

CACVB Board Meeting

June 22, 2026 – 1:00p.m.

CACVB Administrative Offices

PRESENT: Olivia Branch, Kelly Brown, Andrea Copeland, Athena Eastwood, Lisa Jevack, Jennifer Lyon, Danny Shea, Juandiego Wade, Darcie Weigand, Zarina Yafizova. Presence of Kelly Brown and Danny Shea not reflected on the recording.

ABSENT: Chris Engel, Emily Kilroy, Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, Zach Roberts, Brad Uhl

ALSO PRESENT: Courtney Cacatian, Andrea Ruege, Anna Whitlow, Cassie Ivey

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Wade called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Approval of previous meeting minutes
- b. Financial statement

Ms. Lyon moved to approve the consent agenda, Ms. Eastwood seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: CACVB Director Courtney Cacatian reported to the Board regarding progress on the CACVB Strategic Plan, assisted by Marketing Director Anna Whitlow and Director of Visitor and Community Engagement Cassie Ivey. FY2026 was the first year of the current strategic plan. During this year, the CACVB has addressed strategic plan goals through initiatives including the organizational rebranding, a food and beverage industry campaign, collaboration with VA250, creation of a crisis communications plan, midweek business strategy, and participating in preparation for the Downtown Mall's 50th anniversary.

Ms. Cacatian reminded the Board of the CACVB's organizational strategy and the workflows associated with different teams. The setup of the CACVB team reflects the needs of the Charlottesville-Albemarle visitor market. Ms. Lyon asked whether CACVB staffing was constrained by the amount of funding received. Ms. Cacatian confirmed that staff levels depend on the CACVB's funding.

Ms. Whitlow reported to the Board on marketing team's efforts to amplify visitor experiences (one of the strategic plan goals). The CACVB's new branding represents the tourism assets of the region, building into a stronger, more recognizable regional tourism brand. The new branding has generated around 11 million online advertising impressions. Partner organizations have asked CACVB for permission to use the new logo on their

merchandise. The new branding is viewed on the website more than 1 million times per year, and is integral to the updated visitor guides, 50,000 of which are distributed a year. The Marketing team have seen the highest levels of advertising engagement on Meta platforms (Instagram, Facebook, etc.) and are planning a Spring photoshoot to improve static advertising numbers. The cost-per-click for CACVB advertising is about \$1, low by industry standards. Recognizing that artificial intelligence plays a growing role in the way that consumers find information, the Marketing team have focused on curating quality owned media that will be AI searchable.

Ms. Lyon highlighted to the Board the importance of how AI is shifting the advertising industry, based on her experience at Monticello. Consumers have gone from expecting as few clicks as possible to “zero click” searches where they read AI-curated information.

Ms. Whitlow highlighted the work CACVB does to help partners advertise effectively in the new market, including upcoming strategy meetings with select service and full service hotels.

Ms. Ivey briefed the Board on accessibility projects, including grant projects, Wheel the World assessments, Tourism for All, promotional materials, and the Downs and Towns visit. Downs and Towns is the business of influencer Houston Vandergriff, whose visit to the region was funded by a grant to CACVB. The project has been submitted for an ESTO award.

The Tourism for All suite of programs has continued through FY2026, with new programming coming online in FY2027. TourismWORKs work credit program will soon be available to Tourism for All cohort graduates. The majority of attendees at the 2026 Tourism for All conference supported introducing a registration fee to the event, indicating that partners value the programming highly.

The Destination Development team embarked on a food and beverage industry campaign in FY2026, aimed at increasing awareness of CACVB’s capacity to support the food and beverage industry. The campaign included workforce events like Coffee and Conversations (in partnership with Charlottesville Economic Development Office), Albemarle Public Schools’ Senior Stay Day, and a panel featuring Savor Studio at the Tourism for All conference. Destination Development staff also participated in eight familiarization tours, worked to get food and beverage businesses listed on the CACVB web page, and featured food and beverage partners on the Founding Footprints podcast and itineraries.

The Destination Development team has been integral to the development of local VA250 events. CACVB received a Virginia Tourism Corporation grant to develop the Founding

Footprints podcast, for which Carla Mullen won the statewide Ordinary Award. The CACVB also supports partners in VA250-related grant applications.

Ms. Whitlow outlined a major FY2026 project to improve local quality of life, which was the development of the CACVB crisis communications plan. The plan was utilized during Winter Storm Fern in January 2026, and assisted CACVB staff in supporting City and County emergency management with finding emergency accommodations. The Crisis communications plan will go live in the CACVB partner portal in the second half of 2026. The plan will be subject to regular review and will be part of the CACVB's application for destination marketing accreditation.

