



Tourism Advisory Board

June 13, 2024 9:30 am

Caucus Room, First Floor, City Hall

- 9:30 am** Call to order, approval of past meeting minutes
- 9:35 am** Dr. Jeffrey P. Stein, MBU President
- 9:50 am** Samantha Johnson – Monthly Tourism Report
- 10:00 am** Sector Reports
- Lodging
 - Restaurants
 - Retail
 - Attractions/Arts
- 10:20 am** Old Business
- 10:25 am** New Business
- 10:30 am** Adjourn

Tourism Advisory Board Meeting

May 9, 2024 9:30 am

Members/City Staff Present:

Stephanie Cabacoy – American Shakespeare Center
Sandi Carraro – Book Dragon
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
Samantha Johnson – Director of Tourism
Sarah Lynch – Baja Bean
Robin von Seldeneck – Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library

Members/City Staff Absent:

Camille Dierksheide – Staunton Music Festival
Robert Higgs – Barren Ridge Vineyards, Accordia
Jeff Ramsey – Gibson’s Warehouse, Byers Street Bistro
Jessica Williams – Sales and Marketing Manager
Ross Williams – Frederick House

Others Present:

John Allen – Queen City Bistro
Megan Burrow – Burrow and Vine
Brianna Decker – Juniper Lane
Amanda DiMeo – Economic Development Specialist
Chase Hoover – Batten Green
Josh Knight – Engagement and Communications Manager
Amy Lessley – Staunton IHub
Nick & Julia Sabin – Staunton Books
Susanna – Barren Ridge Vineyards
Annette Spencer – Heritage Hospitality
Christian Vames – Frontline Model Kits & Hobbies
Pamela Wagner – Arcadia Project

Call To Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order. Introductions were made around the room. Robin made a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes, and Sarah seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Monthly Tourism Report – Samantha Johnson

Activities:

Visit Staunton staff took part in the following promotional, networking, or administrative activities in April:

- April blog promotions featured Staunton’s Guided Outdoor Adventures, Iconic Sites in Staunton, Let Your Senses Run Wild, and Treat Your Kid(s) to a Day Out in Staunton
- Staunton named the #6 [Best Small Town Cultural Scene by USA Today](#)
- [“A Day in..Staunton, VA”](#) Sponsored content in Blue Ridge Outdoors April Family issue—½ page print itinerary and online version.

- [“Discover Staunton, a town where historic charm meets modern comfort”](#) WTKR, Dave Parker Celebrated Historic Garden Week in Virginia (April 20-27) featuring a tour of 4 cottages in Staunton-Augusta County
- Staunton featured by Daily News Record, [“Architecture Invigorates Downtown Experiences”](#)
- Attended VA250 Planning Meetings at the Frontier Culture Museum
- Attended Happy Birthday America planning meeting
- Conducted site-visits and planning sessions with Frontier Museum, The Hub, CoArt, H24 South, Blue Ridge Court Services, Words Matter, The Book Dragon, and Black Dog Cycling
- Attended the opening of the new student exhibit at CoArt Gallery
- Attended the JMU: Wharf Reimagined reception at the R&R Smith Center
- Attended other meetings as needed: SVTA, SVTP, Beerwerks, MATPRA

Public Relations

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

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Apr 10	10 Small Towns You Can't Miss For A Culture-Centric Escape	USA Today	76,140,145
Apr 25	5 Food Trucks Serving Up Delicious Eats In 2024, Plus Our Newest American Culture Quiz	Fox News Channel	46,810,789
Apr 22	10 Most Affordable Towns To Retire In Virginia	World Atlas	4,830,079
Apr 11	9 Most Scenic Small Towns In Virginia	World Atlas	4,830,079
Apr 02	State Parks Within 100 Miles Of RVA	Richmond Times Dispatch	768,366
Apr 30	Discover Staunton, A Town Where Historic Charm Meets Modern Comfort	WTKR-TV	483,549
Apr 26	SNP: Virginia's Natural Wonder Part Two	WHSV-TV	465,681
Apr 06	Staunton's Shop And Dine Out Begins	WHSV-TV	391,985
Apr 29	Staunton Jams Returns With More Than 45 Performers, American Shakespeare Center Partnership	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 19	Wilson And The Income Tax: President Mistakenly Credited With Most Dreaded American Law	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 18	Staunton To Celebrate Historic Garden Week With Walking Tour Of Ridgeview Road On Saturday	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 18	American Shakespeare Center Invites Public To Free Day Of Celebrating Bard's 460Th Birthday	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 14	25 Best Hotels Near Shenandoah National Park	VacationIdea	118,656
Apr 13	20 Best Things To Do In Staunton, Virginia	VacationIdea	118,656
Apr 29	Shakespeare Center And Local Libraries Team Up To Provide Free Shows To Residents	News Leader	112,571
Apr 29	Staunton Jams Musical Festival Is Back This Weekend	News Leader	112,571

