

Virginia Wine Board Draft Meeting Minutes

Thursday December 4, 2025

Board Members Present

Megan Seibel, Chair

Anne Shelton

Luca Paschina

Stephen Barnard

Nate Walsh

Commissioner Joseph Guthrie

Aubrey Rose, Treasurer

Board Members Absent

Nate Walsh

Lerem Baki

James King

George Hodson, Vice Chair

Guests and Staff Present

Jennifer Reichert, StonyWater

Laura Maxey-Nay, VDACS

Elizabeth Akers, Wine Board Marketing Office

Anna Anderson, Wine Board Marketing Office

Annette Boyd, Wine Board Marketing Office

Megan Hereford, Virginia Cider Association

Chrisa Giorgi, Wine Cellar Stories

Emily Hodson, Grape Breeding

Joy Ting, Winemakers Research Exchange

AJ Greely, Virginia Vineyards Association

Susan Kramer, Wine Board Marketing Office

Desiree Harrison-Brown, Wine Board Marketing Office

Staci Saunders, Virginia Wine Distribution Company

Dakota Rust, Virginia Beer Distribution Company

Matthieu Finot, King Family Vineyards/ Technical Committee Chair

Christopher Hurst, Veritas

- I. Call to Order – 10:12 AM
- II. Minutes
 - a. *A motion was made by N. Walsh to approve the minutes from the May meeting and seconded by A. Shelton. The motion passed unanimously.*
- III. Board Docs Alternatives – L. Maxey-Nay
 - a. Reviewed SharePoint and gaining access
 - b. Decided to use SharePoint instead of BoardDocs
 - c. Agreed to put grants into SharePoint only, instead of Google
- IV. Financial Report – A. Rose

FY26 Budget November 25, 2025

		Research 1/3	Marketing 2/3	
Income				
CASH BALANCE ENTERING JULY 2025 (Confirmed)	\$ 1,799,833.88			
estimated payments in process for FY25 costs	\$ (465,934.40)			
FY26 Allocation per GA budget	\$ 2,330,810.00			
Reserved to be carryover into FY27 per May 2025 discussion	\$ (417,924.35)			
Net available to spend	\$ 3,246,785.13	= \$ 1,082,261.71	\$ 2,164,523.42	
CONTINUING Expenses/Commitments				
FY23-24 Grants that extend into FY26	Virv	\$ 76,284.64		
FY24-25 Grants that extend into FY26	Novel vines; Tannins	\$ 13,829.71		
FY25-26 Grants selected in March 2025		\$ 314,148.00	\$ 208,945.00	
Total Continuing Expenses	\$ 613,207.35	= \$ 404,262.35	\$ 208,945.00	
		65.9%	34.1%	1/3 to 2/3 Ratio Status for Continuing
NEW Expenses/Commitments				
WRE Contract (year 4 of 5)		\$ 327,220.00		
Grape Breeding Initiative (year 4 of 5)		\$ 249,678.63		
National Grape Research Alliance (FY26 dues and rep travel)		\$ 20,000.00		
Governor's Cup Competition FY25-26 (year 1 of 5)			\$ 100,000.00	
Wine Board Marketing Office FY25-26 (year 4 of 5)			\$ 1,255,000.00	
WBMO Office Rent			\$ 37,456.38	
Wireless Services			\$ 2,000.00	
Grant Management Contract FY25-26 (year 3 of 5)			\$ 73,000.00	
Board Admin (Board Docs, EVA, Travel) FY25-26			\$ 20,000.00	
Additional FY 26-27 Grants TO BE SELECTED in MARCH 2026				
Contingency				
Total New Expenses - Approved	\$ 2,084,355.01	= \$ 596,898.63	\$ 1,487,456.38	
		28.6%	71.4%	1/3 to 2/3 Ratio Status for New
		\$ 90,938.52	<--amount below (or above) current 1/3	
	\$ 2,697,562.36	37.1%	62.9%	1/3 to 2/3 Ratio Status NET
Available Balance	\$ 549,222.77	\$ 81,100.73	\$ 468,122.04	# 1/3 to 2/3 Ratio Available
		1/3 (floor)	2/3 (ceiling)	

- V. Industry Reports – Full Reports on SharePoint if notes not provided below.
 - a. Winemakers Research Exchange – J. Ting
 - b. VDACS – J. Guthrie
 - i. Heather Wheeler transitioned divisions into Commodity Servies which leaves the Manager of Domestic Marketing position open.

