

VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION (VCTC)

August 11, 2022 10:00 a.m.

Virginia City Conference Center
10 South E Street, Virginia City, NV 89440

MEETING MINUTES

Notice: Items on the agenda may be taken out of order; two or more agenda items may be combined for consideration; and items may be removed from the agenda or discussion relating thereto delayed at any time. This is the tentative schedule for the meeting. The Commission reserves the right to take items in a different order to accomplish business in the most efficient manner.

The following minutes are a summarized explanation of the topics discussed. A taped recording of these proceedings will be kept for review.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson A. Perry called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Rebecca Clark called roll.

Chairperson: A. Perry
Vice Chair: Jay Carmona – via Zoom
Board Members: Angelo Petrini
Ron Gallagher
Paul Hoyle

R. Clark noted there was a quorum present.

Others: Linda Ritter, Interim Tourism Director
Rebecca Clark, Administrative Assistant
Leah Kruse, Event & Business Development Manager

3. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

DISCUSSION MAY BE LIMITED TO THREE MINUTES PER PERSON AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN. NO ACTION MAY BE TAKEN ON A MATTER RAISED UNDER HIS PORTION OF THE AGENDA UNTIL THE MATTER ITSELF HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY INCLUDED ON AN AGENDA AS AN ITEM UPON WHICH ACTION MAY BE TAKEN.

Joseph (Joe) Stehle, owner of Facet & Company Jewelers, spoke of Hot August Nights. He voiced his concerns of how the event is operated. Mr. Stehle conducted a survey for local merchants to voice their opinions on the event in question. It was posted on the Virginia City Merchants Page on Facebook. There were 20 respondents. Joe continued by reading mixed reviews received from said survey – some positive, some negative.

Joe asked the commission to consider the expense versus revenue when deciding on future Hot August Nights events. Mr. Stehle confirmed that the VCTC does pay \$30,000 for Hot August Nights to be here.

R. Gallagher stated that, by paying that \$30,000, Virginia City receives advertising from the Hot August Nights organization throughout the course of the year.

Mr. Stehle read the first question from the survey. "How profitable was Hot August Nights for your business?" Majority of survey respondents replied with "a little" or "none at all".

Joe Stehle did comment on the profitability for some merchants, but reiterated the need for change to this event going

forward.

Mr. Stehle addressed the concern of the car owners sitting on the boardwalk and blocking access to storefronts. He suggested that going forward, no participant be allowed to sit on the boardwalk, and instead, to sit by their car in the road, as is commonplace in other car shows.

Joe continued reading his survey questions.

Question number 3: Do you think Hot August Nights Benefits the town of Virginia City financially?

Again, a little more than half of the respondents felt it did not financially benefit the town.

Question number 4: Do you think Hot August Nights benefits Virginia City from a tourism standpoint?

Majority responded with "a little".

Question number 5: Would you like Hot August nights to return to Virginia City in the future.

The result was a clean 50/50 split between "yes" and "no".

Mr. Stehle did not feel any other event in town is met with such mixed results or feelings.

A. Petrini mentioned an issue of merchants parking on C St. instead of leaving spots open for visitors.

J. Carmona thought it would be helpful to get names of the businesses that are unhappy with the event so the VCTC could communicate with them directly.

Joe Stehle felt that it was because of the anonymity of the survey that he was able to garner frank responses from business owners.

Chairperson A. Perry indicated it was time to wrap up this public comment.

Chairperson A. Perry also commented on her hopes that the merchants would trust that there is no negative connotation from negative feedback presented to the board.

R. Gallagher stated that there is a meeting after every Hot August Night event between the VCTC and the organizers. This was the first time he had heard anything this negative being said.

A. Petrini felt there was not a single business in Virginia City that does advertising to bring people here. He felt we should be grateful to have the tourist trade we have.

L. Ritter said she and the VCTC are meeting with the CEO of Hot August Nights soon to discuss the event. She did receive phone calls about complaints of the boardwalk being blocked. Hot August Nights had people patrolling the boardwalk, but some participants were hesitant to move.

L. Ritter would like to start working on Hot August Nights for next year now so there is plenty of time to fix these issues and relay details to merchants.

A. Petrini stated he is pleased we have extra parking opportunities in town, and mentioned the possibility of moving the event to another area of town.

P. Hoyle thanked Joe Stehle for his survey and time. He observed there were two parts to address with this event. The first, being the experience during the event (i.e. chairs on the boardwalk), and the second being the financial aspect.

