



Tourism Advisory Board

June 13, 2023 9:30 am

Caucus Room, City Hall

9:30 am Call to order, approval of past meeting minutes

9:35 am May 2023 Tourism Review

9:45 am Sector Reports

- **Lodging**
- **Restaurants**
- **Retail**
- **Attractions/Arts**

10:15 am Old Business

10:25 am New Business

10:30 am Adjourn

Tourism Advisory Board Meeting

May 9, 2023 9:30 am

Members/City Staff Present:

Greg Beam – SDDA
Stephanie Cabacoy – American Shakespeare Center
Sandi Carraro – Book Dragon
Michelle Davis – Hotel 24 South
Liz Fravel - Mary Baldwin University
Paige Hildebrand – Frontier Culture Museum
Robin von Seldeneck – Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library
Annette Spencer for Brian Gearhart – Heritage Hospitality
Sheryl Wagner – Staunton Tourism
Jessica Williams – Staunton Tourism

Members/City Staff Absent:

Steve Claffey, Mayor – City Council Liaison
Andrew Greene - Heifetz Institute
Robert Higgs – Barren Ridge Vineyards, Accordia
Sarah Lynch – Baja Bean
Jeff Ramsey – Gibson’s Warehouse, Byers Street Bistro
Ross Williams – Frederick House

Others Present:

Ellen Boden – Staunton Antiques Center
Terah Cox – Words Matter
Julia Sabin – Staunton Books
Juliette Swenson – CoArt Gallery
Pamela Wagner – Arcadia Project
Michelle Waitier – SDDA
Tara Wall - WWPL
June – Heifetz
Kevin Hettinger – Society for Victorian Arts and Culture
Gabe - MBU

Call To Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order. A motion was made by Liz Fravel and seconded by Robin von Seldeneck to approve the previous meeting minutes. Minutes were approved.

April 2023 Tourism Review – Sheryl Wagner

Activities

The Tourism Department staff took part in the following promotional, networking, or administrative activities in April:

- April promotions included, Hit the Trails in Staunton, Earth Day, Shop and Dine Out Downtown Returns, Historic Garden Week in Staunton, Where to Find Staunton Souvenirs, Sunspots Celebrates 23 Years in Staunton, Shenandoah National Park Fee-Free Days, Staunton-Area Wineries with Views, Shakespeare’s Birthday Party, Staunton Music Festival’s Springfest, What’s New in Staunton, Spring Ghost Tours, Victorian Home Tours, and weekly special events.
- Hosted the first Staunton VA250 Committee meeting on April 6 at the Frontier Culture Museum.
- Assisted in preparations for the Virginia Association of Destination Marketing Organization’s (VADMO) Spring Tourism Symposium.
- Jessica Williams attended the Southeast Tourism Society Domestic Showcase in Huntsville, AL April 16 – 20.
- Sheryl Wagner attended a Virginia Women’s Municipal Leadership Institute class in Charlottesville on April 20.
- Sheryl Wanger attended the VADMO Spring Tourism Symposium in Suffolk, VA April 24 – 26.
- Hosted Canadian travel writers Jan Canapini and Henk Geurts April 27 – 29.
- Managed social media and blog posts for Visit Staunton, the Shenandoah Beerwerks Trail, and the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership (SVTP.)
- Produced weekly and monthly e-newsletters and *Staunton on Tap* weekly listing of events.
- Attended a Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership (SVTP) meeting, an SVTP Marketing Committee meeting, a Shenandoah Beerwerks Trail meeting, a Queen City Mischief & Magic meeting, two social influencer meetings, and a meeting with our marketing agency.

Public Relations

The following is a list of newspapers, websites, magazines, and television stations that published articles about Staunton:

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Apr 17	<u>Turn Back the Clock: Charming Retro Diners in Every State</u>	MSN.com	177,956,931
Apr 27	<u>8 Coolest Small Towns in Virginia for a Summer Vacation</u>	World Atlas	3,972,483
Apr 21	<u>Happening This Weekend: Earth Day Celebration in Staunton</u>	WHSV-TV	490,229
Apr 07	<u>“Shop and Dine Out in Downtown” Returns to Staunton</u>	WHSV-TV	490,229
Apr 14	<u>Historic Garden Week Kicking Off</u>	WCAV-TV	245,301
Apr 05	<u>Historic Garden Week - Homes & Gardens Tour</u>	News Leader	124,094
Apr 10	<u>Gardening to Save Nature Theme of Earth Day Staunton</u>	News Leader	124,094
Apr 19	<u>Blooming History: Virginia Garden Club Celebrates 90 Years</u>	Daily News Record	90,215
Apr 12	<u>Public Invited to American Shakespeare Center’s Double Birthday Bash</u>	Augusta Free Press	87,600
Apr 05	<u>Sunspots Studios Celebrates 23 Years of Bringing Glassblowing to the Queen City</u>	Augusta Free Press	69,931
Apr 10	<u>Staunton Vintage Lifestyle Fashion Boutique Holds Grand Opening</u>	News Virginian	31,833

