



Dear VSCA Members,

As you know, we have held our annual conference at the Hampton Roads Convention Center (HRCC) since the fall of 2015. Prior to 2015, our conference was much smaller and we were able to move our conference location around the state. There were many hotels/conference centers that were able to meet our space and price needs. We made the move to Hampton originally though, because we were beginning to out-grow most places. I have served on the VSCA Board continuously since 2008 as a board member or committee chair. Over these years, I have seen the association's membership grow from 701 (October 2010) to 1454 (today), and our conference has grown from roughly 500 attendees to 900 in 2019! While our conference was definitely impacted by COVID, we hope to be back up to our 2019 numbers this fall. Because of this amazing growth, our options for conference locations are limited. We consistently receive feedback from conference attendees asking us to change locales or at least to move around to make the location easier for different folks around the state.

My purpose in writing to you all today is to let you know that VSCA hears your requests, and we have been exploring new locations and seeking proposals for future conferences; but there are a couple main reasons we have been unable to move from Hampton. First, it's simply a space issue. When we look at alternate locations, we must factor in our needs for a large ballroom for general sessions with the ability to hold 900+ (as we hope to keep growing), at least 10+ breakout session rooms all with significant and similar seating space, and a space(s) for 45-60 exhibitors. Based on space alone, there are very few venues that can accommodate us. Second, we have to be fiscally responsible about that space. As a reference point, the HRCC charges us \$7,100 for the rental of space. One convention center we were eyeing for 2023 was proposing a rental cost of \$42,300 and that was with 25% off as a signing incentive.

Our main goal is not to increase the price of registration since we know cost is a factor for so many attendees. At this time, we are just not willing to significantly increase registration costs in order to move locations. We know an eastern location is not ideal for everyone, especially our western folks, but we hope you understand our reasoning.

I also want to share that we know the HRCC is not perfect. Annually, we get some negative feedback on the food options. One attendee last year made a great suggestion of getting food trucks to come park outside the convention center in lieu of box lunches. While this would be so much fun, it's not an option. When working with hotels and convention centers, we sign food & beverage agreements. We agree to spend a certain amount on food, and outside food is not

permitted. We could spend more on food, but again this would increase registration costs significantly.

We will continue to scout new locations as they are built, but for now we are staying in Hampton at least for the next 2 conferences (2023 & 2024). Please feel free to reach out to me if you have additional questions at vscaconference@gmail.com. We have amazing pre-conference, keynote, and breakout session speakers lined up for October, so we really hope to see you in Hampton! Registration is open now: <https://ncyionline.org/conferences/vscac/>. Additionally, please stay tuned for further communication from VSCA regarding regional events and other professional development opportunities.

Sincerely,
Jenny Hubler, VSCA Conference Chair