

Meeting of the Virginia Horse Industry Board

PATH Foundation

June 17, 2025

Members Present:

Sharon Molster

Barbara Riggs

Oliver Brown

Steve Escobar (proxy VHC)

Beth Smith

Amy Moore

Beth Sheely

Debbie Easter

Gail Rezendes-Dell

VDACS Staff Present:

Heather Wheeler

Amanda Neis-Berger

William Jennings

Justin Bell

Joe Guthrie

Beth Greene

Members of the Public:

Abby Sage

Sue Finneli

Jennifer LaPlume

- I. Call to Order- 11:04am
 - a. The meeting was called to order and introductions were given for all those present
- II. Motion to move Public Comment- Because several public guests were joining the meeting to discuss grant and sponsorship opportunities, it was observed that public comment should be moved to the beginning of the meeting so as not to take away from the additional important subject matter to be discussed.
 - a. S Escobar made a motion to move the Public Comment period to the beginning of the meeting. A Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
O. Brown	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
B. Sheely	Yes
S. Molster	Yes
D. Easter	Yes

- III. Public Comment- Abby Sage, Sue Finneli, Jennifer LaPulme all gave a brief presentation to the Board detailing background of their organization and their request for funding opportunities from the VHIB to potentially help support _____. (Accreditation program outside of thoroughbred)?
- IV. VHIB Marketing Contract Discussion
 - a. Presentation by TopRight Partners- Year one Recep- A brief presentation was given by A Spoleti of TopRight to serve as a year one review of work completed for the full Board. The presentation included the following:
 - i. Overview of initial research phase- What sets VA apart; Brand Audit; Social Listening; Audience Segmentation; Stakeholder Interviews
 - ii. Reading of 6 second Brand Narrative
 - iii. Visual Identity Overview- Color Palette; Logo Concepts and final design; The overall focus on the industry versus the Board itself
 - iv. Review of high-level goals- How the Board wants to be seen as a go-to resource for everyone in the VA horse industry
 - v. Year 1 focuses- Increase awareness; increase number of in-state and out-of-state competitors; Primary versus secondary target audiences;

Opportunity and awareness of VHIB in competitive states (MD, FL, KY, NY, PA); Events calendar build-out

- vi. Year 2 strategy- Build on year one, continue awareness drivers; Build out social media and general content creation; Website strategy- Create central research hub for industry in-state, Comprehensive research library, Quarterly content audits and UI/UX Optimization, job board page
- vii. Awareness campaign goals- Opportunity and awareness- Paid media strategy- reaching target audiences where they live; Social channels- Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube; Equine channels- Member marketing, media partnerships, event targeted
- viii. Campaign Concept- “Unbridled Virginia”- Only Virginia can provide a comprehensive equine experience
- ix. Board Events- Spring listening panel; Fall event
- x. Business Systems overview- Letterhead, name tags, business cards, email signatures, powerpoint templates
- xi. Next Steps into FY 2026
 - 1. Content Management/Development- Have a VA candidate ready to interview; Contract “on the ground” photographers and videographers (licensing additional work from venue specific and approved photographs); Photoshoot end of summer/early fall to build out content library
 - 2. Grant Program restructuring- Assess current program and audit similar programs
 - 3. Fall Event at Morven Park (tentative)- Vendors to be contracted as year two work starts; will use board-created invites list and TopRight will send out

V. Contract Discussion among Board

- a. Assistant Attorney General Justin Bell discussed the particulars of the current marketing contract (year one) and expectations for year two.
- b. Motion to move into closed session- After advisory from J Bell, it was decided the meeting should enter closed session. It was agreed that S Escobar was welcome to join in the closed session discussion as a proxy for D Lands. D Easter made a motion to move the meeting into closed session with the following language: The Board will enter a closed meeting to discuss the Board’s contract with AVA TopRight LLC. The purpose of the closed meeting is to consult with the Board’s legal counsel pursuant to § 2.2-3711 (A)(8) of the *Code of Virginia*: Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by

a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting merely because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter. Staff is instructed to record the nature of the subject matter and the purpose of the closed session in the minutes. During this closed session, the Board will restrict its discussion only to those matters relating to the Board's contract with AVA Top Right LLC. The Board may permit nonmembers to attend this closed meeting if such persons are deemed necessary or if their presence will reasonably aid the Board in the closed meeting. Upon the conclusion of the closed session, the Board will immediately reconvene in an open meeting and take a recorded vote to certify that the closed session only included the business matters relating to the aforementioned contract. S Escobar seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
O. Brown	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
B. Sheely	Yes
S. Molster	Yes
A. Moore	Yes

- c. Motion to exit closed session- D Easter motioned to exit the closed session with the following language: The Board has concluded its closed session. I will now call for each member of this Board to certify to the best of their knowledge: (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under this chapter and; (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the public body. Any member of the public body who believes that there was a departure from the requirements of clauses (i) and (ii), shall so state prior to the vote, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his judgment, has taken place. Staff is instructed to record the certification as well as any members who believe that there was a departure from the requirements in the meeting minutes. S Escobar seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
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O. Brown	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
B. Sheely	Yes
S. Molster	Yes
A. Moore	Yes

VI. Review & Discussion of Electronic Meeting Policy

- a. J Bell answered questions from the Board regarding their current electronic meeting policy, and possible application to the marketing subcommittee’s needs to adopt a similar policy. Of primary concern was the ability for the marketing subcommittee to hold a quorum when necessary, and guidelines on appropriate meeting spaces. J Bell advised that subcommittees have to have at least four (4) members, with three (3) members assembling in person to constitute a quorum. J Bell continued to advise that ideally, three of the four subcommittee members would live close enough together that assembling an in-person quorum would not be an issue. If this were the case, the fourth member would always have an option to dial-in, as physical quorum would be established. A Moore made a motion to formalize the Board’s electronic meeting policy. D Easter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
O. Brown	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
B. Sheely	Yes
S. Molster	Yes
S. Escobar	Yes

VII. Discussion of narrowing/refining scope of work for contract year two and deciding on final deliverables

- a. Various factors of the second year contract with TopRight were discussed, including:
- i. Hiring of additional personnel where needed- Ex. Executive Director. As the Program Manager is only expected to interact with the Board and its affairs as a portion of his duties under VDACS, it has been observed that the hiring of an “Executive Director” could provide full-

time oversight for a full-time project. Based on the Board's needs, hiring of a Content Manager was also discussed.

- ii. Assignment of responsibilities to the Board members versus TopRight Partners- As certain sections of work and deliverables are refined for year two, it was noted that there needs to be better distinction between the current assignment of responsibilities as to which party is responsible for what. As an example, it was observed that the Board would rather decide on the roadmap of show circuits to advertise within, versus letting TopRight structure.
- iii. Addition of subject matter experts where needed- H Wheeler pointed out the Board's ability to add "subject matter experts" as an additional reference group for industry-specific inquiries or concerns. As an example, five Western discipline experts could be chosen at the Board's discretion to discuss Western-specific needs in advertising. This could include things like rider form, attire, setting, and so on.

VIII. Decision to move forward with discussions and ultimately finalization of year two contract with TopRight

- a. D Easter noted the need to continue to refine the scope of work provided for year two of the marketing contract, including outstanding work from year one needed completion. A Moore made a motion to continue refining the scope of work for year two of the marketing contract with TopRight Partners, based on the Board's immediate needs and concerns for the body of work presented. D Easter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Adjournment- 3:01pm