

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism  
Minutes: September 4, 2020 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Council Members in Attendance: Suzan Barnes, Kevin Fern, Karen Hibbard, Shonda Atwater, Chuck Magerl, Susie Coleman, Ken Corbet, Jan Kessinger, Shannon Francis, Bridgette Jobe, Mary Madden, Diane Robinson, Jeanny Sharp, Mary Ware.

Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism staff in Attendance: Secretary Brad Loveless, Nadia Reimer, Colby Sharples- Terry, Jordan Hildebrand, Jaimee Salalac.

Bajillion Agency in Attendance: Andrea Engstrom, Sarah Moreland, Ronnie Murphy, Kip Kraisinger

The meeting was held virtually on Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 9:07 AM by Chair Suzan Barnes

Council members made introductions

There was a motion to approve minutes from June 5, 2020 by Karen Hibbard, Jan Kessinger, seconded. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment. No one was in attendance to provide public comment.

Secretary Loveless provided a report for overall agency. Summer and Spring were busy for the State Parks and campgrounds with more people visiting wide open spaces due to the pandemic. April and May were record breaking months for State Parks. Campgrounds continue to fill up fast and it is recommended that you book early. Fishing sales for this Spring are at about 35% above normal and anticipates that this continues. Out of state deer and bird hunters are booked up this year and are a big part of the revenue every year. Tourism is doing a great job with Bajillion Agency on the To the Stars campaign and the Underground Railroad Month video with the Governor.

Bridgette Jobe gave a report on recent activity in the Tourism division. She reported that the Tourism Industry Virtual Huddles have been very successful to communicate with tourism industry members throughout the pandemic, providing educational and timely info. The Huddles are a partnership with Kansas Tourism and the Travel Industry Association of Kansas. There are 75-90 people on each live huddle and many more listen later online. She announced that Colby Sharples- Terry moved into a new position in July as PR & Communications Manager. Taylor Hartshorn has been hired as the Fiscal and Research Manager and will start his new job on September 8. Bridgette presented the org chart on Tourism staff. Since becoming the director Bridgette has realigned job positions and roles. One key change has been identifying Kelli Hilliard as the Industry Relations Manager.

Colby Sharples-Terry presented the goals of the Kansas Attraction Development Grant Program and announced the 2020 Grant Recipients. Kansas Tourism was able to award 6 of 14 applicants with grants totaling \$123,471. Total request topped \$1 million. The need to increase the amount of grant dollars available each year was noted. The 2021 Attraction Development Grant opens March 1, 2021 and closes April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Bridgette shared a recent video that was created to promote the Freedom Frontier National Heritage Area during National Underground Railroad Month in September. This video was a partnership with FFNHA, Kansas Tourism, Kansas African American Affairs Commission and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. The video featured Kansas youth and Governor Laura Kelly reading an official proclamation at various Underground Railroad sites in Kansas. There are 21 Official Network to Freedom Underground Railroad sites in Kansas. A landing page was created on TravelKS.com telling you more about these sites. The feedback received from the video has been phenomenal in it's first 3 days of being posted.

Bridgette presented the overall outline of the foundational components of the strategic plan for Kansas TOURISM. Last Fall Kansas Tourism contracted with Wichita State University, Community Engagement Institute to help gather input from our partners. Great feedback was received from partners in the industry at the 2019 Kansas Tourism Conference, through the Council on Travel and Tourism work sessions and the Kansas Tourism Division staff work sessions. Bridgette presented a new mission, vision and team values along with 6 focus areas. Work has already begun on most of the focus areas. Bridgette then introduced Andrea Engstrom and Ronnie Murphy from Bajillion Agency to provide information on how their agency fits into the Kansas Tourism strategic plan, give examples of recent marketing projects, and to present a vision for future marketing endeavors. Bajillion's marketing focus is on these Key Strategies: New Brand, Website, Digital Marketing, Search Engine Marketing, Print Advertising/Billboards, Story Series, Gear Suite, Research/Reporting and Content Calendar. Plans are being made for Kansas Day 2021 as a major launch of the new brand and new website.

Bridgette opened the meeting up to Council members for questions on the strategic plan. Council members agreed that Kansas Tourism is going in the right direction with the strategic plan. Chuck Magerl expressed his concern that the Tourism budget seems to be a big issue and doesn't see that in 2021 or 2022 that it is going to change or get easier. Shannon Francis expressed his concern that hunting, mostly deer hunting is not being promoted to its full potential. Bridgette provided some feedback about how Tourism does promote all outdoor activities and has increased the impact that hunting ads are receiving. Tourism works closely with Wildlife and Parks and capitalizes on their marketing efforts. Ken Corbett expressed that he would like to see Kansas Tourism get a more stable funding source and feels that funding should be out of a general fund appropriation. As far as deer hunting, he feels that we could do a better job at promoting. There was discussion as to if any CARES funding would be available for Tourism.

#### Council Industry Members updates

- Ken Corbett, Kansas Sport Hunting Association- A Convention was recently held in Salina with roughly 30 attendees that included speaker on several different topics including COVID 19. With the Fall weather approaching and the need for people to get out he expects a great season.
- Suzan Barnes, Travel Industry Association of KS- The TIAK Meeting was held on August 13<sup>th</sup> by email. The Kansas Tourism Conference will be held in Liberal October 19-21. There will be multiple meetings the next week to discuss whether to hold the Tourism Conference in person or virtual. It is hoped that we will be able to hold the conference in person as planned. It will be announced on the Virtual Industry Huddle Meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Suzan voiced her appreciation for the partnership between Kansas Tourism and TIAK for the virtual huddles, great attendance with timely topics that the industry really appreciates and responds to.
- Susie Coleman, Petroleum Marketing Association- Although March and April showed a major slump in gallon sales they are now getting back on track as people are starting to travel. Gallon sales are about 1% off from last year's fuel sales for July/August.
- Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association-Lodging – Seat open.
- Chuck Magerl, Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association- Restaurants- Those in the food service are seeing an enormous loss due to COVID 19 and the restrictions in place. Those that offer drive thru or carry out are doing better than those that offer dine in services. The loss of revenue in Kansas for April-July is about 565 million dollars.

#### Ex-Officio Reports

- Mary Madden, Kansas Historical Society- They are prepared to open when they can and have been taking extra steps to keep the public, staff members, and their families safe. Although the museum is closed at this time Kansas State Historic Sites are open. Virtual exhibits are getting a lot of attention. State Archives is open and available by appointment only. Trying to get KMA meeting here. Kansas Archeology Day was canceled.
- Alex Rice, Kansas Dept of Commerce- No comment at this time.
- Jeanny Sharp, Kansas Dept of Transportation- KDOT is hard at work on road projects. KDOT partnered with KDWP on several events, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the completion of I-70 and the completion and reopening of the bridge at Cedar Bluff State Park just in time to welcome campers for the Labor Day weekend. The new drivers ed program which is part of the 10-year program will be offered to drivers up to 29 years old without any prior violations. KDOT is working on a mobile response tool for the 15-year-old program Kan Drive that will allow for truckers to check routes, bridges heights, weight and more to help navigate their route. Travelers will also be able to benefit from this mobile tool to set route and overcome challenges on the road.

Suzan Barnes announced the next meeting date is November 6, 2020, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The location will be announced later. Future meeting dates are December 4, 2020.

There was a motion to adjourn by Suzan Barnes, Chuck Magerl seconded. Passed Unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.