



Tourism Advisory Board

October 12, 2023 9:30 am

Caucus Room, First Floor, City Hall

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

9:35 am September 2023 Tourism Review

9:45 am Sector Reports

- Lodging
- Restaurants
- Retail
- Attractions/Arts

10:10 am Old Business

10:15 am New Business

- Sandi Carraro

10:20 am Adjourn

Tourism Advisory Board Meeting

September 14, 2023 9:30 am

Members/City Staff Present:

Steve Claffey, Mayor – City Council Liaison
Michelle Davis – Hotel 24 South
Gabe Glassmann - Mary Baldwin University
Andrew Greene - Heifetz Institute (Zoom)
Paige Hildebrand – Frontier Culture Museum
Sarah Lynch – Baja Bean
Robin von Seldeneck – Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library
Sheryl Wagner – Staunton Tourism
Jessica Williams – Staunton Tourism

Members/City Staff Absent:

Greg Beam – SDDA
Stephanie Cabacoy – American Shakespeare Center
Sandi Carraro – Book Dragon
Robert Higgs – Barren Ridge Vineyards, Accordia
Jeff Ramsey – Gibson’s Warehouse, Byers Street Bistro
Ross Williams – Frederick House

Others Present:

Kevin Hettinger – Victorian Society for Arts and Culture
Justin McBride – Brisket Taco
Victor Meyer – Marino’s (Zoom)
Eric Schesventer - WWPL
Juliette Swenson (CoArt Gallery)
Pamela Mason Wagner (Zoom)
Tara Wall– WWPL
Nikki West – Ciders From Mars
Kelli Williams, VTC

Call To Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order. A motion was made by Robin von Seldeneck and seconded by Michele Davis to approve the previous meeting minutes. Minutes were approved. Sheryl welcomed Kelly Williams, Destination Development Manager with Virginia Tourism Corporation. Introductions were made around the room.

Kelli Williams, Destination Development Manager for the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Kelli passed around information with the following links:

- TOP 14 Resources and Contact Information: <https://www.vatc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/VTC-TOP-14-072323.pdf>
- Funding Resources: <https://www.vatc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PM-Funding-Opportunities-2022v062823.pdf>

- E-Newsletter Sign Up: <https://www.vatc.org/travelpost/>
- Event Listings: <https://www.vatc.org/marketing/digital-marketing/webmarketing/>
- Welcome Center Event Kits: <https://www.vatc.org/viriniawelcomecenters/advertising/>

Kelli is the liaison for any questions, grant info, press releases, etc.; please pass anything to her and she will be sure they are routed to correct people at VTC.

August 2023 Tourism Review – Sheryl Wagner

Activities

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

- August promotions included, Celebrate Craft Beer Month in Staunton, Staunton Music Festival, The Roots Music Concert Series at the Frontier Culture Museum, Paws and Play During The Dog Days Of Summer in Staunton, Staunton Nominated As A Top Adventure Town, Last Family Summer Hurrah in Staunton, Gen Z Getaway In Staunton, and weekly special events.
- Florin Breeden from Mary Baldwin University completed his internship August 10.
- Planned activities with the Virginia Association of Free & Charitable Clinics Executive Directors Conference coming to Staunton next year.
- Participated in a Queen City Mischief & Magic planning meeting.
- Hosted a familiarization tour for Virginia Tourism Corporation employees in Staunton August 16-17.
- Sheryl Wagner attended the Virginia Women’s Municipal Leadership Institute August 17.
- Sheryl Wagner attended the U.S. Travel Association’s ESTO conference August 20-23.
- Made arrangements for an *Arlington Magazine* travel writer that will be attending Queen City Mischief & Magic this year.
- Hosted a meeting with Hotel 24 South and The Blackburn Inn about meeting and conference marketing.
- Met with Kristen Sill with Mary Baldwin University Career Services about future internships from MBU.