The CACVB visitor services team has supported preparations for the Downtown Mall's 50th anniversary, using the Mobile Visitor Centers as pop-up lantern-building workshops for the planned lantern parade. The lantern activity allows the visitor services team to talk with visitors at greater length. CACVB Marketing has also supported the Downtown Mall, recently pitching and securing a feature ("John Grisham's Downton") in Garden and Gun magazine.

Ms. Cacatian requested the Board's assistance with revisions to the strategic plan going into future plan years. The first proposal is removing the recommendation to purchase or upfit the mobile visitor centers; the CACVB budget is not anticipated to rise in the coming two years. The current MVCs are not in need of replacement, and so purchasing new vehicles can be delayed to a future strategic plan. Mr. Shea asked whether there could be alternative forms of engagement to the MVCs, such as signage with QR codes. Ms. Cacatian reminded the Board that the CACVB does not have the authority to post signs anywhere, and would need to get permission from the City, County, University, and private entities. Additionally, the MVCs allow a high-quality visitor experience and encourage return visitation.

Ms. Brown asked whether the CACVB provides easily accessible day trip itineraries, for example an itinerary based around a trip to Eastwood Farm and Winery. Ms. Cacatian said that there are several ways the CACVB makes this information available: the marketing team produces blog posts; the sales manager distributes sample itineraries at trade shows; the Founding Footprints podcast has accompanying itineraries. The CACVB team is working on increasing map functionality and geographic specificity as part of the website redesign.

The next recommended change to the Strategic Plan involved community partnerships. The current plan instructs the CACVB to foster a stronger relationship with UVA and the UVA Foundation as the Virginia Guesthouse comes online. The Virginia Guesthouse does

not currently partner with CACVB on visitor services; Ms. Cacatian recommended putting this goal under the sustainable economic growth and midweek business goal.

Ms. Brown pointed out that the Virginia Guesthouse is the only place with the capacity to drive midweek non-leisure travel. Deprioritizing engagement with the Virginia Guesthouse risks losing an opportunity to help the market. Ms. Cacatian said that the CACVB still tracks what the Virginia Guesthouse is doing and its impact on the market, but that efforts to pursue engagement with the hotel have been unfruitful. She asked whether there was concern among hoteliers about the CACVB prioritizing one specific hotel. Ms. Yafizova said that such concerns had not been raised; the market impact of the Virginia Guesthouse justifies paying it particular attention. Ms. Branch agreed that the Strategic Plan goal had been made redundant due to the lack of engagement from the Virginia Guesthouse but asked to continue the work on midweek business. Ms. Cacatian said she would bring a revised recommendation addressing the Virginia Guesthouse issue to the Board during the August meeting.

Ms. Cacatian also recommended a change to the strategic plan goal of developing a partner guidebook. CACVB staff have decided that it is more effective to build out the existing CACVB Partner Portal than to design an additional informational booklet.

The final recommendation is to adapt the local quality of life goal that instructs the CACVB to support destination-wide outdoor recreation improvements by auditing web listings across multiple platforms to determine industry sentiment. CACVB staff determined that this goal was beyond the team's current capacity. The recommendation is to therefore to reword to emphasize internal department operational improvements.

The Board expressed support for making the recommended changes to the Strategic Plan, with the exception of the Virginia Guesthouse goal.

Ms. Whitlow briefed the Board on the CACVB social media calendar, which is being built up by the Marketing team with new content. CACVB is looking to engage younger audiences, so is currently prioritizing Instagram and social media influencers. The recent NCAA lacrosse championships presented an opportunity to geofence a marketing campaign, encouraging attendees to return.

Ms. Lyon asked whether the lacrosse-related marketing can be a template for future events, such as football games. Ms. Cacatian said that CACVB might consider a similar program for home games, but that it would depend on the audience that the CACVB wanted to engage.

Ms. Lyon pointed out that there is a lot of Charlottesville-focused content on TikTok. Ms. Cacatian reminded the Board that the CACVB does not use TikTok due to a previous Board decision – the Board can revisit that decision if it wants to. Ms. Whitlow said that the investment in setting up a whole new social media platform for the CACVB may not be worth it; the influencers the CACVB works with post their content on multiple platforms including TikTok, so CACVB does have an indirect presence on the platform. Ms. Branch suggested that Keswick could connect the influencers it hosts to the broader Charlottesville-Albemarle tourism industry.

CLOSED SESSION: Chair Wade made a motion to bring the Board into closed session. A full vote of the Board members present was conducted, and all were in favor. The Board went into closed session at 2:35 p.m. Senior Assistant County Attorney Andrea Ruege was present during the closed meeting.

CERTIFICATION: Certification of the closed meeting was completed and voted on by all present board members.

ADJOURNMENT: Chair Wade adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.