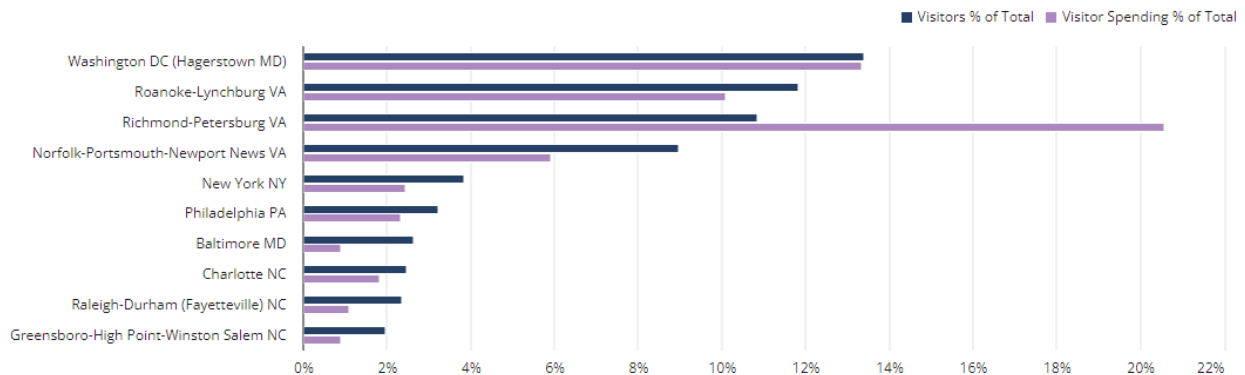
Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Apr 11	Staunton Among USA Today's Best Small-Town Awardees	News Leader	112,571
Apr 09	Take A Tour Of Europe At Staunton Music Festival's Springfest Concert	News Leader	112,571
Apr 19	Architecture Invigorates Downtown Experience	Daily News Record	88,701
Apr 17	Garden Club To Host Historic Garden Tours Next Week	Daily News Record	88,701
Apr 11	Spring 2024 Festival & Event Guide	Blue Ridge Country	13,886
Apr 11	Fall 2024 Festival & Event Guide	Blue Ridge Country	13,886
Apr 01	Britchin' Brown Renaissance Festival Coming To Stable Craft Brewing	The News Virginian	13,002
Apr 29	From The Editor: Path Of The Parkway - 29 Mountain Counties	Blue Ridge Country	12,888
Apr 29	A Day In...Staunton VA (Sponsored Content)	Blue Ridge Outdoors	45,524
			136,607,901

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
April 2023	April 2024	% Change
32,318 visitors	35,074 visitors	+8.53%
141 visitor's guide requests	168 visitor's guide requests	+19.1%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending

Top 10 Origin Markets by Visitation with their Spend



Smith Travel Research (STR) Hotel Occupancy Report

Occupancy (%)	2023												2024			Year To Date	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	2022	2023
This Year	40.6	45.8	54.1	60.9	65.8	65.6	61.0	60.9	60.8	67.4	53.5	40.1	35.2	42.6	48.7	44.7	46.9
Last Year	39.7	42.9	51.3	63.8	64.4	65.0	65.0	64.2	67.3	71.7	58.1	47.2	40.6	45.8	54.1	31.8	44.7
Percent Change	2.4	6.8	5.3	-4.5	2.2	1.0	-6.1	-5.0	-9.7	-6.1	-7.9	-15.0	-13.3	-7.0	-10.0	40.7	4.9

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Sector Reports - Lodging

Michelle: Down in occupancy, ADR up, seeing the same trend for May. Forecast for the rest of the year looks very good.

Sector Reports - Restaurants

Sarah: People beginning to venture out again, and Shop and Dine out doing well other than rainy weekends.

Sector Reports - Retail

Sandi: Marion's has had modest sales, and foot traffic is up. Seeing visitors from NoVa and Tidewater area. Heifetz's sales are up. April was flat for Frontline but up double digits for the year. Medieval Fantasies Gyfte Shoppe's sales were down with Easter in March. 80% of visitors are from out of town, seeing a high number of European guests. Book Dragon is up double digits. First Fridays has not been successful. Kathleen Grissom, author, will be at Book Dragon on May 19. Sarah added that Staunton Jams weekend was awesome.

Sector Reports - Attractions

Andrew: Concert calendar is now posted online. Brochures have been delivered. Week of June 10 is the big move-in for students. Senior Division is 6 weeks, and there are two 3-week Junior programs. Week of July 27 will be move-out week. Received a \$9,000 VTC grant and should hear about the MLP grant with Staunton Music Festival soon.

Paige: On pace with last year, overall up 6% for FY. Hosted 60-70k visitors last year. Will have the event "Revolutions and Rebellions" over Memorial Day Weekend, which is a VA 250 event as well.

Robin: Flat over last year, April up 1%, but up 12% year over year. Bus tours are coming back and have been very busy. Having a lecture on Monday night, and May 18 is Field Day with new games and activities. Stuart Hall will host a research symposium on May 20 - "1912-1922 Connections to Today" with 5 moderators.

Stephanie: Met our goal, and surpassed pandemic numbers. 1 month remaining in summer season and mailing out 15k brochures. Camp dates are June 30-July 22. Will be closed July 4th.

Gabe: Commencement next weekend May 18-19, will be distributing "Congrats" posters downtown. Would like to ask Dr. Stein to attend the next TAB meeting to speak.

Old Business

We need to elect a Vice-Chair since Greg's departure. Sarah Lynch nominated Robin von Seldeneck. Sandi Carraro seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

New Business

Pamela: Understands the poster project with Habitat for Humanity has been cancelled, but Lance may find another way to carry on.

Nick: Introduced a QR code that leads to a website he created for business to have listings and links to Instagram and Facebook and is free for retailers downtown. Sarah asked how this would work with what we are doing now. Nick stated he brought this to SDDA and they were not interested.

Pamela: Asked if there was an update on hiring an SDDA Director. Sarah said they were progressing and wanted to make the right choice.

Gabe will be leaving Staunton to attend Grad. School at VCU. Everyone wished Gabe well.

Pamela: The earliest date for the Arcadia project to be finished would be June 2025.

Julia: Had questions about Zartico. Samantha explained it captured average spend, main points of origin, spending trends, and anticipates general attendance at events. The data is captured based on location sharing and credit card usage.

John: April was a great month for Queen City Bistro, and he is working on building his brand. Appreciative of these meetings. Can host small to medium sized events, from 25-60 people, and 10 -20 in another space.

Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 am.

Meeting minutes submitted by Kim Cormier.