P. Hoyle went on to say he would like for the VCTC to send out surveys after events to obtain feedback.

Gerald Antinoro, Storey County Sherriff, commented on the traffic and pedestrian safety issues. He intends to speak with the CEO as well to address these concerns for the future. A number of citations were issued during the event, specifically for illegal parking.

4. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR THE AUGUST 11, 2022 MEETING

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the agenda for the August 11 meeting.

First – R. Gallagher

Second – P. Hoyle

Approved Unanimously

5. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE JULY 14, 2022 MEETING

Chairperson A. Perry made the motion to approve the minutes for the July 14, 2022 meeting.

First – R. Gallagher

Second – A. Petrini

Approved – Unanimously

6. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: FINANCIAL UPDATES

L. Ritter shared the Tourism Tax and Lodging Tax charts (see attached).

R. Gallagher commented that the second hotel in TRI is underway on construction.

7. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: MARKETING UPDATES

Ronele Dotson, RAD Strategies, replied to Paul's comment about surveys being sent out after events. She clarified that the VCTC has done this in the past, though not since prior to 2020. Her recommendation would be to start them again in 2023.

Amy Demuth, RAD Strategies, displayed upcoming marketing material for Camel Races. She stated that website visitors were up by almost 20% in July. The top clicks were: itineraries, Camel Races, lodging, and Hot August Nights.

A. Demuth shared that Margot Black, writer for LA Parent, visited Virginia City over the 4th of July weekend.

P. Hoyle inquired how quickly the Virginia City newsletter sign-ups have increased. A. Demuth informed the board that the website now has a pop-up that asks visitors to input their email addresses. R. Dotson stated they get approximately 100-150 new subscribers a week since this was implemented in February.

8. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE

L. Kruse informed the Board that she was in Vegas for training on incidents during events.

She shared that there are numerous weddings booked at Pipers over these next few weekends, as well as a wedding at the Virginia City Freight Depot.

August 26th and 27th is the Motorcycle Roundup at the Fairgrounds. September 5th is the Labor Day Parade, and that weekend is also Civil War Days.

L. Kruse then segued into Business Development Updates (agenda item number 9).

L. Kruse shared that a group, Amplify Life, was currently in town. It is part of her initiative to bring more groups into Virginia City.

Leah then introduced Emily Skyle-Golden, Cordillera International Film Festival, to speak on the group visit that occurred on August 1st. Part of this festival is to encourage filming in Nevada and highlight locations that are underutilized. A group of about 84 influential people were brought to Virginia City with the hopes they would be inspired to film here for future projects. A video was taken of this visit and had already been viewed by 27,000 people. The social media post had 40,000 views.

L. Kruse gave a shoutout to Bucket of Blood and the Outlaw Comedy Show for their sponsorship.

10. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: NON-PROFIT ALLIANCE UPDATE

Nora Stefu, Historic 4th Ward School, announced the August 20th fundraiser.

N. Stefu also informed the Board of construction beginning this Monday.

Chairperson A. Perry, St. Mary's Art Center, stated the next Canvas and Cocktails class will take place August 18th.

11. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: STAFF REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE & FUTURE MEETINGS

L. Ritter presented traffic count numbers during event days (see attached). She then shared the occupancy rate chart, transient lodging tax, sales tax from food and beverage, sales tax from retail, and the monthly traffic counts (see attached).

L. Ritter then shared the website usage report. There was a large spike in traffic on June 29th in 2022. California remained the largest website visitors. She then presented the website user analytics (see attached). Miss Ritter then presented the numbers for the Visitor Center for the month of July. 6,445 visitors came to the center that month. The busiest day was Saturday, July 2nd with 369 visitors. The quietest day was Monday, July 25th with only 77 visitors. The visitor center also sold 3,445 attraction tickets during July.

L. Ritter announced that the shuttle van operated for the first time last weekend. Liza McIlwee, Tourism Assistant, picked up passengers from the V&T train depot and deposited them in front of the Sheriff's office on C St. Interested passengers then picked up the shuttle again for a ride back to the depot.

L. Ritter also noted that Cemetery Gin continues to sell well, and that the distributor will ascertain that the Comstock Cemetery Foundation will receive their contributions.

P. Hoyle confirmed that RAD Strategies and Linda Ritter receive their website analytics from the same source. She confirmed they both utilize the same website for analytics.

