

Natrona County Travel & Tourism Council

Visit Casper

**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2021
CASPER, WYOMING**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Ruble called the public meeting of the Natrona County Travel and Tourism Council to order Tuesday, August 24, 2021, at 11:32 a.m. Roll call determined the presence of a quorum.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Michael Cevasco, Town of Midwest
Jim Ruble, Town of Evansville
Sabrina Kemper, City of Mills
Kevin Hawley, City of Casper
Renee Penton-Jones, Natrona County
Steve Freel, City of Casper
Brad Murphy, Town of Bar Nunn
Ken Thoren, Town of Edgerton

Excused: Tiffany Gamble, Natrona County

Also Present: Brook Kaufman, CEO
Chelsea Combe, Marketing Specialist
Amanda Scherlin, Marketing Manager
Luke Gilliam, Business Development Manager
Tia Troy, Lightning Bug Public Relations
Darren Rudloff, Rudloff Solutions
Kelly Eastes, Kelly Eastes Inc.
Tammi Chappell, Hampton Inn
Aubrey Valdez, Clarion Inn
Gena Jensen, National Historic Trails Center Foundation

- III. Moved by Mrs. Penton-Jones, seconded by Mr. Freel and carried without dissent to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

OLD BUSINESS

IV. STRATEGIC AND DESTINATION PLANNING – DARREN RUDLOFF

Mr. Rudloff presented the initial findings of his plan review. Strategic issues for the destination identified to date include wayfinding, beautification, outdoor recreation, (Casper Mountain, Platte River), attraction development and downtown. Initially, items that didn't present as often included workforce, convention space, sports infrastructure, air service and economic development. After feedback from the board, some opportunities will be grouped as we move forward through the process. Next is

feedback from the steering committee and 1:1 interviews with key stakeholders.
(Exhibit 1)

NEW BUSINESS

V. EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK UPDATES

Ms. Kaufman shared that the handbook had not been updated since 2016. After recent review, Ms. Kaufman is working with the Executive Committee on making changes in key areas. More will be shared at the September board meeting.

VI. VISIT CASPER BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Using CARES funding, Visit Casper launched the first annual tourism business challenge in August 2021. The goal of the program is to stimulate recovery in the tourism sector by incubating new or evolving businesses that serve visitors or drive visitation. Applications will be accepted through September 24, 2021. Applicants will be vetted by a panel of 6 expert judges before moving to the semi-final round. All seed money will be awarded by December 20, 2021. (Exhibit 2)

VII. CASPER AREA FILM COMMISSION – KELLY EASTES

Also leveraging CARES funds, Visit Casper recently contracted with Kelly Eastes to organize a film effort in Natrona County. Mr. Eastes will be handling things like asset management and presentation, permitting, location photos etc. Visit Casper is working closely with the Wyoming Office of Tourism to not duplicate efforts and leverage their expertise. Next steps are working with the City and County on the permitting process and building out the marketing plan. Representative Sweeney shared that the Travel, Rec and Wildlife Legislative Committee would be hearing film testimony August 26th. Mr. Eastes is planning to participate.

VIII. MARKETING UPDATE – AMANDA SCHERLIN

Mrs. Scherlin shared top line metrics on current marketing programs including the One & Only and Road to Yellowstone. Year-to-date, 2200 Yellowstone Kits have been ordered, 4300 over the life of the program. All travel intent indicators are up to 2019 and we will continue to lead with wide open spaces messaging. Top content continues to be things to do, attractions and events.

IX. SALES/PHB UPDATE – LUKE GILLIAM

Mr. Gilliam updated the board on current sales activities. He is attending four tradeshows in the coming months including Connect Sports, Teams and Small Market Meetings. He also recently began building out Casper's local sports venues on the Sports Tourism Index website. He floated the idea of a Destination Booking Agreement and how many destinations are asking event planners to sign so canceled business is rebooked. Finally, Proud to Host the Best continues to work on sponsorships and the first state tournament is marching band October 16, 2021.

COMMUNICATION REPORTS

- V. **STAFF REPORTS** No questions.
- VI. **COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATION** No questions.
- VII. **COUNCIL COMMENTS** Mayor Freel shared the new tennis court project proposed by NCSD and the opportunity that may present Visit Casper is selling the destination. Mrs. Kemper talked about the requirements of EDA funding for travel and tourism grants and that they are working with the City of Casper on a joint grant effort. Mr. Cevalasco reported that Salt Creek Days will take place again in 2022.
- VIII. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** None.
- IX. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** None.
- X. **NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:** Monday, September 27, 2021. Location: Visit Casper Office.
- XI. **ADJOURNMENT:** Moved by Mrs. Kemper, seconded by Mr. Cevalasco and carried without dissent to adjourn the meeting at 12:58 pm. Motion carried.



Jim Ruble, Chair



Renee Penton-Jones, Secretary