



Tourism Advisory Board

July 11, 2023 9:30 am

Caucus Room, City Hall

- 9:30 am** **Call to order, approval of past meeting minutes**
- 9:35 am** **June 2023 Tourism Review**
- 9:45 am** **Sector Reports**
- **Lodging**
 - **Restaurants**
 - **Retail**
 - **Attractions/Arts**
- 10:15 am** **Old Business**
- 10:25 am** **New Business**
- **Discuss changing the TAB Meeting back to the 2nd Thursday of each month**
- 10:30 am** **Adjourn**

Tourism Advisory Board Meeting

June 13, 2023 9:30 am

Members/City Staff Present:

Sandi Carraro – Book Dragon
Andrew Greene - Heifetz Institute
Paige Hildebrand – Frontier Culture Museum
Robin von Seldeneck – Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library
Sheryl Wagner – Staunton Tourism
Jessica Williams – Staunton Tourism
Ross Williams – Frederick House

Members/City Staff Absent:

Greg Beam – SDDA
Stephanie Cabacoy – American Shakespeare Center
Steve Claffey, Mayor – City Council Liaison
Michelle Davis – Hotel 24 South
Liz Fravel - Mary Baldwin University
Robert Higgs – Barren Ridge Vineyards, Accordia
Sarah Lynch – Baja Bean
Jeff Ramsey – Gibson’s Warehouse, Byers Street Bistro

Others Present:

Florin Breeden – SCVB Intern from MBU
Juliette Swenson – CoArt Gallery
Pamela Wagner – Arcadia Project
Michelle Waitier – SDDA
Tara Wall - WWPL
June – Heifetz

Call To Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order. A motion was made by Ross Williams and seconded by Paige Hildebrand to approve the previous meeting minutes. Minutes were approved.

May 2023 Tourism Review – Sheryl Wagner

Activities

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

- May promotions included, April Showers Bring May Flowers In Staunton, National Tourism and Travel Week, Staunton Jams, Re-opening of The Blackburn Inn Spa, Gypsy Express Opens For The Season, Celebrate Every MOM(ent) in Staunton (Mother’s Day), The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Work On Your Tee Shot At These Staunton-Area Golf Courses, Virginia Living’s Best of Virginia 2023, Frontier Culture Museum 2023 Lecture Series, Memorial Day Weekend in Staunton, and weekly special events.
- Sheryl Wagner attended the Zartico Users Conference in Tampa, FL May 2-6.
- Florin Breeden, a senior at Mary Baldwin University began his internship with the Tourism Department on May 16.

- Sheryl Wagner attended a Virginia Women’s Municipal Leadership Institute class in Newport News on May 17-19.
- Hosted a Canadian Media FAM Tour May 17-18.
- Finalized a video for promotion on Google, Meta, and YouTube Shorts. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/YuWC0wffOSo>
- Attended a Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership (SVTP) meeting, an SVTP Marketing Committee meeting, a Shenandoah Beerwerks Trail meeting, a Queen City Mischief & Magic meeting, and a meeting with our marketing agency.

Public Relations

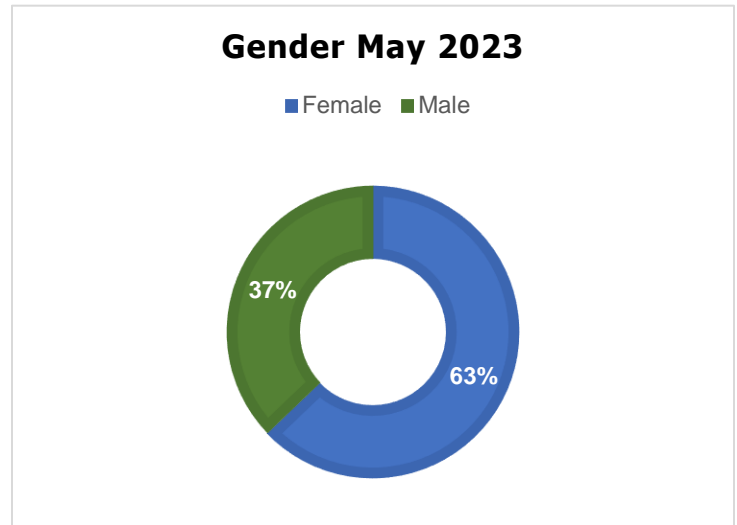
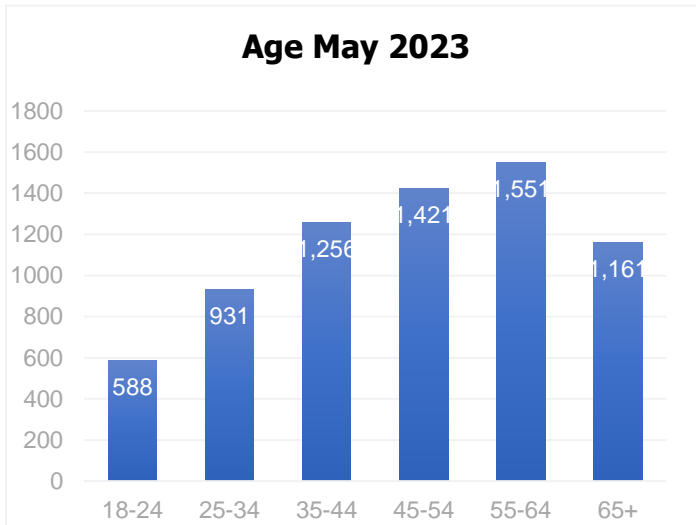
The following is a list of newspapers, websites, magazines, and television stations that published articles about Staunton:

