

MEETING OF THE VIRGINIA HORSE INDUSTRY BOARD

PATH Foundation-Warrenton, Va

July 21, 2025

Members Present:

Amy Moore

Beth Smith

Gail Rezendes-Dell

Debbie Easter

Sharon Molster

Barbara Riggs

Gretchen Carr

Frank Ferguson

Virtual:

Beth Sheely

David Lands

- I. Call to order- 10:19am
 - a. The meeting was called to order
- II. Marketing Contract Year 2 Deliverables
 - a. Amanda Neis-Berger and William Jennings from VDACS gave an overview of the current deliverables list, which they've collaborated on with the marketing subcommittee to finalize.
 - b. VDACS staff and Board members provided historical context of the deliverables list for the two new Board members, Frank and Gretchen. This included scope of year one work, overview of branding development and

iconography, what work has been completed thus far, and refinements and goals for year two.

- c. Deliverables list was thoroughly reviewed page-by-page between Board members present, VDACS personnel, and Board members joining virtually. After each page was discussed, program manager G Petro gauged everyone's understanding by soliciting any outstanding questions or concerns. Subsequent sections were not reviewed until preceding sections were understood and agreed upon by all members present.
 - i. Comments were made by Board members and VDACS staff in an attempt to clarify information or refine verbiage in the current deliverables within several sections. Those comments are as follows:
 - 1. Media Plan and Media Buying- Amanda Neis-Berger noted that although there has been a pause in work, TopRight has continued to optimize the media plan already approved and in place
 - 2. Content Generation- Photography & Videography- A Moore asked for clarity on money needed for licensing images for use in marketing materials. It was decided that TopRight should be responsible for these payments, although this language needs to be included in the year two scope.
 - 3. CRM & Email Nurture Program- Reviewed requirement for past sponsorees and grantees to provide email mailing lists on demand per original VHIB agreements. H Wheeler mentioned that organizations are also required to share the VHIB's contact and website information with their own constituents.
 - 4. Economic Impact Study- A Moore noted the importance of this study and section of work for year two. In her words, the main concern is that this study is being drafted by economists with no real equine experience and supervised by a marketing team with little equine experience. Because of this, it is imperative the Board have a weigh-in on baseline materials created for the study's completion, such as survey questionnaires.
 - a. H Wheeler reviewed finished materials the Board may want to see from this study as compared to the last EIS previously completed by the VHIB. These included a hard-bound copy of the study, infographics and high-level summaries for key personnel, the full original study (complete with data/appendices), and a high-

level presentation (powerpoint) to share with key personnel.

- 5. Budget- Sections of work for the year two contract labeled “Optional” were discussed, with D. Easter noting that the full Board should approve completeness of work in the non-optional sections before allowing further spending on optional work. It was observed that the Board would need an additional surplus fund to be approved to cover any increases in spending that may occur through the year, or likewise any changes in financial priorities. It was also noted that the \$200,000 estimate for Content Development/Management was fair given the unknowns of how many contractors would be required (photography, videography, copywriting, social management). A Moore made a motion to approve the surplus of \$200,000.00 for Content Development and Management, with an additional \$150,000.00 to be allocated towards any additional expenses across separate categories of work throughout the year, bringing the total approved spend for year two to \$847,000.00. S Molster seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
D. Easter	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
F. Ferguson	Yes
G. Carr	Yes

- 6. Content Manager Position/Hiring- D Easter wanted clarification as to roles and responsibilities when hiring a Content Manager for the VHIB’s social media management and content production. It was explained that TopRight would utilize a list of criteria developed by the Board as a roadmap for finding an appropriate individual. Upon narrowing of the candidates to between three and five qualified individuals, the Board would have final say to approve the selected candidate.

III. Future Aspects of Contract

- a. Due to the necessity of having equine-experienced individuals' input on various elements of the Economic Impact Study, it was decided that the Board should designate a separate subcommittee to handle aspects of the decision-making process as the study is built out. Frank Ferguson volunteered to join the originally proposed team of A Moore, D Lands, and D Easter. S.Molster made a motion to approve formation of an Economic Impact Study subcommittee with members Amy Moore, David Lands, Debbie Easter, and Frank Ferguson. D Easter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
A. Moore	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
F. Ferguson	Yes
G. Carr	Yes

- b. A discussion was had regarding the importance of timely communication and decision making required to finalize the year two scope of work with TopRight. Because of this condensed timeframe, and a majority agreement as to the completeness of the deliverables list, it was posed that the current marketing subcommittee be able to negotiate any remaining contract elements with TopRight to finalize the agreement. A. Moore made a motion that the marketing subcommittee be able to negotiate and ultimately finalize the year two scope of work agreement with TopRight on the Board's behalf. S. Molster seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Riggs	Yes
D. Easter	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
F. Ferguson	Yes
G. Carr	Yes

- c. It was decided that the addition of one more member to the marketing subcommittee would be advantageous to discussions and meeting requirements. Gretchen Carr expressed interest in joining the marketing subcommittee, at which point S. Molster made a motion for Gretchen to be a full-time member of the committee. B Riggs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A. Moore	Yes
D. Easter	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
F. Ferguson	Yes
G. Carr	Yes

IV. Morven Park Sponsorship

- a. The Board discussed the options provided by Morven Park to host a hospitality/VIP event for industry consultants the night before the eventing weekend. Although originally slotted for Thursday, October 9, Stacey Metcalf with Morven Park asked if the Board would be willing to move the event to Wednesday, October 8 instead. Upon review of the event options, and discussion as to how this drives the Board’s current mission and goals, it was decided that the Board would not host any additional event in coordination with the sponsorship already issued to Morven Park for their 4-day eventing weekend October 8-12, 2025.

V. Executive Director Discussion

- a. H. Wheeler gave an overview of the VDACS process for RFP and ultimately the hiring of an Executive Director for the VHIB. Due to fears of a lengthy process with possible restrictions, A. Neis-Berger and W. Jennings explained the possibility of utilizing a staffing company, which already works closely with VDACS. It was outlined that this process would circumvent the need for an RFP and would also provide more flexibility in finding the best match of individual to work with the Board. Advantages include:
 - i. Ability to narrow the field of potential candidates more quickly
 - ii. Flexibility in finding the best match (IE if work begins and problems occur/work is not sufficient, the Board can choose again without consequence)
 - iii. Flexibility in hourly rate based on ceiling of \$98/hr approval
 - iv. Ability to locate very specialized candidates in an already narrow field
- b. D. Easter requested that the marketing subcommittee be able to decide on parameters for Executive Director hiring based on the above.

VI. Dates for August and September

- a. August 18 will be a virtual Board meeting
- b. September 22 will be an in-person Board meeting at the PATH Foundation in Warrenton, VA

VII. Adjournment- 1:10pm

- a. S. Molster motioned to adjourn the meeting. B. Riggs seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

A. Moore	Yes
D. Easter	Yes
B. Smith	Yes
G. Rezendes-Dell	Yes
F. Ferguson	Yes
G. Carr	Yes