Public Relations

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

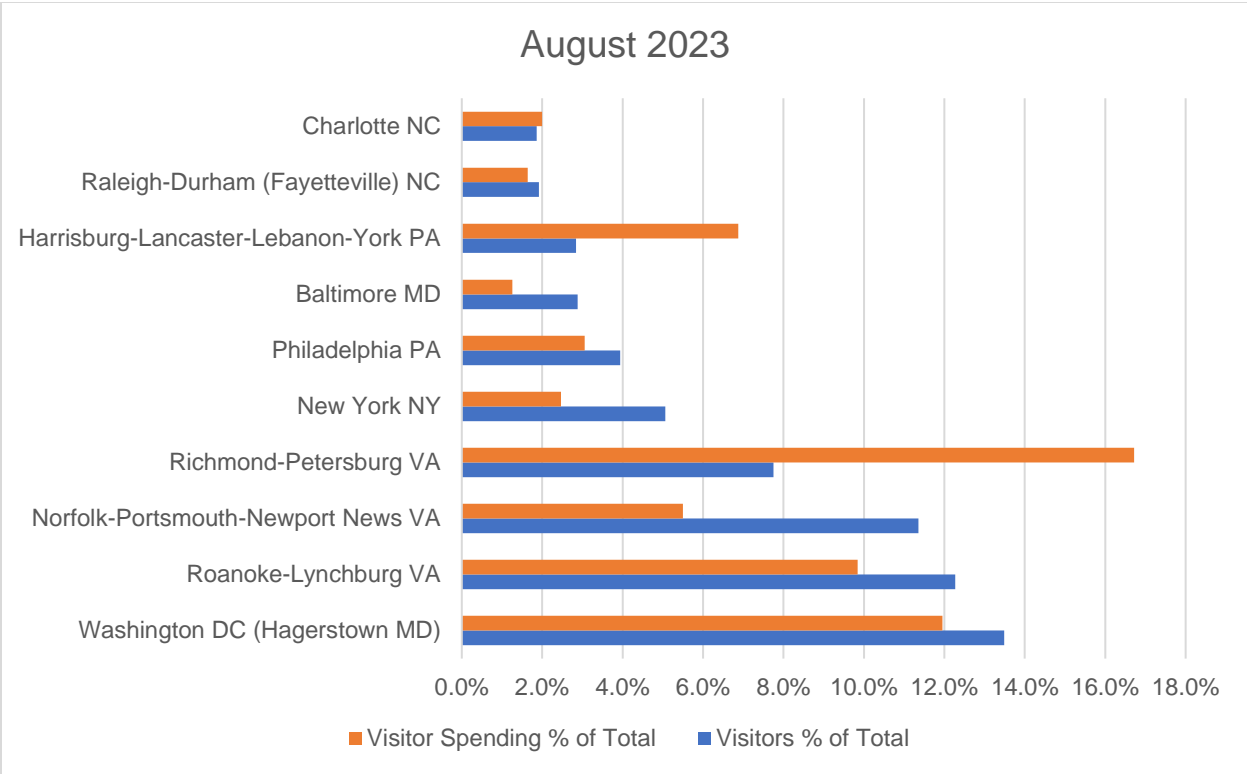
Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Aug 22	<u>The Best Things To Do In Staunton, Virginia</u>	Southern Living	12,263,145
Aug 22	<u>The Best Things To Do In Staunton, Virginia</u>	Yahoo! Lifestyle	9,044,746
Aug 28	<u>The Ultimate Blue Ridge Parkway Road Trip Guide</u>	The Points guy	7,533,839
Aug 27	<u>14 Prettiest Towns In Virginia</u>	World Atlas	4,860,336
Aug 17	<u>11 Small Towns in Virginia Were Ranked Among US Favorites</u>	World Atlas	4,860,336
Aug 17	<u>7 Adorable Small Towns In The Mid-Atlantic</u>	World Atlas	4,860,336
Aug 13	<u>10 Gorgeous Virginia Towns to Visit in 2023</u>	World Atlas	4,860,336
Aug 13	<u>August 25 Staunton Music Festival Returns to the Queen City</u>	Crast.net	1,719,322
Aug 12	<u>Review: American Shakespeare Center's MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING is a Treat for All Seasons</u>	BroadwayWorld.com	1,678,506