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
May 05	<u>Virginia's Most Charming Small Towns, Ranked</u>	MSN.com	177,956,931
May 21	<u>These Are America's Most Beautiful Streets. How Many Have You Walked Along?</u>	MSN.com	156,890,226
May 01	<u>Bigfoot's Trail in Virginia</u>	Axios	9,970,779
May 23	<u>A Charming And Historic Small Town In Virginia, Staunton Is Seemingly Frozen In Time</u>	Only In Your State	5,344,046
May 06	<u>High Hopes for Model Train and Railroad Show Happening Sunday</u>	WHSV-TV	490,229
May 30	<u>Picture This: Camera Heritage Museum Founder Celebrates 55 Years of Collecting Cameras</u>	WHSV-TV	369,843
May 16	<u>American Shakespeare Center Performs ‘The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised] [again]’</u>	WHSV-TV	369,843
May 03	<u>Staunton Jams Returns Downtown This Weekend</u>	News Leader	124,094
May 09	<u>Local Tourism Programs Receive Marketing Funds to Drive Visitation; No Recipients in Waynesboro</u>	Augusta Free Press	92,283
May 09	<u>Staunton Author Writes Guide to Summer Travel Visiting President’s Homes in Virginia</u>	Augusta Free Press	92,283
May 01	<u>Statler Brothers Thrived on Americana, as Reflected in Baseball-themed Ballad</u>	The Trucker	78,969
May 05	<u>Annual Model Train and Railroading Show Returning to Augusta Expo</u>	The News Virginian	31,833
May 04	<u>Queen for a Day: Delightful, Delicious Train Rides</u>	Blue Ridge Country	25,097
	TOTAL REACH		351,836,456

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
May 2022	May 2023	% Change
21,593 visitors	36,661 visitors	+69.8%
59,604 page views	99,713 page views	+67.3%
251 visitor’s guide requests	128 visitor’s guide requests	-49%

Website Demographics



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

Smith Travel Research (STR) Hotel Occupancy Report

Occupancy (%)	Year To Date						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2021	2022	2023
This Year	40.6	45.9	54.1	60.9	36.1	49.5	50.4
Last Year	39.6	42.9	51.3	63.8	31.0	36.1	49.5
% Change	2.5	7.2	5.3	-4.5	16.4	37.0	1.8

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Sector Reports Lodging

Ross: May was great and over 8% up. Graduations were good. June is looking surprisingly busy, people are traveling. Sheryl recently checked on Airdna and it says there are 187 Airbnbs in Staunton. The

lodging spaces above Slyde 23 (old Emilio's) were just added to Airbnb. 25 N. New Street will all be Airbnbs. Ross said the silver lining of the pandemic is that all Airbnbs are now required to report lodging taxes, so some stopped operating because of that. Frederick House has seen about a 20% uptick from that, and probably 30% up overall since the pandemic. He added people also like the personal touch and don't want to get locked out or have no one to assist them as in some Airbnbs.

Sheryl: Jessica and Sheryl attended the open house for Batten Green (previous Inn at Old Virginia, Westshire Farms and Orlesa Farms). Jessica believes they will focus on events and weddings. They have 8 rooms. Sheryl also introduced our MBU intern, Florin Breeden.

Sector Reports Restaurants

Michelle: Brisket Taco finally opened. Slyde 23 has been doing well. Star Party Winery upstairs is now open, but we are unsure of hours. Sheryl learned that Justin from Chicano Boy plans to open a wood-fired grill pizza place near Silver Line Theatre, possibly by December. There is also a yoga space and Jazzercise has moved close to this area. Acme Tattoo moved next to Refill. There is a lady from the Staunton Farmer's Market that plans to open a soup/sandwich restaurant in the former Magdalena space.