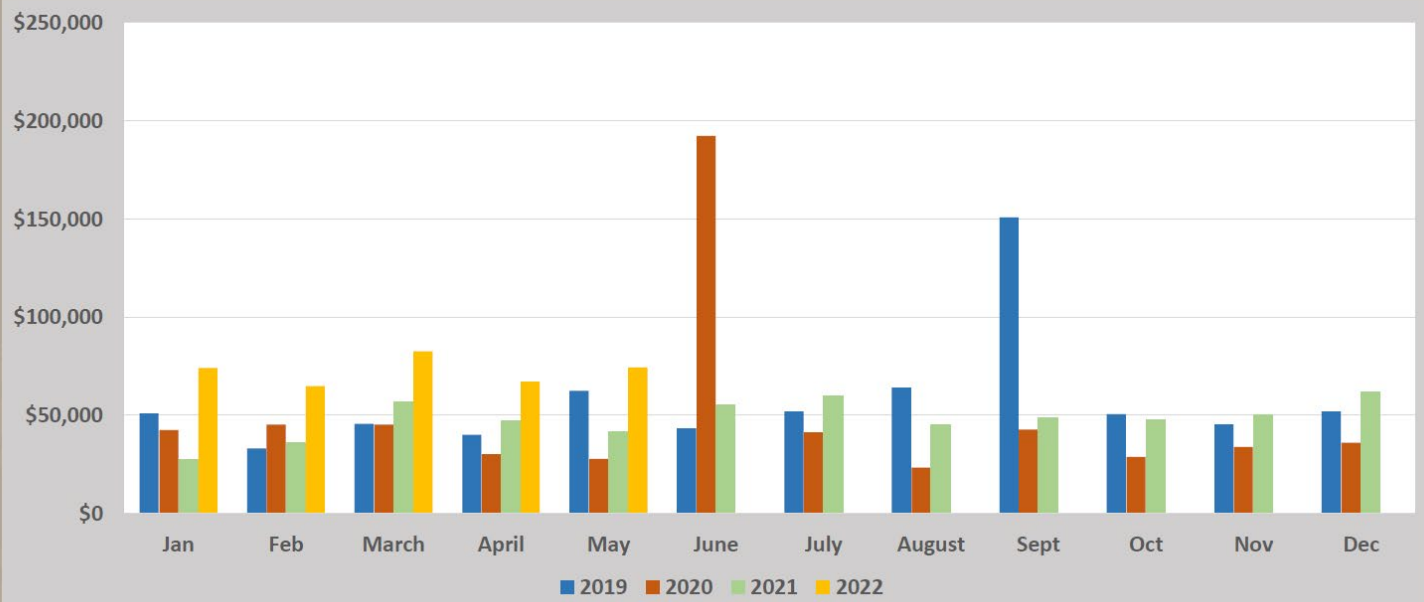
R. Clark read a letter that was received by the VCTC office from a visitor. She then announced the next VCTC Board Meeting would take place Thursday, September 8, 2022 at 10 am.

12. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY BROUGHT THE NEXT ITEM TO THE COMMISSION'S ATTENTION: PUBLIC COMMENT

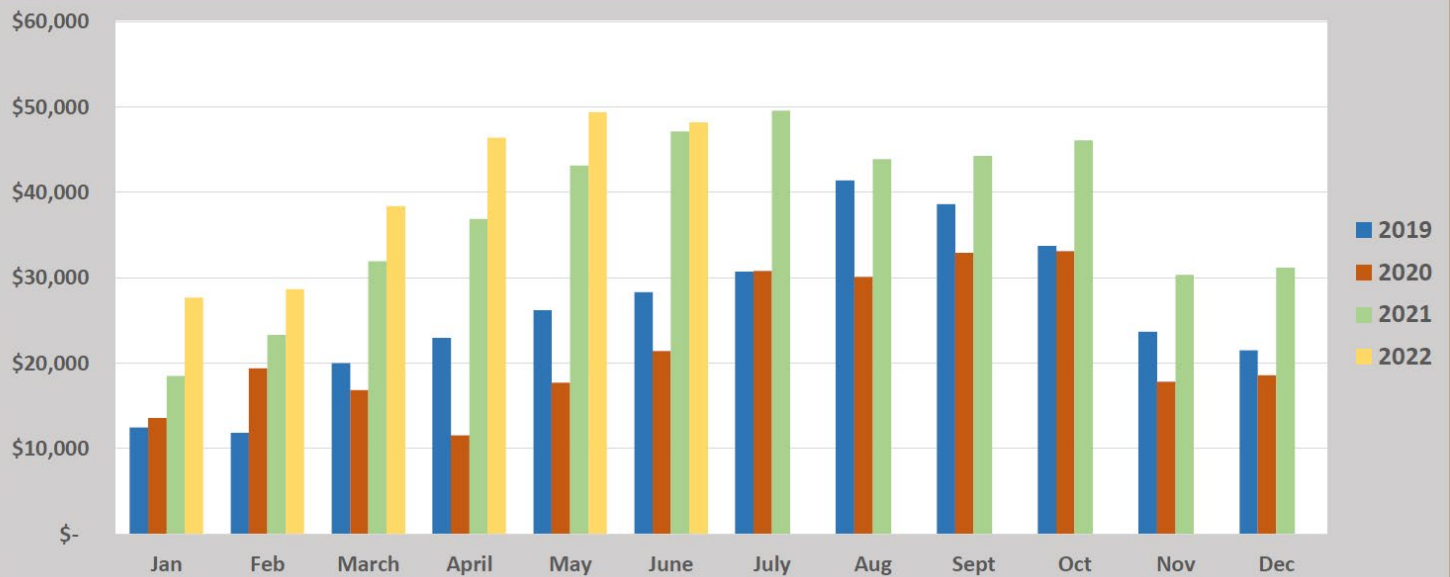
There was no public comment.

