

Natrona County Travel & Tourism Council

Visit Casper

**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2021 ~ 11:30 AM
CASPER, WYOMING**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Gamble called the public meeting of the Natrona County Travel & Tourism Council to order Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at 11:31 a.m. via Zoom. Roll call determined the presence of a quorum.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Tiffany Gamble, Natrona County
Renee Penton-Jones, Natrona County
Jim Ruble, Town of Evansville
Michael Cevasco, Town of Midwest
Brad Murphy, Town of Bar Nunn
Ken Thoren, Town of Edgerton
Erik Aune, Town of Mills
Steve Freel, City of Casper

Excused: Kevin Hawley, City of Casper

Also Present: Brook Kaufman, CEO
Amanda Scherlin, Marketing Manager
Mikki Milosevic, Destination Services Coordinator
Greg Hirst, Oil City News
Tia Troy, Lightning Bug Public Relations

- III. Moved by Mrs. Penton Jones, seconded by Mr. Murphy, carried without dissent to approve the consent agenda as presented. Mr. Aune abstained. (Exhibit 1)

OLD BUSINESS

IV. MARKET UPDATE AND FORECAST

Ms. Kaufman updated the Board on what is happening in the tourism economy nationally. Based on trends and available data, there seems to be a variance in traveler sentiment nationally vs within Wyoming. As of now, the percentage of American Travelers concerned about contracting the virus, their friends and family contracting the virus, or the impact on their finances is still up. She did note that 35% of American Travelers believe the pandemic is going to get better and they continue to rate travel activities as safer than they did at the beginning of the pandemic. The availability of a vaccine is contributing to their optimism.

Ms. Kaufman noted that the resident survey conducted annually is on hold as the agency will be deploying another COVID sentiment survey in March 2021.

Ms. Kaufman also explained that based on industry data and feedback, our market will not likely see a rebound in meetings and conventions until the end of 2021.

Mrs. Penton-Jones informed the board that she has seen many meetings rebooking for the 3rd and 4th quarter of 2021 but she does not see large groups coming back until 2022. Ms. Kaufman also informed the board that based on the STR Market Forecast report for Natrona County, we anticipate we'll be close to 2017 levels in occupancy and average daily rate. Ms. Kaufman believes leisure travel will lead us again this year.

Mrs. Scherlin gave a marketing update. The Road to Yellowstone campaign will launch in February, we will also begin marketing outdoor recreation with the One and Only campaign in March. She also shared that we're experiencing robust participation in restaurant week this year and that 900+ people download the pass via Bandwango.

Mrs. Penton-Jones noted that one of the reasons average daily rate is down is because many hoteliers have local contracts at a lower rate. Mr. Murphy also shared that the reason the Ford Wyoming Center has had canceled events is because of capacity issues related to health orders. He also shared that the upcoming high school tournaments will go on even if [for some reason] spectators aren't allowed. Ms. Penton-Jones informed the board that the MOU for Proud to Host the Best has been signed and she believes funding is in place for us to win the bid to keep the events in Casper for another 4 years. WHSAA will open bids in early February 2021.

Mr. Aune asked if we have an agency coming on board. Ms. Kaufman shared that with Mrs. Scherlin going on leave we have put Bark Firm on retainer to assist with marketing. Ms. Kaufman said she would like to pull the marketing committee together for a meeting in early February.

Ms. Kaufman let the board know that the statewide lodging tax went into effect January 1st.

Ms. Kaufman informed the board that all ISC impact funds received will be placed in the 5150 Tourism Development account.

Ms. Kaufman shared that Visit Casper and the County recently signed an MOU to update the 2014 Kay-Lynn Masterplan for the Trails on Casper Mountain. The next step will be for the County to formally retain the organization to begin working on plan development.

NEW BUSINESS

V. BUDGET COMMITTEE FOR 2021-2022

Ms. Kaufman asked for volunteers for the 2021-2022 Budget Committee. Mr. Murphy, Mr. Ruble and Mrs. Penton-Jones volunteered.

COMMUNICATION REPORTS

VI. **STAFF REPORTS:** No questions. (Exhibit 2)

VII. **COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATION:** No questions.

VIII. **COUNCIL COMMENTS:** None.

- IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.
- X. EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.
- XI. NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: Tuesday, February 23, 2021. Location: Zoom or Visit Casper Office.
- XII. ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Mr. Thoren, seconded by Mr. Cevasco and carried without dissent to adjourn the meeting at 12:34 p.m. Motion carried.



Tiffany Gamble, Chair



Kevin Hawley, Secretary