

Natrona County Travel & Tourism Council

Visit Casper

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023 CASPER, WYOMING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Penton-Jones called the public meeting of the Natrona County Travel and Tourism Council to order Tuesday, May 23, 2023, at 11:35 a.m. Roll call determined the presence of a quorum.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Renee Penton-Jones, Natrona County
Ken Thoren, Town of Edgerton
Cole Montgomery, City of Casper
Sabrina Kemper, City of Mills
Mike Cevasco, Town of Midwest
Lisa Engebretsen, City of Casper
Tassma Powers, Town of Evansville

Excused: Tiffany Gamble, Natrona County

Absent: Tom Brauer, Town of Bar Nunn

Also Present: Tyler Daugherty, CEO
Terri Weinhandl, Executive Assistant
Dave North, Natrona County Commissioner*
Kyle Gamroth, City of Casper Councilor**

* Arrived at 11:42 a.m.

** Arrived at 11:50 a.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

III. Mrs. Penton-Jones asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Moved by Mr. Cevasco, seconded by Mrs. Engebretsen, carried without dissent to approve the consent agenda. (Exhibit 1)

OLD BUSINESS

IV. NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK RECAP

Mr. Daugherty thanked everyone who participated in the week's events. The scheduled events went well with a meet and greet kickoff at Frontier Brewery the week prior for general managers and directors of sales in the lodging and hospitality field to make introductions with new faces.

Monday

Visit Casper participated in a career panel at Natrona County High School with five representatives from the tourism/hospitality industry, and Tina Hobelheinrich from the

Chamber of Commerce. The panel talked with approximately 50 students about how they got into tourism, what they love about it, and how the students can get into the industry themselves. Hopefully both high schools will participate in 2024.

Wednesday

Ms. Troy from Lightning Bug Public Relations put on marketing and public relations workshops for Visit Casper partners, addressing the impact that marketing and public relations have on tourism.

Friday

The annual Visit Casper breakfast was held at the Nicolaysen Art Museum. Mr. Daugherty gave an introduction presentation and showed a promo video for the WYO Sports Ranch complex, followed by a guest panel discussion on sports tourism with Mr. Trevor Wilson, WHSAA Associate Commissioner, Jessica Hastings, Operations Manager for McMurry Companies and WYO Sports Ranch Board Member, Kirk Goodman, General Manager of the Ford Wyoming Center, and Tiffany Funk, Regional Manager for the JJM Group Hotels and Treasurer of Proud to Host the Best.

Visit Casper announced the post card drawing winner at the breakfast presentation.

No FAM tours took place due to the delayed delivery of the Visit Casper bus.

The Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT) released their findings for tourism in 2022.

- Wyoming welcomed approximately 7.5 million visitors, spending \$4.5 billion with Wyoming businesses, supporting 33,000 jobs in state. The number of visitors was down from 2021.
- Natrona County welcomed 746,310 overnight visitors, spending \$349.6 million with local businesses, generating 2,810 jobs in Natrona County.
- The \$349.6 million spent in Natrona County generated \$16.8 million in state and local taxes.
- Each household in Natrona County would have to write a check for \$510 to make up the \$16.8 million in taxes from visitor spending.

Visit Casper will update their website with the WOT 2022 numbers.

Mr. Cevasco asked with fewer 2022 travelers spending more money, is it a sign in the change of demographics. Mr. Daugherty said that the numbers represent the WOT's best estimate and the flooding in Yellowstone obviously effected travel. Ms. Troy shared those fewer travelers spending more is consistent across the west for 2022, namely neighboring states Montana, Colorado, and South Dakota.

NEW BUSINESS

V. PUBLIC HEARING – FY 22/23 BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mrs. Penton-Jones called for a motion to open the public hearing for the purpose of the FY 22/23 budget amendment.

Moved by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Mrs. Kemper, carried without dissent to open the public hearing at 11:42 a.m.

No public was in attendance.

Mrs. Penton-Jones called for discussion.

Lodging tax revenue for FY 22/23 will exceed \$2M and with the 90% spend requirement the budget amendment is the result of an increase in lodging tax revenue. The biggest reason for the budget amendment was due to the staffing gap after three staff members resigned in April and May and the time it took to fill those vacant positions. Adjustments were made in marketing, social media, print advertisements, employee benefits, and admin. Items listed in blue are those line items that were adjusted.

No further discussion.

Mrs. Penton-Jones called for a motion to approve the proposed FY 22/23 budget amendment.

Moved by Mr. Thoren, seconded by Mr. Montgomery, carried without dissent to approve the budget amendment.

Mrs. Penton-Jones called for a motion to close the public hearing.

Moved by Mr. Thoren, seconded by Mrs. Kemper, carried without dissent to close the public hearing at 11:46 a.m.

VI. **BY-LAWS AMENDMENTS**

The By-laws committee (Mrs. Powers, Mr. Cevalasco and Mrs. Engebretsen) prepared their recommendations, and the document was forwarded to Crowley & Fleck for review.