13. CHAIRPERSON A. PERRY ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 11:19 AM.

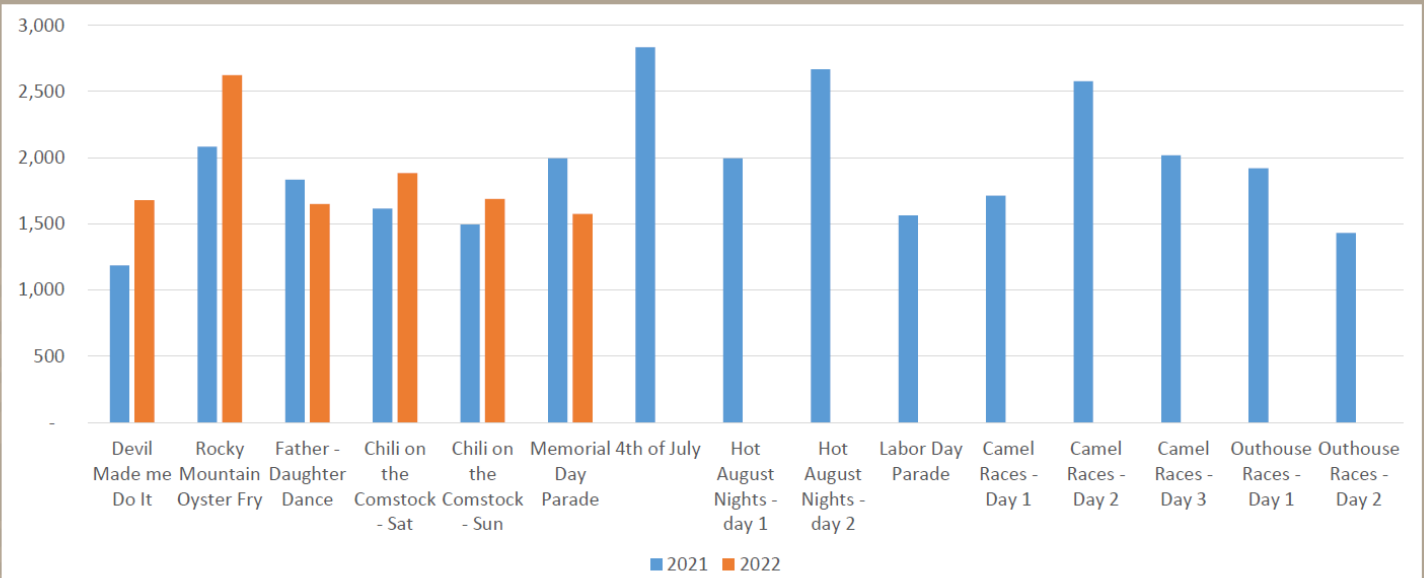
Tourism Tax – ¼% Sales Tax



