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MINUTES
VIRGINIA TOURISM AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Pinkston
3110 Fairview Park Dr # 1400
Falls Church, VA 22042

Thursday, June 05, 2025

Members Present: Mr. Justin Beale, Mr. Moses Foster, Mr. Eric Jones, The Honorable Matthew Lohr, The Honorable Luis Lopez Stipes, Ms. Lisa Meriwether, Captain Jill Mills, Ms. Susan Payne, Mr. Christian Pinkston, Mr. Justin Reid, Ms. AJ Robinson, The Honorable Juan Pablo Segura, and Mr. Terry Stroud

Members Absent: The Honorable Stephen Cummings, Mr. Damian Dajcz, The Honorable Winsome Earle-Sears, The Honorable Stefanie Taillon, and Ms. Lori Waran

VTA Staff Present: Mr. Jason Alexander, Mr. Chris Canfield, Mr. Andy Edmunds, Ms. Jane Lammay, Ms. Caitlin Johnson, Ms. Rita McClenny, Ms. Lindsey Norment, Mr. Dan Roberts, and Ms. Carolyn Wren

Guests Present: Mr. Matthew Avila – Hunden Partners; Mr. Barry Biggar – Fairfax County; Ms. Bethanie DeRose – Hunden Partners; Ms. Elizabeth Myers – Office of the Attorney General; Mr. Ryan Sheridan – Hunden Partners; and Mr. Eric Terry – Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association (VRLTA).

I. Call to Order

The summer meeting for the Virginia Tourism Authority was held on Thursday, June 5, 2025, at Pinkston headquarters, Falls Church, Virginia. Chairwoman Jill Mills called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. and welcomed everyone. A quorum was present.

II. Investiture

Mr. Moses Foster of Richmond, President & CEO – West Cary Group
In April 2007, Mr. Foster opened West Cary Group with the idea of combining ROI-oriented marketing with elegant creative. Outside the office, he serves on the Executive Advisory Council for the University of Richmond Robins School of Business, the Board of Trustees for HCA Chippenham/Johnston-Willis Hospitals, and the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce. Prior to forming WCG, Foster was senior director of creative development at Capital One. He holds a BA from Virginia Tech.

III. Approval of Minutes from December 05, 2024

Ms. Lisa Meriwether moved to adopt the minutes from the Board Meeting on December 05, 2024, and Mr. Eric Jones seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. Report of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Secretary Segura emphasized the importance of finishing the administration strong. He noted that the Kalahari project generated more impact than the previous two

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49 administrations combined. His directive is for VTC to strengthen collaboration with other
50 state agencies, expand both B2B and B2C engagement, and enhance how we tell Virginia's
51 tourism story across multiple platforms and audiences.

52

53 **V. Chairwoman's Report**

54 Chairwoman Mills thanked the Virginia Tourism Authority staff present and all members for
55 their attendance and participation in the meeting.

56

57 **VI. Welcome**

58 Mr. Biggar thanked Ms. Rita McClenny for the invitation to the meeting. Fairfax County was
59 happy to host and welcome everyone and all were left with a gift bag and items to take.

60

61 **VII. Statewide Tourism Plan | Hunden Partners**

62 Ms. Caitlin Johnson emphasized the importance of strategic planning, noting that now is the
63 optimal time to shape Virginia's tourism future. She introduced the State Tourism Plan (STP)
64 as a comprehensive roadmap for growing Virginia's tourism industry.

65

66 Ms. Bethanie DeRose provided additional details on the STP, highlighting its focus on
67 product development and aligning regional assets with market demand. The plan aims to
68 strengthen Virginia's tourism competitiveness over the next three years by increasing
69 visitation and traveler spending. To date, 9–10 regional visits have been completed,
70 encompassing 28 meetings with 428 stakeholders and identifying 211 Points of Interest
71 (POIs). The goal of the STP is to optimize Virginia's tourism assets and increase its overall
72 competitiveness to travelers. The focus is to promote Virginia's strongest lures and identify
73 gaps in tourism product development.

74

75 Attendees discussed topics including economic development opportunities, investment
76 timelines, and branding strategies. There was consideration of adopting a three-year
77 planning horizon versus a traditional five-year model, as well as the importance of public-
78 private partnerships such as those with youth sports facilities like The St. James in Fairfax
79 and infrastructure improvements, including additional branded hotels in Shenandoah Valley
80 and a convention hotel in Richmond.

81

82 Additional ideas included expanding wine tourism and leveraging proximity to Washington,
83 D.C., to attract overflow visitors. Next steps include continued stakeholder engagement,
84 completion of place-based assessments, development of recommendations, and
85 submission of draft and final State Tourism Plan documents.

86

87 **VIII. Staff Reports**

88 Ms. Lindsey Norment provided an update on the ongoing flagship campaign, which will
89 continue through September. The campaign's objective is to drive increased visitor
90 spending across the Commonwealth. It emphasizes awareness and engagement among
91 experience-seeking travelers in key domestic markets, with growing reach in additional
92 regions. Early performance indicators demonstrate strong awareness gains and increased
93 lodging activity. The campaign is fully digital, designed for rapid optimization, and
94 strategically avoids broadcast media to maintain audience engagement and minimize
95 fatigue.

96

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97 A co-branded grant program will launch next week to support up to 100 DMO partners from
98 September–October, aligning with the campaign’s end. Tiers include paid social, digital,
99 influencer, and large-scale activations (e.g., Phillies vs. Mets). ROI is currently \$5 returned
100 per \$5 spent. The team is tracking campaign impact through ad performance and image
101 surveys, with future KPIs to shift toward visit intent and brand perception.
102

103 Mr. Jason Alexander provided a budget update, noting that the agency’s overall budget
104 remains stable for FY2025 with only minor adjustments. He highlighted ongoing support
105 from central appropriations and partner transfers, as well as the continued allocation of
106 funds to marketing and pass-through programs.
107

108 Mr. Dan Roberts provided an update on statewide tourism performance, noting strong
109 growth in visitor volume, spending, and length of stay compared to prior years. He
110 highlighted continued recovery and resilience across key regions, with Northern Virginia
111 serving as a major contributor to overall economic impact and employment. Discussion
112 included ongoing trends in leisure travel, air arrivals, and market competitiveness, as well
113 as future funding priorities to support tourism and economic development initiatives.
114

115 Ms. Rita McClenny provided an update on aligning budget priorities with high-value
116 markets, emphasizing the importance of targeting areas where consumer demand and
117 business opportunity intersect. She outlined key challenges impacting the industry,
118 including significant infrastructure funding needs, workforce constraints, and reduced
119 federal support for national marketing efforts. McClenny also noted recent regional grant
120 awards supporting tourism development and shared details on upcoming industry events
121 and the next Board meeting.
122

123 **IX. Adjournment / Lunch**

124 Mr. Terry Stroud moved to adjourn the meeting, and The Honorable Juan Segura seconded
125 the motion. Chairwoman Mills called for a voice vote, and the motion was approved
126 unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.