- ii. Jennifer Reichert has been hired as grants manager of the Virginia Horse Industry Board.
 - iii. Katie Frazier has been selected as the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture
 - c. Virginia Wineries Association – report reviewed from SharePoint
 - d. Virginia Wine Distribution Company – S. Saunders
 - i. Software upgrade underway to roll out early 2026. Update will include one portal for both beer and wine clients
 - e. ViRV Grape Breeding – E. Hodson and B. Jordan
 - f. National Grape Research Alliance – E. Hodson
 - g. Virginia Cider Association – M. Hereford
 - i. Lowered membership dues to encourage more membership (18-20 members currently). There are around 50 total cideries in VA.
 - ii. Offered \$150 incentive if member submitted entry to Governors Cup.
 - iii. Annual meeting will be held in April in Richmond.
 - h. Virginia Vineyards Association – A. Greely
 - i. Commercial grape report- one survey out verses two sent out.
 - ii. New software purchased with grant has helped efficiency.
 - iii. Annual meeting: Anticipate more vendor spaces being rented and more attendees
 - iv. Starting regional meetings on December 18.
 - i. Wine Board Marketing Office – A. Boyd.
- VI. Wine Cellar Stories – C. Giorgi
 - a. Recorded 30 vineyards/ 10% of VA Vineyards
 - b. Editing now with release date by June of 2026
- VII. Wine Vision –A. Anderson
- VIII. Public Comment
 - a. On 10/15/25, J. Guthrie’s office received an anonymous paper letter, with no return address, as did some other Board members. It requests the contents be shared in a confidential session. However, none of the letter’s several observations and suggestions meet the legal requirements to enter closed session per the Virginia code. The letter has been shared with the entire Board and shall be included in the minutes as it would if it were public comment.
- IX. Letter of Support
 - a. Board will support the Chair and Vice-Chair's decision
- X. Grants Management – J. Reichert, Full report in SharePoint
 - a. The Board determined that their ratings of grant reports was useful. They will review the December 2025 progress reports.
 - b. *M. Siebel made a motion for Matthiew Finot to be the chair of Technical Committee, seconded by L. Paschina and motion passed unanimously*

c. *A. Rose made a motion for the 6 current members on the Technical Committee to remain on the committee, seconded by S. Barnard, motion passed, M. Seibel abstained.*

XI. Pre-Proposal Review

- a. Discussed pre-proposals and selected which to invite, providing feedback as appropriated.
- b. Following discussion, 31 pre-proposals were selected to submit a full proposal, 6 were declined, and 3 were referred to the matching marketing program.
- c. *S. Barnard made a motion to invite, decline, and refer to the Matching Marketing grant program as discussed. N. Walsh seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous.*

XII. Next Meeting Date/Location

- a. Graduate Hotel in Charlottesville, VA on 3/31 and 4/1

XIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by S. Barnard and seconded by A. Rose. The motion passed unanimously

Items for the wine board to discuss: Share this with the other board members in a confidential executive session.

- **Should a benefactor of the board funding also be the secretary for that same board? A gate keeper has a large amount of control and spin. I've seen this before on other boards. Not healthy.**
- **Does the marketing efforts benefit all wineries? Some say naught. Favoritism.**
- **Is there a form of incestuous overlap between associations and boards that should be split apart? If not the boards then maybe the people.**
- **RFQ the marketing to make sure your path is best and of best use for the funds you spend.**
- **The winemakers research exchange was to be funded until it could split off under its own funding. That needs now to happen.**
- **More research needs to be done to benefit all the wineries.**
- **Virginia has a growing acetic acid level increase problem in their products plus other flaws. The newbie needs help at their level. High level research may be causing this new wine flaw issue if people don't understand the correct application. Also much of the research [reportedly] is duplicate efforts from previously board funded research.**
- **It's easy to malaise as a board. Think and pay attention. Lead. Look at history.**

The wine advisory board might need to step up and lead what marketing efforts, vineyard research and enology programs need to be pursued. Don't stand back and wait to see what someone else, that financially benefits, wants to do. You lead.

Seek solid programs with measureable goals that someone on the board actually understands, follows and guides.

Don't just take the glowing remarks and delivery of the person reporting to you about their program and how well they spent Wine Board money.

Be serious in moving the industry in an upward and progressive direction. This takes energy.

With the Virginia Wine Coalition you have actually paid to have your lunch stolen. Your group should be helping your industry with regulation information and ways to help alleviate regulatory restrictions. Help the industry.

Fact check and spot check budgets if not do a full blown financial audit of what is going on. When was the last audit and who lead that? Report to the industry what you find and your path from that point forward.

Show that funds spent by the Wine Board are spent for the benefit of the industry as a whole. Commingling between the VWA and excluding some is still a problem. Follow what you spend and what groups are doing with it. Open resources funded by the board to all.