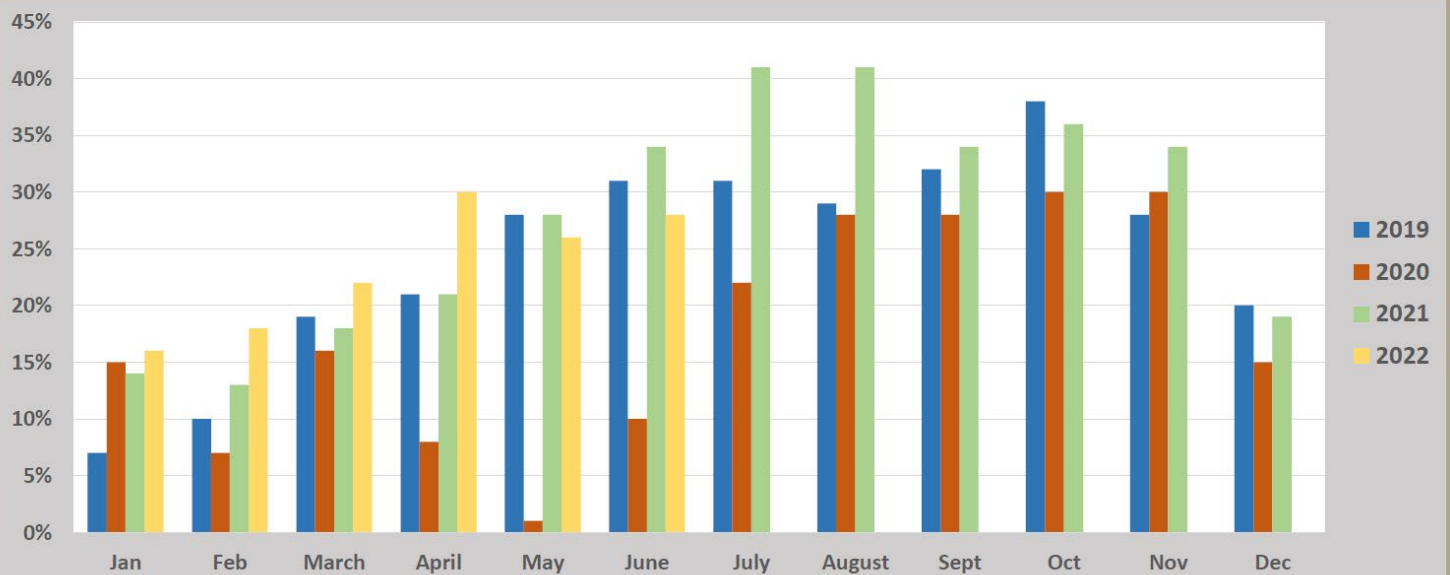
Transient Lodging Tax – All County



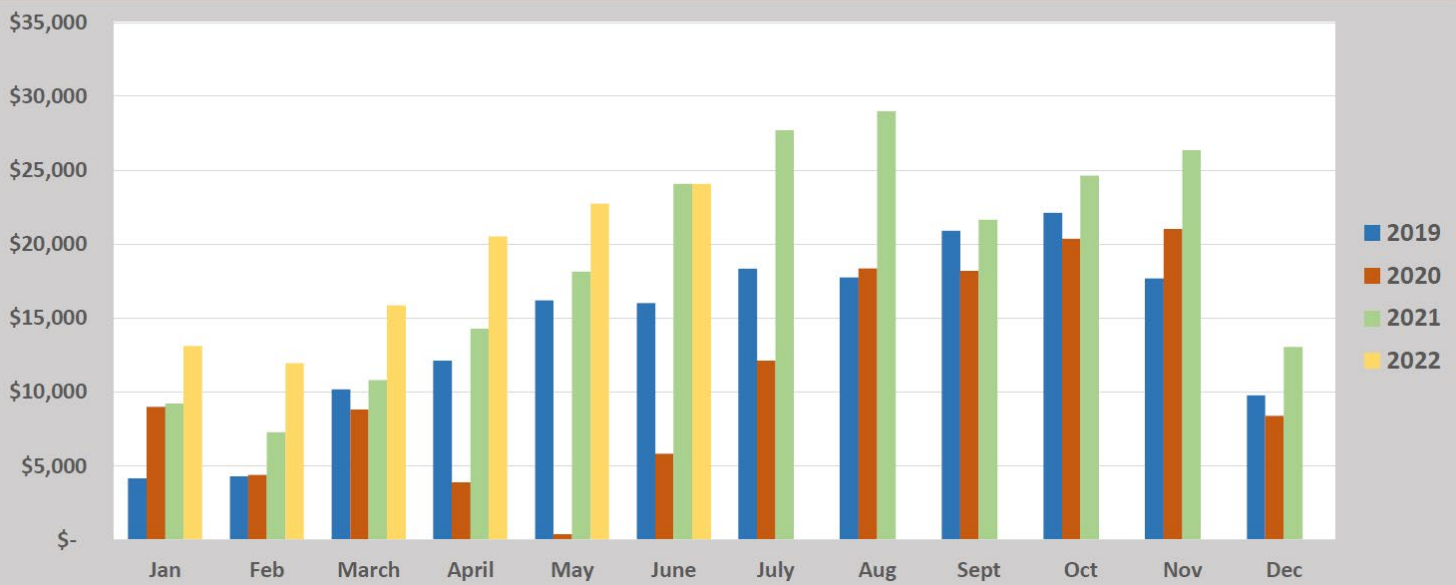
Event Traffic Counts — southbound 2 miles north of Virginia City



