

AT A CONTINUED MEETING OF THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
HELD IN THE GORGE C. MARSHALL MUSEUM ON THE CAMPUS OF THE VIRGINIA
MILITARY INSTITUTE AT 340 VMI PARADE, LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA
ON TUESDAY JUNE 4, 2019 AT 6:00 P.M.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: A.J. "JAY" LEWIS, II.
 DANIEL E. LYONS
 JOHN M. HIGGINS
 R. W. DAY

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: DAVID W. HINTY, JR.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
AND CLERK TO THE BOARD: SPENCER H. SUTER

CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Lewis called the meeting back to order at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving a presentation from the Office of Tourism. Also present were members of Lexington and Buena Vista City Council. Lexington City Mayor Frank Friedman and Buena Vista City Mayor Billy Fitzgerald called their meetings to order as well. The City of Lexington hosted the meeting, which include a meal. Mayor Friedman welcomed all attendees and each person was asked to introduce him/herself to the group.

Director of the Regional Office of Tourism Jean Clark welcomed those present and introduced Ms. Shannon Gray, CEO of Gray Research Institute, noting that the Regional Tourism Office had contracted with Gray Research Institute to conduct a detailed "Destination Assessment" study for the Rockbridge Region. Ms. Gray then provided a PowerPoint presentation and first reviewed the purpose of the study, which was generally to understand who was visiting our area, why they were here, how much they spend, and what we as a region can do to maximize the positive impacts of tourism.

She then explained the general methodology of the study, which included stakeholder meetings, nearly 400 visitor intercepts/interviews at local tourism destinations, a lodging study and visitor profile development. The profile development recorded visitor demographics and in addition to more detailed data gathering, generally sought to answer the following questions: "Where are you from? Why are you visiting? How much are you spending locally?" She then provided her detailed findings. Some key points included:

- The return on investment (ROI) for funding the Office of Tourism is not less than \$8.25:\$1.00 and may be as much as \$19.00:\$1.00.
- Downtown Lexington, Natural Bridge State Park, W&L / VMI and the Virginia Horse Center are some of the most popular attractions.
- Visitors to the Virginia Horse Center spend significantly more than visitors to other destinations.
- 85% of visitors polled rated the overall quality of their trip as 5 (of 5) stars.
- Short term rentals is a rapidly growing segment of business
- Visitors staying in hotels and B&Bs generated \$66,566,399 in total revenue and in \$6,648,678 in taxes in 2017.

Ms. Gray concluded with the following advice for the elected officials:

- Continue to advocate for tourism and promote the area as a destination.
- Recognize and appreciate the small businesses that combine to make our area a destination.
- Keep the Office of Tourism informed about any new businesses or actions which could impact the business community.

Supervisor Higgin had to leave the meeting at approximately 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Lewis announced adjournment of the meeting at 8:10 P.M.