

ATTACHMENT A

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

February 19, 2019
Williamsburg Tourism Council

**WILLIAMSBURG TOURISM COUNCIL
MEETING
STRYKER CENTER, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA
February 19, 2019
Meeting Notes**

A meeting of the Williamsburg Tourism Council was convened at 1:00 p.m. on February 19, 2019 at the Stryker Center, City of Williamsburg. A quorum was present with the following attendees:

Tourism Council Members Present:

Honorable Jeffrey D. Wassmer,	District 4 Supervisor, York County Board of Supervisors
Honorable Ruth Larson,	Chair, James City County Board of Supervisors
Dr. Mitchell Reiss,	President, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Doug Pons,	Vice Mayor, City of Williamsburg
Neal Chalkley,	President, Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association
Kevin Lembke,	President, Busch Gardens Williamsburg
Mickey Chohany,	Williamsburg Area Restaurant Association/Second Street Restaurant
Kym Hall,	Superintendent, National Park Service
Philip G. Emerson,	Executive Director, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
Jeanne Zeidler,	Chair, Board of Directors, Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance

Staff Members Present:

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

I. Call to Order

Jeff Wassmer called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

Mr. Wassmer said he wanted to start showcasing something that you would only see in Greater Williamsburg area and shared an image of a bald eagle on the Yorktown Monument. Kym Hall let the group know about the monument's recent construction updates.

II. Public Comment

There are no public comments.

III. Minutes

In the minutes, Mickey Chohany corrected a date typo. Doug Pons clarified his statement about the search firm survey.

After corrections, the minutes were approved.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Ruth Larson reported on revenue and expenses. She reported a current cash balance of \$5.4 million and expected a deposit within the next couple of days. Ms. Larson noted that there has not been much spending; however, the media spend begins March 4.

Ms. Larson also reported that the SB 942 tax collection numbers are becoming more steady month to month.

Ms. Larson stated that the WADMC account is still being closed out and all numbers should be near even. BB&T was chosen as the bank for the reserve money. Chesapeake Bank is the main bank.

At this time, Mr. Chohany requested that he would like more detail about the money coming in, where the revenue is, and would also like the cash projections slide expanded.

Kevin Lembke asked when the group would decide what to do with the extra money outside of the \$8.5 million budget. The group agreed to add any future spending suggestions to the March agenda, based on staff, agency, and partner recommendations, as well as any campaign reporting so far.

V. Committee Reports

a. Search Committee

Mr. Pons reported that the committee has conducted several interviews, but were not ready to make a decision as there were a couple more interviews scheduled. Mr. Pons stated that they are still on track to making a decision soon. He said it should be mid- to late-April until a new Executive Director would start.

b. Bylaws Committee

Mr. Chohany reported that the Tourism Council's bylaws were ready to be presented and approved. The goal of the bylaws was to be comprehensive, but not too wordy. Mr. Chohany also said that they are a living document and could be amended. He said he would disseminate to the Council that afternoon and would need any feedback by March 4. If necessary, the committee could reconvene to ensure a vote by the next Tourism Council meeting.

It was also reported that while the new bylaws are in sync with the Business Council's, they are not replicas. The Tourism and Business Councils do not have matching fiscal years to their funding sources, but they could be amended at a later time.

VI. Marketing Director Update

Dave Potter presented an update on the campaign creative. He said that staff had met with the marketing advisory group and agencies to further the “Funexpected” idea. Mr. Potter presented different creative examples, including digital ads and pre-roll video scripts. He also reported on a new LinkedIn page for B2B, social ads, and prints ads through Meredith publications (Family Circle, Parents, etc.).

In a media update, Mr. Potter presented timelines for digital and TV/streaming. This was also included in the Tourism Council packets. He also updated on public relations, including a visiting travel writer, new social media platforms (Pinterest and Instagram Stories), and SEO. Mr. Wassmer requested historical data on social impressions and trends.

Mr. Potter reported on what the Visit Williamsburg team is doing for the 2019 American Evolution Commemoration, including a featured article on the website.

When reporting on the destination marketing budget, Dave reminded the group that there have been some fundamental changes within the marketing. Because the content creation went up, the hours to produce the content did as well, but the agency rates did not increase. Mr. Lemke said he would like to see paid media be over 50% of the marketing budget.

Mr. Potter also announced that there have been two new hires: Jill Pongonis as Media Relations Manager and Robyn Gentry as Manager, Social Media & Website.

Ms. Larson asked when the team would know whether the campaign is working or not? Mr. Potter said response time and any necessary changes can be immediately.

Mr. Pons requested that when looking at additional spending dollars, a sponsorship line item should be added to attract new events, including sports events.

VII. Administrator Update

Jody Puckett presented a DMO comparison chart to the group, as a follow up to last month’s discussion.

Mr. Lembke requested that there could be more staff added, including in-house experts to offset agency costs.

Ms. Hall asked if there was a comparison of ROIs between different entities. Mr. Wassmer suggested putting an occupancy number on the chart, but they needed to find the right metric. Ms. Puckett said this could be a component to their research analysis.

Ms. Puckett reported that room night sales were down 2% YTD; however, there were other variables to consider other than marketing. Neal Chalkley also said that 2% of hotel inventory was lost in 2018. Ms. Puckett recommended doing a quarterly report

versus month-to-month. She said that localities will often have late filings, so the picture is not always accurate.

Ms. Puckett then reported on the economic impact study update. After a 2-month process, the company SIR in Richmond, was chosen for the project. Ms. Puckett said that a kick-off meeting was scheduled with SIR from Friday, February 22, to narrow scope of work, the contract, and a timeline. A steering committee would also be appointed.

At this time, Rachel Burgess with SIR presented on the company and their approach for the study. She said they have 5 focus areas: an overview of research and incremental tourism economic impact for the Williamsburg area; development of a visitor profile that can be used to plan future efforts; data collection that might be used to plan future infrastructure and product development; development of KPIs and benchmarks to use in 2020; and suggestions on brand development for the future.

Mr. Wassmer emphasized that this research was needed as a foundation to move forward. Mr. Chohany asked what the timeline was for executing the findings. Ms. Burgess said they would like to have real data within 4-6 months of signing the contract.

VIII. Chair Report

Mr. Wassmer reported that he continues community outreach through engagement with the York BOS, Williamsburg City Council, and the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance Annual Meeting.

For the GWCTA board, the Tourism Council needs to appoint 3 members. The purpose is to maintain continuity between organizations. Mr. Wassmer said based on previous discussion, the recommendations were Neal Chalkley, Doug Pons, and Mickey Chohany. A motion was presented and passed for these appointments.

Phil Emerson asked if there was a term limit. Jeanne Zeidler said the term is 2 years. They are eligible for 2 additional terms. Nothing is effective until 30 days after both the Business and Tourism Councils bylaws are approved.

IX. Old Business

Mr. Chohany asked for an update on last meeting's discussion on the tourism reserve fund. Mr. Wassmer said both reserve funds were approved – a "rainy day" fund and a development fund – however, no details were determined. Mr. Chohany said that the funds should be used for marketing because that is what the legislation states. Mr. Wassmer said that when he asked Senator Norment about product development, Senator Norment said that it would be okay if the Council approved it. Mr. Chohany then said that he would advocate against product development and he thought the municipalities' percentage would go toward that. Ms. Larson stated a development fund could also increase tourism in the area.

Mitchell Reiss believed that this was a capital investment discussion. Ms. Hall concluded the discussion by saying that any decision made should be driven by data.

X. Closed Session

XI. Adjournment

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