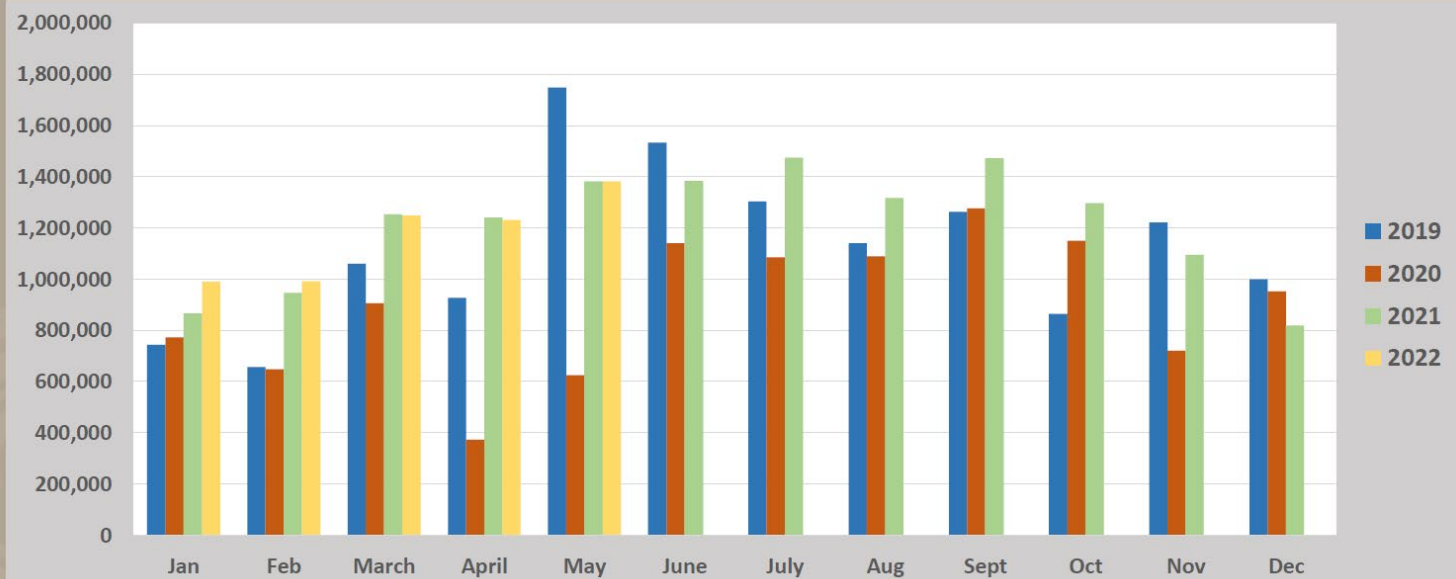
Occupancy Rate - VC



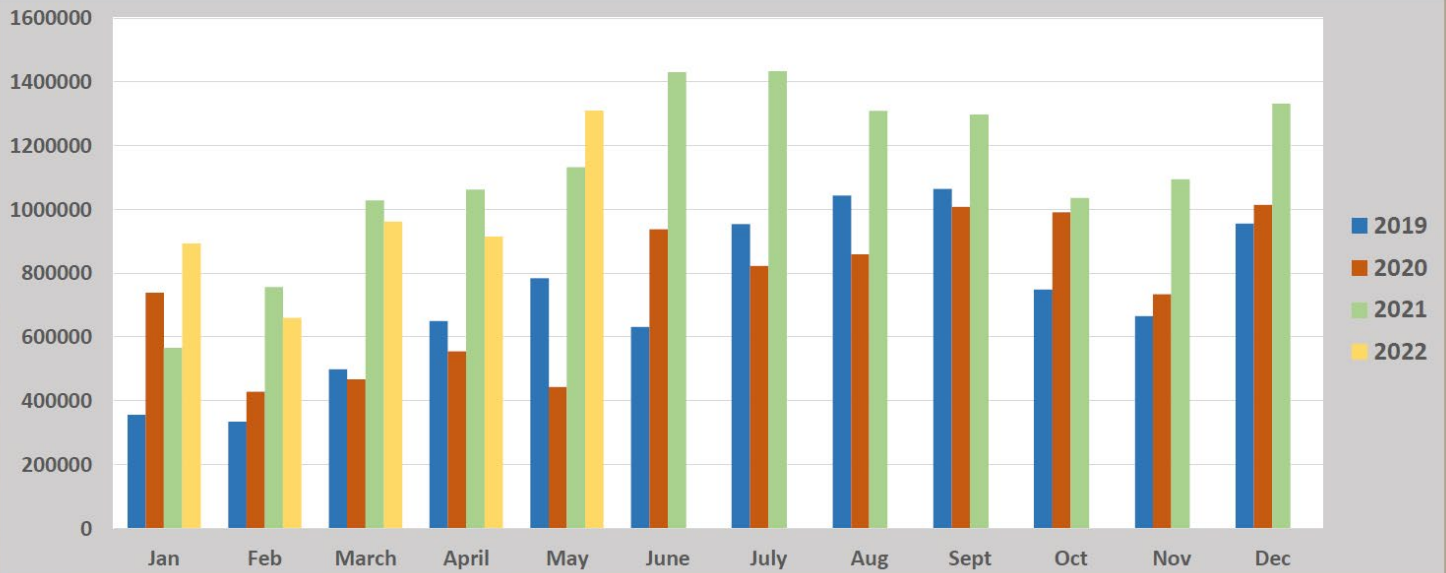
Transient Lodging Tax – VC



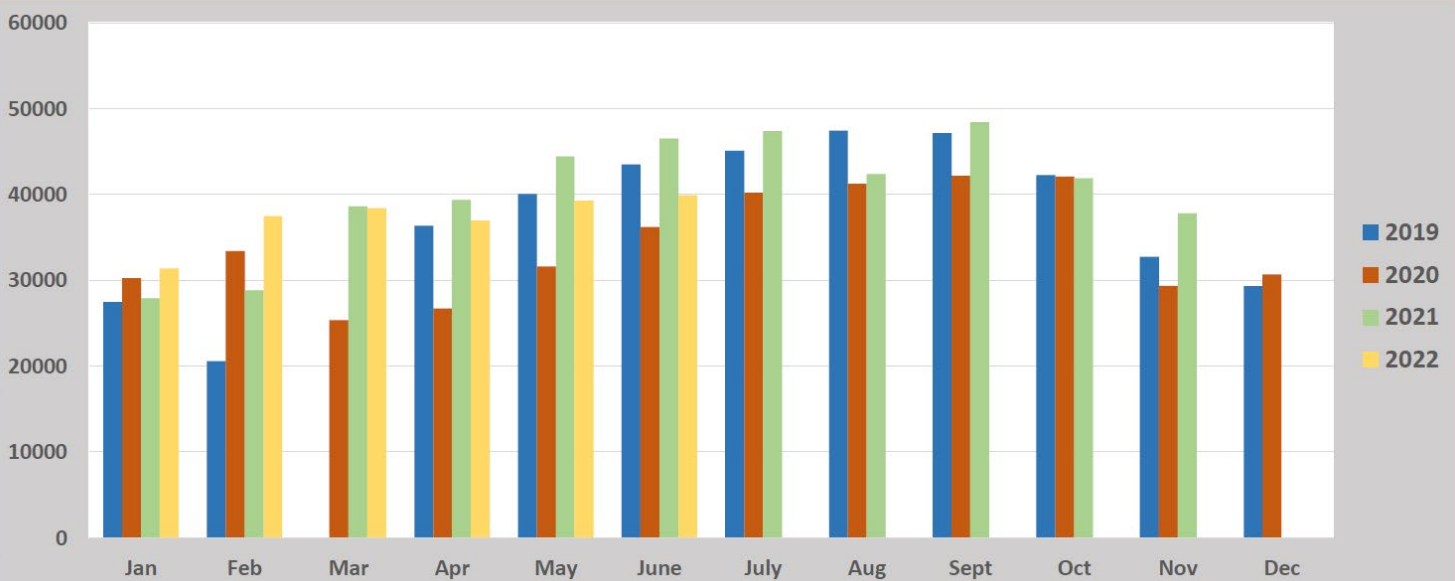
Sales Taxes Collections – Food & Drink



Sales Taxes Collections – Retail

