

Stephanie B. Nixon, *Chair*  
John F. Tanner Jr., *Vice Chair*  
Bette Brand  
Gillian Gordon-Moore  
Stuart C. Siegel



Waqas Ahmed  
*Executive Secretary*

**Virginia Racing Commission**  
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## **Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held December 15, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.**

**Location:** State Corporation Commission, Tyler Building, Courtroom B,  
1300 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia

**In Attendance:**

**Commission Members**  
Stephanie B. Nixon, Chair  
John F. Tanner Jr., Vice Chair  
Bette Brand  
Gillian Gordon-Moore  
Stuart C. Siegel

**Commission Staff & Presenters**  
Waqas Ahmed, Executive Secretary  
Brian Wolford, Deputy Executive Secretary  
Kimberly Mackey, Director of Operations  
Israel Saavedra, Director of Licensing and Investigations  
Eris Jones, Director of Audit and Compliance  
Katreena Lewis, Director of Policy and Licensing  
John Birchfield, Wagering Systems Officer  
Darrell Wood, Shenandoah Downs  
Dr. William Allison, Virginia Gold Cup Association  
Frank Hopf, Colonial Downs  
Jack Sours, Colonial Downs Group  
Frank Petramalo, VA HBPA  
Glen Berman, VA HBPA

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The regular meeting of the Virginia Racing Commission was called to order at 1:00 p.m. on December 15, 2025, by Chair Stephanie B. Nixon. A roll call confirmed all commissioners were present, establishing a quorum. A motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of September 15, 2025, was approved unanimously.

Under department reports, Executive Secretary Waqas Ahmed introduced the full team, commending their efforts toward transparency and improvement. Director of Finance Gabrielle Cordle reported on the completion of the biennial budget draft and updated revenue estimates through 2032. Director of Audit and Compliance Eris Jones outlined the division's transition from a monitoring phase in 2025 to full-scope audits in 2026. Director of Policy and Licensing Katreena Lewis noted the issuance of 4,339 permits in 2025 and ongoing work on a digital licensing platform. Director of Investigations Israel Saavedra provided 2025 statistics, including 31 permit investigations and over 1,800 breath alcohol

tests. Lead Veterinarian Dr. Dave Stanford presented safety statistics for the year, noting that fatality rates at all tracks remained at or below the national average.

Under new business, the Commission reviewed a Resolution of Appreciation for Dr. Charles Richard Harden, recognizing his decades of dedicated service as Commission Veterinarian. A motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Siegel, seconded by Commissioner Gordon-Moore. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission considered the Code of Ethics for Commissioners and the Executive Secretary. A motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Brand, seconded by Vice Chair Tanner. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission tabled the adoption of a policy regarding commissioner travel until the February meeting.

The Commission then considered limited license applications for 2026 race meetings. Mr. Darrell Wood presented for Shenandoah Downs, highlighting the success of the new barn facility and a request for seven-week meets in both spring and fall. Mr. Al Griffin presented for the Virginia Gold Cup, noting improved turf safety statistics. Mr. Frank Hopf presented for Colonial Downs, proposing a schedule that includes three days in March and a summer meet that shifts Wednesday racing to Sundays. A motion to grant two provisional licenses to Shenandoah Downs was made by Commissioner Siegel, and seconded by Commissioner Brand, conditional upon the VRC's review of the information submitted on December 15, 2025, and the additional information due on January 14, 2026, passed unanimously.

A motion to grant a provisional license to Virginia Gold Cup was made by Vice Chair, Tanner, and seconded by Commissioner Gordon-Moore, conditional upon the VRC's review of the information submitted on December 15, 2025, and the additional information due on January 14, 2026, passed unanimously.

A motion to grant a provisional license to Colonial Downs was made by Commissioner Siegel, and seconded by Commissioner Brand, conditional upon the VRC's review of the information submitted on December 15, 2025, and the additional information due on January 14, 2026, passed unanimously.

The Commission next addressed the renewal of licenses to conduct pari-mutuel wagering on Historical Horse Racing (HHR). Mr. Jack Sours presented on behalf of the Colonial Downs Group, noting an increase to 4,868 terminals statewide and detailing operations at existing Rosie's Gaming Emporiums and the Rose Gaming Resort. Staff recommended provisional licensure pending the completion of specific background checks and fingerprinting. A motion made by Commissioner Brand, and seconded by Commissioner Gordon-Moore, to grant a provisional owner-operator's licenses to conduct pari-mutuel wagering for the 2026 calendar year for the following facilities operated by the Colonial Downs Group, LLC, contingent upon satisfactory receipt of all required fingerprint submissions, completed permit applications, and all corresponding background investigations and character disclosures for the applicable entities: New Kent, Vinton, Richmond, Hampton, Collinsville, Emporia, The Rose Gaming Resort in Dumfries, and Henrico, passed unanimously.



RE: Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held December 15, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

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The Commission subsequently considered applications for Advance Deposit Wagering (ADW) licenses. Staff recommended provisional licensure for NYRA Bets, TVG, TwinSpires, and Xpressbet, pending the submission of remaining fees and documentation. Vice Chair Tanner moved to approve provisional licenses to conduct Advance Deposit Account Wagering for 2026, seconded by Commissioner Brand and passed unanimously.

Vice Chair Tanner moved to approve the Horsemen's Contract between Colonial Downs and the Virginia Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association. Seconded by Commissioner Gordon-Moore, the motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chair Tanner moved to approve the request withdraw administrative costs from the horsemen's account in the amount of \$420,000 of the \$483,000 budget. Seconded by Commissioner Brand, the motion passed unanimously.

Executive Secretary Ahmed and Deputy Executive Secretary Brian Wolford presented the Agency Strategic Plan for 2026–2028. The plan focuses on three pillars: integrity and safety, sustainable growth, and organizational excellence. Commissioner Brand moved to approve the Agency Strategic Plan, seconded by Commissioner Gordon-Moore. The motion passed unanimously.

During the public comment period, Commissioners Gordon-Moore and Tanner provided a report on their attendance at the Global Symposium on Racing. Mr. Hoppy Shores addressed the Commission regarding the fan experience, commending staff improvements while offering suggestions regarding ticket scanning logistics and suite utilization.

With no further business or public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 2:49 p.m.