Staunton-Area Wineries With Views

The Shenandoah Valley has always been known for its views. And more recently, it's been making a name for itself for its wines. According to Richmond Magazine, "The relatively cool, dry, and gentle climate of the Shenandoah Valley produces a wider breadth of more resilient varieties, leading to bright wines that pack bright acidity. So why not celebrate this abundance by pairing one of these wonderful wines with some stunning scenery at one of our Staunton-area wineries with views?"

YOU'RE INVITED SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

Saturday April 22

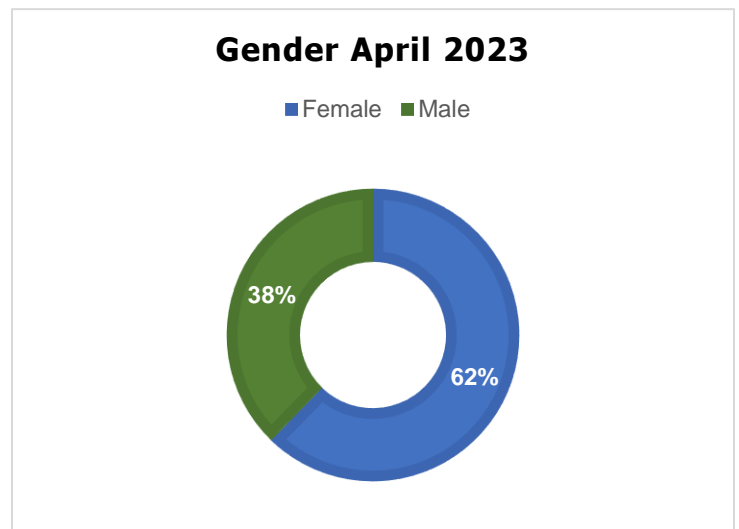
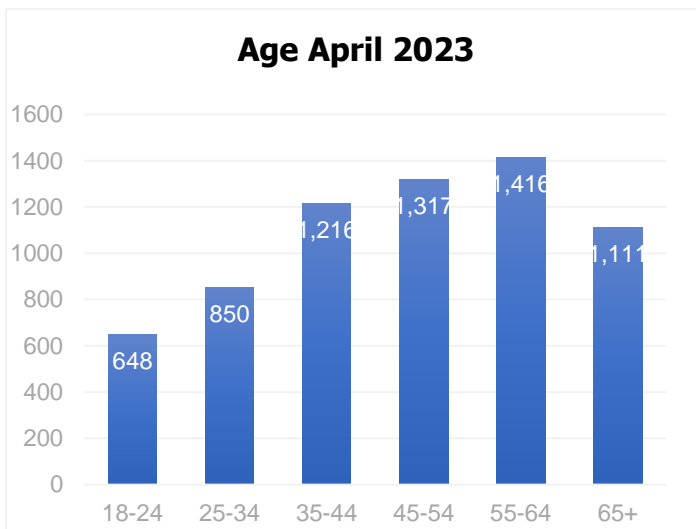
You're invited to attend the best back party of the year right outside the Backfields Playhouse—HBC for the whole family! The American Shakespeare Center is also celebrating their 20th season in their 2023 artistic year with [these ideas](#).

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Apr 11	<u>We Want to Retire in the Carolinas or Virginias in a Walkable Town Neither Too Large Nor Too Small — Where Should We Go? (Bonus Story)</u>	MSN.com	177,956,931
TOTAL REACH			361,939,871

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
April 2022	April 2023	% Change
13,612 visitors	35,537 visitors	+161%
38,638 page views	100,152 page views	+159.2%
189 visitor's guide requests	141 visitor's guide requests	-25%

Website Demographics



Top 10 States		Top 10 Metro Areas	
April 2022	April 2023	April 2022	April 2023
Virginia	Virginia	Harrisonburg	Washington, DC
Maryland	Maryland	Washington, DC	Harrisonburg
North Carolina	North Carolina	Roanoke-Lynchburg	Roanoke-Lynchburg
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Baltimore	Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News
District of Columbia	Ohio	Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	Philadelphia
New York	New York	Richmond-Petersburg	New York
Florida	Georgia	New York	Richmond-Petersburg
Massachusetts	Florida	Charlottesville	Raleigh-Durham
New Jersey	Michigan	Philadelphia	Atlanta
Ohio	Indiana	Boston MA-Manchester NH	Columbus

