

**WILLIAMSBURG AREA DESTINATION MARKETING COMMITTEE**

**August 15, 2016**

**4:00 PM @ Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance**

**Meeting Notes**

**1. PRESIDING: WALT ZAREMBA, CHAIR**

**PRESENT:** Scott Foster, Karen Riordan, David Cromwell, Kevin Onizuk, Ron Kirkland, Rita McClenny, Andrea Sardone

**NOT PRESENT:** Phil Emerson, A. J. Patel,

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Susan Bak (representing Phil Emerson) Dave Potter, Corrina Ferguson, Jody Puckett, Julie O'Neil, Bob Harris, Krisi Olsen

2. Walt Zaremba established a quorum was present, calling the WADMC meeting to order. First order of business was to welcome Scott Foster, Vice Mayor, City of Williamsburg to the board replacing Doug Pons. Corrina Ferguson introduced our agency partners: Luckie: Mary Winslow, Brad White, Jay Waters, Maggie Valerio. Percepture: Thor Harris, Rene Mack, Angelica Colantuoni. Miles: Ileana Frascone.

The second order was to ask if any guests would like to make a public comment. No one wished to speak.

3. Walt Zaremba asked if everyone had reviewed the **June 20, 2016 Meeting Notes**. Kevin Onizuk motioned for approval of the notes, second by Karen Riordan, all members unanimously approved.
4. **FINANCE REPORT 2016** – David Cromwell presented the Financial Summary through July 31, 2016 asking if the members were good with the new format. The members were in agreement the format provides what they need.

Total revenue has shifted from an overall positive variance in the month of June to a negative YTD July 31. The shortfall may be due to some timing issues which are being monitored to determine what risk if any there may be moving into the fall. The Working Expenses planned overage is being off set by savings in the Support Expenses.

The annual audit has been completed. There are no issues other than some documentation recommendations. Upon review, the Executive Board will present the final audit to the full board in October.

5. **DESTINATION MARKETING DIRECTOR'S REPORT** – Corrina Ferguson presented the campaign update starting with Social Media highlights through July 31, 2016. The team has layered in a seasonal element promoting All In For August as an end of the season push.

Public Relations for June & July focused on media influencers and conversationalists with a good degree of success from articles published in major outlets focusing on a wide variety of subjects. Links to the articles can be found in this report. There was a partnership with Parents magazine and Google maps featuring Historic Jamestowne & Jamestown Settlement promoting a Washington DC & Williamsburg driving vacation. Additional press highlights included balancing history with recreation.

Now that we are in mid August, the 2016 campaign is beginning to wind down. The Williamsburg Tasting Trail brochure arrives next week which includes a map detailing where the breweries, winery and distilleries are located.

Planning for 2017 is well underway, meeting this week with agency partners and advisory group chairs to develop a strategic plan. The goal is to build on our successes as well as test and learn some new initiatives in order to build on a higher conversion. Some members suggested testing a non traditional market to fill the funnel with new visitors. Earned and social media are possible ways to efficiently approach new markets.

The strategy in approaching our traditional markets is based on visitation patterns and proximity to Williamsburg. The northeast has the primary markets where most of our visitors come from. Given the technology of reaching people today, we are looking more and more beyond geographic targeting.

The strategic plan will be presented to WADMC members in October. The plan will include an overview of 2016 campaign results, topline strategic direction for 2017 and preliminary 2017 revenue projection. Once you approve the strategic plan, a tactical Marketing Plan and budget will be developed to present to the WADMC members in December for approval.

Next, Corrina shared an update on The Booking Engine RFP process. Taskforce members are:

Julie O'Neil, Co-Chair	Busch Gardens
Kristi Olsen, Co-Chair	York County
Craig Farrin	Kingsmill Resort
Corrina Ferguson	WADMC

Bob Harris	Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance
Joan Heikens	Jamestown Yorktown Foundation
Ron Kirkland	Williamsburg Hotel & Motel Association
Margret Lindblom	Doubletree Hotel
Hitesh Patel	HMP Properties
Dave Potter	WADMC
Paula Pritchard	Colonial Williamsburg
Jody Puckett	James City County
Rich Saunders	City of Williamsburg
Billy Scruggs	Fife & Drum Inn
Mike Wynne	Westgate Resort

The booking RFP was published February 3. On April 14 two proposals were received. June 20 the taskforce recommended reissuing a less restrictive RFP. During WADMC's June 23 meeting, the members unanimously agreed to the reissuance of the RFP. RFP 2.0 was published July 15. This time three proposals were received July 20. The Committee met to discuss scores & proposals. During this meeting the taskforce could not come to consensus. August 5 the taskforce composed conflicting pros and cons of options. August 10 the taskforce voted on the following three options.

**Option 1**

Stay the course with our current model and work on its imperfections (can bundle lodging + tickets)

**Option 2**

Pursue a book direct model, with a focus on aggregating lodging offerings (no bundling with tickets)

**Option 3**

Don't go with any software integration at this time, if after 6-12 months this doesn't seem to work, revisit a booking engine for 2018-2019

Even after revising the RFP based on feedback of why companies hadn't responded during the first round. Because the taskforce cannot come to consensus and wants to do what is best for the destination, they wanted to ask WADMC for direction.

The WADMC members discussed their own pros and cons for each option and why a majority would like to change from the existing customer service option. For option one, one of the reasons a majority would like to make a change is due to customer changes in buying habits resulting in a year after year decline in sales on Visit Williamsburg, as well as other destination sites,. Sellers on the site would like to eliminate one more distribution point where they have to pay commissions. Because of the commissions, higher rates are provided to cover these costs resulting in non competitive package price points.

For option 2, this solves the commission issue but there would be a considerable annual expense to WADMC for licensing the software. It was also questionable if the packaging needs could be met.

Option 3 solves the commission issue with direct purchases on supplier's websites. The booking committee would need to be retooled to become the Retail Merchandise Advisory Committee. The main focus would be to find a solution for packaging and developing a way for all attractions to sell their tickets.

Walt Zarembo called for a motion. Kevin Onizuk motioned to not go with any software integration at this time, if after 6-12 months this doesn't seem to work, revisit a booking engine for 2018-2019, seconded by Ron Kirkland. The motion carried 8 to 3 from the following members:

Scott Foster, Karen Riordan, David Cromwell, Kevin Onizuk, Ron Kirkland, Andrea Sardone

WADMC further directed for the Booking Engine Advisory Group be re-tasked to become the Retail Advisory Group to focus on finding a ticket/package solution.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS** – Rita McClenny announced two local companies on the Williamsburg Tasting Trail had received VTC grants. Ron Kirkland provided copies of the new Go Williamsburg Visitor Guide.

There being no further business, Walt Zarembo adjourned the meeting announcing the **next WADMC Meeting will be held October 3, 4:00 PM, @ Greater Williamsburg Area Chamber & Tourism Alliance.**

Respectfully submitted by,

David M. Potter, WADMC Administrator