percent of annual budget will be utilized February – July (February – April accounts for 45% of spend)
 - \$11M advertising campaign to launch in February
 - \$2M increase over 2021
 - Increase in linear TV, connected TV, and paid social
 - Channel evolution
 - Television: Move from cable-only to include major networks
 - Connected TV: Adjust targeting, inventory, and partners
 - Endemics: Reduce spend with Adara, shift to Sojern
 - Social: Utilize more video
 - Streaming Audio: Test podcasts
 - Paid Search: Increase budget, maintain focus on lower funnel
 - Email: Added support via Vista Graphics in Boston and New York
 - Influencer: Maintain, explore new "creator" partnerships

VIII. Old Business

- No old business was presented

IX. New Business

- Kevin Lembke
 - Busch Gardens Howl-O-Scream attendance surpassed 2019 levels
- Cliff Fleet
 - Leisure ticket sales have shown strong performance
 - Williamsburg Inn received a *Forbes Travel Guide* Five Star Rating Award for 2021
 - Colonial Williamsburg received worldwide coverage for First Baptist Church's foundation excavation
- Mickey Chohany
 - Restaurant Week will take place January 21 – 31, 2022
 - Reiterated supply chain challenges

X. Closed Session

- Fleet motioned to enter into Closed Session
 - Pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel matters
- All were in favor

- Fleet motioned to exit Closed Session
 - We hereby certify that to the best of our knowledge, (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which closed the meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by this body in the closed meeting just concluded
- All were in favor

XI. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place in-person on January 18, 2022