Occupancy (%)	Year To Date					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	2021	2022	2023
This Year	40.6	45.9	54.1	31.8	44.7	46.9
Last Year	39.6	42.9	51.3	34.8	31.8	44.7
% Change	2.5	7.2	5.3	-8.7	40.7	4.9

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Sector Reports
Lodging

Michelle: May is up, June pacing behind. Getting a lot of inquiries about fall.

Annette: The Tru has sold out a lot, even some weekdays and of course with graduations.

Ross: (sent update via email) B&B's were flat for April year over year but the numbers are still strong. Please let everyone know we are hosting a Mother's Day Fundraiser for the cats. We'd appreciate a like and share on the event as Facebook isn't getting us out there despite promoting the event.

Sector Reports
Restaurants

No restaurant rep today.

Sector Reports
Retail

Sandi: More people inside the store with Shop and Dine Out, currently open 7 days per week. Book Dragon is up and have been working on 10th Anniversary for Independent Book Stores. Have an upcoming Mermaid Storytime, 3 book clubs and author events. Frontline and the Well-Balanced Paw have seen an uptick in numbers. Well-Balanced Paw has been working on fall projects. Burrow and Vine said business is good when Shop and Dine Out occurs and there is no rain. They will celebrate their anniversary on May 27th. The previous building that housed Marden Graphics is almost ready and will have space for two retail businesses

Sector Reports
Attractions

Robin: May is looking good. Have a speaker on May 15th on Civil Discourse. Archeological Field School begins May 22 and each Friday at 12:00 pm the public is invited to come hear about what they have found that week. On May 31 WWPL is hosting a stakeholder meeting for feedback on the final exhibit designs.

Stephanie: Uptick in May. Will have The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (3 actors, 38 plays, one good time). Will be closed a week between spring and summer season. Will send invites for TAB and staff. Taming of the Shrew and Measure for Measure open in June, with Much Ado following in July. Summer camp is at max capacity.

Paige: May Day was really wet and we had to cancel the May Pole dance. April visitation increased as well as school groups. Booking vendors for events. Harvest Festival will be held Augusts 6 and will focus on bread. Roots Concert series begins in August. Memorial Day includes 4 groups of historians and will focus on rebellions and wars.

Liz: MBU Commencement is next weekend. New president is Dr. Jeffrey Stein and he will begin his role on July 1, 2023. He is coming from Elon and his wife's name is Chrissy.

Greg: Camera and Palette celebrates their 55th anniversary the end of May. A L'il Statler Exhibit Opens Memorial Day and will run through Labor Day at the Space. Nighttime is a great time to visit it, and it includes some new items, awards and photographs.

Old Business

Sheryl: We are currently onboarding with our new research platform called Zartico. It works by mapping and tracking using geolocation data to see where visitors are coming from, going to, and how much they are spending. It tracks a sample of credit card spending as well as event data.

Pamela: The Arcadia Project hosted tours during Staunton Jams and had a table at the main stage. We have an additional tour coming on June 8. We are \$135,000 away from our match and looking good!

New Business

Kevin: Tours of the home now on Saturdays and Sundays, or by appointment. The April tea went well and there is another scheduled for May 28 which will also celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday. Currently researching the former occupants and putting info on the website.

Terah: Retailers on our block are the front line and always open on Fridays and Saturdays, sending people to restaurants and other businesses.

Juliette: Web traffic has increased and sales are up 80%. Tourist account for 70% of our business.

June: Heifetz is doing lots of outreach including Augusta Health and local schools. Hear and Now Concerts have been held. VSDB student who has been playing piano will have a celebration Wed. at 6:30

Ellen: Really good April, busy weekends. 75% of our business is tourists. Airbnb is doing really well.

Greg: QCMM received a grant from the VTC for this year's festival. Sarah will be sending out applications to businesses to participate – be creative and try not to gouge with pricing – think outside the box.

Robin: WWPL received a grant from the NEH, and we are the only museum in Virginia that did.

Julia: Staunton Books re-opening, great to be back!

Gabe: If interested in providing discounts during graduation weekend, please email me.

Terah: Would like to discuss business hours and staying open later on weekends. Possibly a subcommittee?

Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:29 am.

Meeting minutes submitted by Kim Cormier