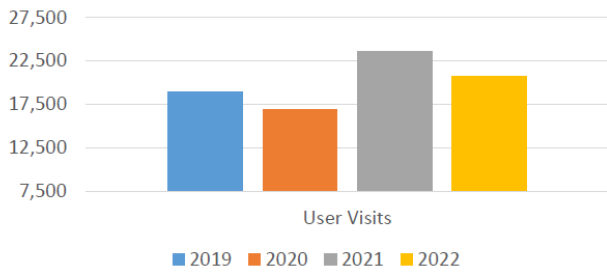


Traffic Counts – Monthly

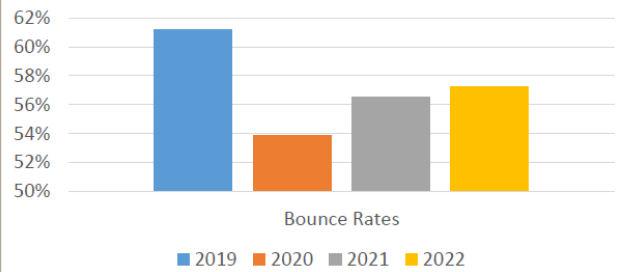


Website user analytics– 4 year comparison - June

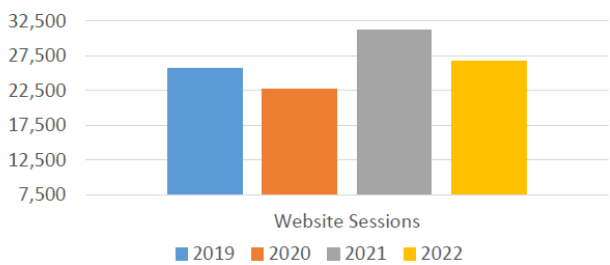
Website Users



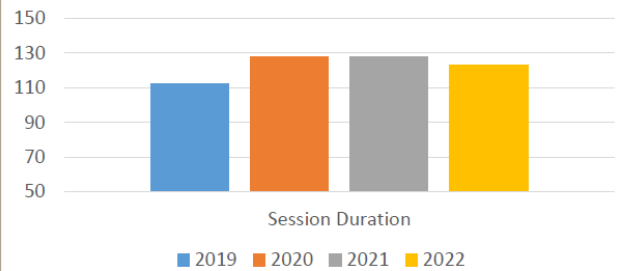
Bounce Rate



Website Sessions