Sandi: Robert and Angela Higgs plan to open a crepe/international style restaurant at 101 West Beverley.

Sector Reports Retail

Sandi: There are 2 retail spaces available at the former Marden Press. Memorial Weekend was good for most retailers despite the weather. Sales were up as well as number of visitors. Heifetz is gearing up for their summer program, with many staff and faculty coming in this week. Shakespeare starts back again this weekend. MBU did a nice video on their social media, and mentioned Beverley Street...not east or west, just Beverley. Sandi said some of the businesses on East Beverley Street do not get a lot of attention in photography or mentions and it would be nice to be included. Frontline Hobby had a friend who did some great videos for him, and is willing to do this for other businesses. Mondays it is more difficult to find restaurants and businesses open. It is one of Book Dragon's best days. Businesses are not posting their hours on doors or social media, and if they do, it is sometimes incorrect or has changed. Jessica agreed, there are differences on their website, Google and social media and it is a problem. Jessica will try to push this out in the next partner newsletter. Where's Waldo kicks off soon (July 1-31) and Sandi still has a few spaces open. Michelle will put in SDDA's e-blast. July 5th is Book Dragon's 4th anniversary.

Michelle: The Statler exhibit has been up since Memorial Day at The Space, and will stay up until Labor Day. Don Reid included it in his video, and Wilson Fairchild shared it on their social media. A lot of people said they are making the trip to see their costumes and memorabilia. After Labor Day, they will have an exhibit on ASC's 35th year with a costume exhibit. Then Santa's Workshop will be housed there. SDDA is looking for volunteers for selling concessions for July 4th. It is a fundraiser for Staunton High Boosters and SDDA's Better Together fund. Downtown looks busy with lots of people walking around.

Sector Reports Attractions

Paige: May was good, started summer camps and picking up a lot of tours (Diamond). Paige would like a digital copy of restaurants that can accommodate 50-60 on a group tour for dining. Right now, they are

stopping at Cracker Barrel and Mrs. Rowes, and she would love to get them downtown. Roots Concert Series begins in August.

Tara: JMU Field School has found some fantastic discoveries, including an indigenous artifact at least 8,000 years old. They also found an amulet that provided evidence of the enslaved dwelling located there. There have only been 12 of these discovered in the US, and only one other found in Virginia. Photos and videos are up on WWPL's website. Dr. Blanton said what they are finding there has never been found in Shenandoah, nor possibly even anywhere west of the Blue Ridge in Virginia. One last archaeological talk will be held this Friday at 12:00 pm.

Andrew: Staff (40) arriving as well as students (167), which means their families are coming as well. There should be increased traffic with everyone dining out and exploring downtown. Concerts June 21- July 29. Dark day is Tuesdays, other days at least one concert. Age 12 and under are free. \$5 student tickets, free tickets for MBU staff and students. A VTC Marketing Leverage grant was awarded and partners were Staunton Music Festival and the Staunton Tourism office. It is a landing page called Music in the Mountains. They marketed this to DC, Hampton Roads, NYC markets through e-blasts, Classical Music Radio and other stations. They were awarded the maximum amount. Locally they have partnered with Accordia, Yelping Dog, Redbeard to provide food and spirits at events. There are also Friday night concerts at Staunton Augusta Art Center, Hootenannies, Farmers' Market appearances as well as their regular concerts.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Pamela: They sold the 4-story building next to the theatre to Robin Miller who will turn that into 23 residential apartments, 800-1000 sf each. City Council approved the 1.8 million IRF grant, and there was a tour and reception at Hotel 24 South. Ken Paris is knocking it out of the park with food at Hotel 24 South. We have Treasures from the Dixie as an exhibit, and marquee letters have sold out. Pamela mentioned Life in the Heartland series on VPM, where one film highlighted the Christmas Parade.

Juliette: May was average. Juliette requested the TAB minutes be sent out more quickly.

Sheryl: Hosted VTC staff on a FAM tour recently, they toured Staunton, stepped on the train, and 3 of them had never been to Staunton.

Jessica: Bike Virginia will be in town June 23-25 with 800+ cyclists. Their headquarters are at the Frontier Culture Museum, and one of their routes bring them through downtown Staunton.

Sandi: Neat to see people head downtown before and after they ride the scenic train and walk into downtown Staunton. Sheryl said there are 34 seats right now but they have plans on adding additional cars.

Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.

Meeting minutes submitted by Kim Cormier