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Aug 10	The Weekend Scene: Get Down With Hip Hop 50, The National Book Fest and More Around DC	WRC-TV	1,465,817
Aug 9	Historic Steam Train Offering Excursions Through Virginia's Scenic Shenandoah Valley	WRIC-TV	1,386,085
Aug 3	Traveling to Virginia for the First Time: A Newcomer's Guide	Family Destinations Guide	1,212,847
Aug 9	Here's What You Need to Know About the 611 Locomotive Excursions	WDBJ-TV	715,915
Aug 22	611 Fall Excursion Tickets Now Available For Purchase	WSLS-TV	683,485
Aug 23	Initial Ticket Sales Strong For Upcoming N & W 611 Fall Excursions	Model Railroader Magazine	618,827
Aug 13	'With Great Power, Comes Great Responsibility,' Queen City's Local Super Hero Says	WHSV-TV	513,051
Aug 13	25th August Staunton Music Festival Returns to the Queen City	WHSV-TV	513,051
Aug 9	Here's What You Need to Know About the 611 Locomotive Excursions	WHSV-TV	513,051
Aug 5	American Shakespeare Center Opens Fall Season With Gender-Bending 'Hamlet'	The Daily Progress	190,366
Aug 18	7 Best Road Trips From NYC for an Epic Family Adventure!	Momtastic	184,797
Aug 27	Staunton Council Approves Rezoning Request, Opening the Way For New Chef Ian Boden Restaurant	News Leader	98,126
Aug 8	185 Years Of History at VSDB Exhibit in Staunton	News Leader	98,126
Aug 2	Arcadia Project Receives \$1.5 Million in Grant Funding; Venue Expected to Open in 2025	Augusta Free Press	68,262
Aug 30	Growth Industry	Virginia Business	34,819
Aug 24	Best of the Mountains 2023	Blue Ridge Country	32,535
Aug 29	Walls Of Wonder	Virginia Living	27,366
Aug 25	Virginia's Black Forest	Virginia Living	27,366
Aug 7	611 Va Return Involves Conquering Many Challenges and Logistics	WFIR-AM	25,831
Aug 25	25 Surprisingly Romantic Getaways In Virginia	Getaway Mavens	24,616
		TOTAL	60,115,241

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
August 2022	August 2023	% Change
33,592 visitors	41,464 visitors	+23.4%
87,447 page views	112,839 page views	+29%
446 visitor's guide requests	224 visitor's guide requests	-49.7%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending



Smith Travel Research (STR) Hotel Occupancy Report

Occupancy (%)	Year To Date									
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	2021	2022	2023
This Year	40.6	45.9	54.1	60.9	65.8	65.6	61.0	45.5	56.1	56.4
Last Year	39.6	42.9	51.3	63.8	64.4	65.0	65.0	31.8	45.5	56.1
% Change	2.5	7.2	5.3	-4.5	2.2	1.0	-6.1	42.9	23.4	0.5

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**Sector Reports
Lodging**

Michele: Occupancy was up slightly in July, September looks really good, up in occupancy and ADR. October looks strong, and we have some holds in November with the timing of Thanksgiving. December looks really strong with groups and weddings.

**Sector Reports
Restaurants**

Nikki: August was much better than last year. This summer flipped from last year. Looking forward to a strong fall season. Nov. 11-19 is Virginia Cider Week, and we are currently scheduling out events. There is also a Cider Trail that will launch in October.

Justin: My data is skewed due to adding days in and changing hours, but next month I should have more quantifiable data. Have run out of product multiple days.

Sector Reports Retail

Sandi: via email - Overall the businesses I've spoken said that August was pretty good. The students coming in drew in more visitors with parents dropping off and staying for the weekend. The staggered return of students was good. For the retailers who are open on Mondays we saw an increase of sales as parents and other visitors stayed thru Monday. For us at the bookstore we were up in sales for August. Labor Day was very busy for us and for the retailers who I spoke too that were open the whole weekend had good sales. Book Dragon along with two retailers did almost double what the previous Labor Day sales were. First Friday went well and looking forward to each one. Most of the retailers, including Book Dragon are getting ready for QCMM and we've all said, it feels like it snuck up on this year but I for one am excited, and know the couple of retailers I've spoken to are also excited. Visitors have been talking about it and are really looking forward to it. Heifetz asked to pass on this info: The Heifetz Music Shop and the Heifetz Institute of Music offices will be relocating to 11 S. New Street next to Cranberry's and Harmony's Moon effective Oct. 1st. Heifetz will be participating in the QCMM and will be in the current location (107 E. Beverley) throughout that weekend.