Small/minor changes were made. Board officers will now be elected in June so the new offices will start in July to coincide with the new fiscal year.

Mrs. Kemper asked if there was a revision date. Mr. Daugherty pointed out the revision date of May 23, 2023 appears on the last page.

Mrs. Penton-Jones called for a motion to approve the revised By-laws.

Moved by Mrs. Engebretsen, seconded by Mrs. Powers, carried without dissent to approve the revised By-Laws.

VII. **PRELIMINARY FY 24 BUDGET**

Mr. Daugherty said he was sharing the proposed FY 24 budget for everyone to review. The lodging tax estimate is conservative based on past lodging tax amounts.

There are currently 7 budget classes. Invoices are sometimes split between classes making it hard to track exactly where funds are spent. In the new budget year, there will be condensed classes for better tracking of spending, namely:

- Admin

- Grants
- Sales
- Marketing
- Destination Development

Visit Casper is budgeting to exceed over \$2M in lodging tax revenue this next fiscal year.

There are a few new line items that will need to be added:

- Welcome Kiosk with merchandise
- Bus expenses

Mr. Thoren inquired more about the bus. Mr. Daugherty is hoping for delivery around July 1 and will move forward with getting the bus wrapped. He plans to provide the bus for hop on-hop off tours, mural tours, FAM tours, sales tours, shuttle services, and bus rentals.

Visit Casper purchased the bus and will lease it to the City of Casper for \$1 annually. Visit Casper will carry insurance and secure drivers who have taken the city driver's training course and hold a Class B license.

Visit Casper also has an additional \$600,000 in destination development grant funds from the Wyoming Office of Tourism.

The proposed budget allows for amendments if need be. Visit Casper is in a good spot with the budget proposed with what funds are in savings plus the \$600,000. It offers a lot of flexibility if the lodging tax revenue goes south over the fiscal year.

The FY 24 budget is tabled until the June meeting.

VIII. **MARKETING CO-OP PROGRAM**

Visit Casper will issue 10 - \$,2500 grants to local businesses in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries to market their businesses. These monies will allow the recipients to control their marketing efforts and decide when they advertise, where they advertise and what media format they choose to advertise. The intent is to issue checks by the end of the fiscal year.

COMMUNICATION REPORTS

IX. **STAFF REPORTS**

Mr. Daugherty reported that next fiscal year the board will no longer receive individual staff reports. Future reports will be department-based for Sales, Marketing, and Analytics to allow for better monthly tracking.

- Sales
 - What our annual events are.
 - What leads we have.
 - The number of people coming to an event.
- Marketing
 - Where we are placing ads.

- What our website hits are for.

Mr. Thoren commented that he enjoys the updates on all the work that is being done.

X. **LIGHTNING BUG PUBLIC RELATIONS**

- Ms. Troy conducted two workshops during National Travel & Tourism week.
- She brought five journalists to Casper the week of May 15.
- Three influencers will be in Casper promoting CNFR, and the rodeo red carpet event at the Ford Wyoming. A journalist from Good Housekeeping will also be at CNFR.
- Beginning to promote the Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo.
- Airbase news release.

XI. **SALES REPORT**

Mr. Gilliam said that the sales team has mostly been a department of one. The focus has been different for the last few years pursuing large impact driven sports events. As the Sales department grows, as Amanda Sewell gets more involved with state association groups and rocky mountain business, they want to make sure how they report makes sense from what they are doing a daily basis and on a long-term basis.

The Sales team is relaunching partner communication through the extranet which is the backside portal into Simpleview for partners, sharing in a more streamlined and way that makes sense. Sales will be putting together an internal document with department goals to meet on a weekly basis, and a monthly basis. They will include all different segments of business in the summary.

XII. **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Mr. Cevasco shared a summary of what is occurring in Midwest with regard to the water tower and infrastructure, and status of Wind Henge. A meeting will take place May 23 to plan for Salt Creek Days.

Mrs. Penton-Jones asked if NIRA will be recognizing the NCTTC board at CNFR. Mr. Gilliam will reach out to Ms. Sewell to confirm.

Visit Casper will send the board a reminder about the rock star balcony at CNFR.

XIII. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Gamroth shared that Wednesday, May 24, the city council will hold special work session to discuss the roof replacement for the aquatic center and get an update on the fund raising for the second sheet of ice. They will also meet on the grant applications.

Visit Casper will host a customer value optimization (CVO) workshop with Madden Media on Friday, June 23. The marketing plan and organization and 2021 master plan will be addressed, and how it can be implemented. More information to come.

XIV. **NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.


XV. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
None.

XVI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Mrs. Powers, seconded by Mrs. Kemper, carried without dissent to adjourn at 12:14 p.m.



Tiffany Gamble, Chair



Cole Montgomery, Secretary