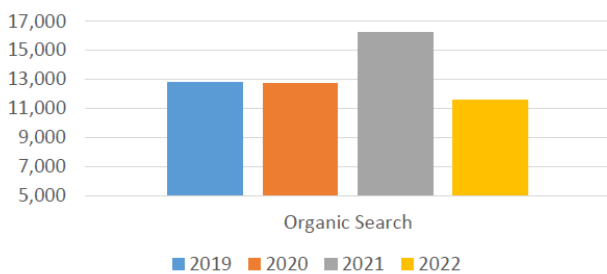


Session Duration (Seconds)

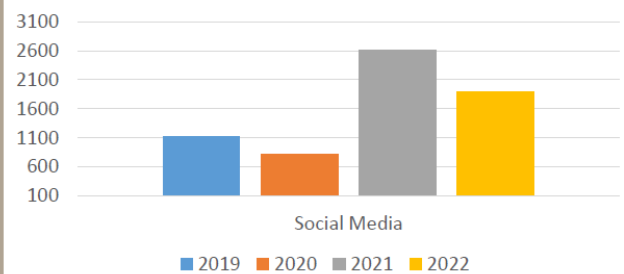


Website user channels – 4 year comparison - June

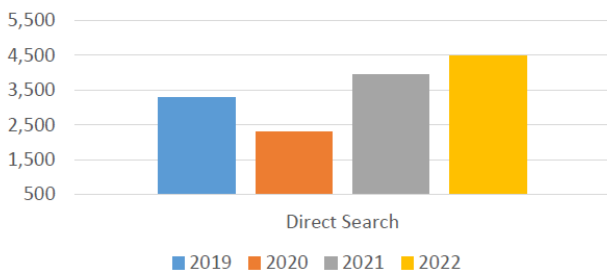
Organic Search



Social Media



Direct Search



Referrals

