

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism
Minutes November 7, 2025
Docking Building
915 SW Harrison St, Ste 300

Council Members in Attendance: Susie Santo, Susie Coleman, Chuck Magerl, Bridgette Jobe, Laura Rose Clawson, Kim Anspach, Alexis Radil, Simone Elder, Ron Ryckman, Sr, Janet McRae, Donna Price.

Kansas Tourism staff in Attendance: Jaimee Salalac, Jordan Roemerman, Julianna Hagen, Colby Sharples-Terry, Andrea Etzel.

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM by Bridgette Jobe in the absence of Chair Karen Hibbard.

Bridgette introduced Simone Elder, new Council member representing the Kansas Sampler Foundation. Council members then made introductions

Laura Rose Clawson moved to approve the minutes from August 1, 2025. Donna Price seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There were no requests to make public comments.

Bridgette Jobe presented a Directors Report.

- Monthly Reports for July, August, September were provided to council.
- Staff Updates:
 - Kelsey Wendling, Tourism Agritourism Manager, has pursued another opportunity after 4 years with Tourism. Bridgette is in the process of reevaluating the distribution of duties for this position and will adjust as needed. The position will be filled.
- Office move:
 - In October, the Dept of Commerce relocated from the Curtis Building to the Docking Building. Kansas Tourism contributed to the welcoming atmosphere when you first enter on the first floor, including the large video screen, interactive educational stations, and the selfie wall graphic. All school groups / tours will eventually begin at Docking. Bridgette offered council members a building tour at the conclusion of the meeting.
- 2026 Travel Guide:
 - Copies of the new travel guide were provided to Council members. 350,000 guides were printed and are available in individual or bulk orders.
- Kansas Magazine
 - Kansas Magazine is celebrating its 80th anniversary. Governor Laura Kelly signed a proclamation proclaiming November as KANSAS! Magazine Month. Press Release will be sent out soon.
 - A Temporary Exhibit highlighting 80 years of the magazine is opening at the Kansas Museum of History in Topeka on Saturday, Nov 22. The goal is to expand the knowledge of Kansas Magazine and to increase subscription numbers.
 - Council members were asked to help promote subscriptions. \$25 for one year, which includes five issues, a Kansas Calendar, and one kids issue. Andrea Etzel, Editor, is putting together a sample holiday template that will be sent to the council to share with their partners.

- Tourism Marketing grants
 - 37 applications received, 20 awards granted
 - Total funds requested \$226,308.65
 - Total Funds available: \$100,000
 - Awards by region: NC (8), NE (12), NW (3), SC (10), SE (2), SW (1), Multi-region (1)
 - Awardees will be notified this week. Press Release scheduled for early December.
- Tourism Attraction Development Grant
 - Applications opened October 30th.
 - Applicant webinar scheduled for Nov 19th at 2 PM
- Annual Kansas Tourism Conference – Partnership between Kansas Tourism & TIAK
 - Held in Manhattan - October 21-22 with over 220 attendees
 - Kansas Tourism provided a session which included a year-end recap. LG Toland spoke and hosted a panel of economic developers discussed factors that they look for when investing in a community.

TBEX Summit recap

Colby Sharples- Terry and Susie Santo provided a TBEX event overview and recap.

Santo reported that the TBEX 2025 Summit welcomed over 190 attendees including 130 Travel Creators and 60 Industry Professional. This was the first-ever city / state collaboration in TBEX history, a partnership that was positively recognized by TBEX for its excellence. Visit Wichita provided 12 unique Pre-BEX tours partnering with 160+ local partners and businesses generating an estimated 9 million impressions and over \$9 Million in earned media value to date.

Sharples-Terry provided information on the 12 Post-FAM trips hosted by Kansas Tourism. Forty-two creators from across the world visited 80 communities in 4.5 days. The FAM themes were centered around the 6 tourism regions and 6 themed itineraries. She shared post 30-day analytics from InfluenceKit.

World Cup updates

Bridgette provided updates on World Cup planning. The Dept of Commerce works with KC2026, the organizing agency for the event. All information about things to do in Kansas for the FIFA World Cup app Kansas City page will be pulled from TravelKS.com. Kansas Tourism is actively working with all tourism partners across the state to ensure listings and photos are updated.

Fan Fest will be held at WW1 Museum as a free but ticketed event as capacity will be 25,000 at a time. It will be open at a minimum on Kansas City match days and Team USA match days. More details will be announced closer to the event.

Final draw will be held December 5th with matchups announced shortly after.

Team base camp announcements will be after the first of the year.

Council Industry Members updates:

- Ken Corbett, Kansas Sport Hunting Association (written report shared by Bridgette)

The Kansas Bird Producers are selling birds not only in Kansas but from Texas to the Dakotas. Kansas is known for its high quality of game birds. Those that are in the hunting business are experiencing a high volume of bookings. Just to show how much hunters enjoy coming to Kansas we have had hunters from TX, WI, MI, MD, MO, CO, and KS. If the weather holds all the hunt operators sound very upbeat. Gas prices are down, which is a big plus to our industry. Ken encouraged everyone to spread the word Kansas is an outdoor lover's paradise.
- Susie Coleman, Fuel Marketing Association - Susie provided an update fuel cost.

- Rob Bergquist, Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association – Lodging (written report shared by Bridgette) National hotel occupancy is down, with government travel declines significantly impacting the industry. Tariffs affected some items, though less than anticipated. Staffing remains a major challenge; while job postings and applicants have increased, worker quality continues to be a concern and was a prominent topic at a recent national hospitality conference, alongside AI. Property taxes are a growing issue statewide and nationally. Rising costs for products, benefits, wages, and property taxes are creating severe financial strain on hotels. For example, several large hotels in Topeka pay more than \$20,000 per month in property taxes, forcing difficult decisions related to staffing and bill payments. Midwest travel has been less volatile than coastal markets; occupancy and rates are down slightly but without major swings. However, financial concerns are increasing as the industry enters the three slowest months of the year for many Midwest non-destination hotels
- Chuck Magerl, Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association – Chuck reports supply increased while demand went down in August. Sales are not matching inflation. There was discussion between the council on the lodging and dining reports and challenges.
- Simone Elder, Kansas Sampler Foundation - Provided updates on Big Kansas Road Trip Pop-Up events held in Humboldt (September 6) and Sheridan County (October 4). The next Pop-Up is scheduled for **May 2026 in Humboldt**. The Foundation has an opening for a Program Manager.
- Alexis Radil, Kansas Museum Association – Alexis shared that the 2025 Kansas Museums Association Conference will be held in Great Bend on Nov 19, 2025.

Ex-Officio Members updates

- Patrick Zollner, Kansas Historical Society – Patrick announced the Grand opening of the museum will be hld on November 22, 2025.
- Laura Rose Clawson, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks – Wildlife and Parks had a booth at the state fair where they engaged with 40% of fair attendees, received an award and secured their spot for next year. Laura shared in honor of America's 250th birthday in 2026, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is inviting residents and visitors to join the Kansas Outdoor Recreation Challenge. A celebration of outdoor adventure across Kansas. Fall Hunting season underway. They are preparing for the 2026 fishing season.

Bridgette presented the 2026 Council meetings dates. 2026 Meeting dates - February 6, 2026, May 1, 2026, August 7, 2026, and November 6, 2026.

Bridgette will email all council members the 2026 meeting dates, Tourism Economics Impact of Tourism in Kansas report, and the Kansas Magazine Holiday Flyer.

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Susie Santos, Janet McRae seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM CST.