Juliette: On First Friday Juliette visited a few businesses to see how they are participating. Spiderman was at Queen City Gifts and Games. Co-Art has a new exhibit each month, and there was a demonstration of wood block cutting. Juliette hopes to have a brochure to help advertise and to grow First Fridays. Accordia is interested in participating with a wine tasting and perhaps special music. Juliette said Greg was hoping businesses would have a special event for First Fridays, and there would be a white star posted outside the business to indicate participation. Juliette also spoke about Terrain Biennial 2023, an outdoor public art display beginning in October, and will be located at different homes and locations.

Sector Reports Attractions

Andrew: The new location on 11 S. New St. will have a smaller retail space. Hear and Now is launching in October with some from Ensemble In Residency and collaboration with some faculty. Dates are Oct. 8, Nov. 5, Dec. 15, Mar. 3, Apr. 7, and May 5. Heifetz is always open to partnerships and working on group discounts.

Robin: When surveying our visitors, for the last two months, the number one-way people are finding us is from signs on the interstate. The second most popular way is via internet search. WWPL is part of a consortium called Museums For All, where we offer very discounted admission to anyone who qualifies for SNAP/EBT. The normal ticket price is \$20, discounted down to \$3. People are beginning to take advantage of that. One of the superstitions tours for QCMM is sold out! On Monday, our speaker series is Forgotten Soldiers at the RR Smith Center. In October, we will have the Archaeology Field School Finds. In November, we will have a session on investing and the stock market.

Gabe: Students came back, school started and we began the downtown business bracket. It all went really well. We had 355 new undergrad students come, and they descended on downtown and toured around. The students were excited to learn of all the different business downtown. Sarah mentioned there were 4 days that W&L students (20 at a time) were downtown. The top restaurant in the MBU business bracket was Shenandoah Pizza. Family weekend is Oct. 6-8.

Paige: The Map exhibit will open September 28th and be open until January. August was up, but saw a decrease in our homeschool days. Global Tempest is this weekend, and we are bringing in hundreds of interpreters from across the state, and one from OK who will be a native interpreter. Oktoberfest tickets are on sale now, and passholders are free this year up to 4 people.

Sheryl: The Virginia 250 Committee has opened the group up to Waynesboro and Augusta County. They still must pass resolutions, so they can't apply for grants yet. The Frontier Culture Museum Foundation has applied grants for two "Road To Revolution" signs (one in Staunton, one in Augusta County) and GART (Greater Augusta Regional Tourism) will help fund that. We need businesses to provide events and activities. We also would like school participation. There will be a mobile museum that will travel to different areas. We have begun early here in Staunton. Paige said the theme is Revolution of Ideas, so other historical happenings can fit into this. Robin said Steve Landes is working with a group on an Augusta County History Trail, and she wondered if these groups could work together. Sheryl believes they can.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

Pam: The Arcadia Project received a \$1.5 million grant from the State. This will bring us to a \$3 million dollar budget, which should get the job finished. We hope to open the theater Q1 2025. We are also applying for a \$50k Brownfields Grant. We will have a new improved maze again for QCCM. We have rebooted Music at the Movies at the Visulite, the first one was in September. Pam mentioned a tour this Saturday at the old Coca-Cola plant where the new brewery intends to go.

Kevin: Still have museum tours, but have partnered with Ghosts of Staunton and had two sold out tours. Coming up on one year anniversary. Working with QCMM on a Murder by Magic event. Will have a Halloween Magic and Mentalism show on Oct. 27. Will host a Holiday Tea on Dec. 15, then probably going dark for the rest of the year.

Sheryl: Encouraged everyone to submit their events to VisitStaunton.com. Please use this [link](#) to submit events.

Kelli: Encouraged everyone to submit their events to Virginia.org. Create an account at this [link](#). She also mentioned the new event kits available for purchase for \$25 each at the welcome centers.

Adjourn

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

Meeting minutes submitted by Kim Cormier.