

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism
Minutes November 15, 2024
Kansas State Capitol, Auditorium 4-N

Council Members in Attendance: Kim Anspach, Karen Hibbard, Janet McRae, Rob Bergquist, Susie Coleman, Ken Corbet, Chuck Magerl, Rep Mary Ware, Bridgette Jobe, and Patrick Zollner

Kansas Tourism staff in Attendance: Babette Dixon, Jordan Roemerman, and Adam Roorbach

Guests in Attendance: Tom James, and SportsKS Executive Committee members - Mike Bell, Christina Hayes, Holly Leiker, Eric Olson and Jessica Viramontez

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Chair Karen Hibbard.

Council members made introductions.

There was a motion by Mary Ware to approve minutes from August 2, 2024, with the correction on the Historical Society updated to read, "Fort Hays, Kaw Mission and Constitution Hall are currently open year-round state historic sites. The long-term goal is to make all state historic sites to be able to be open year-round." Susie Coleman seconded. Passed unanimously.

There were no requests to make public comments.

The SportsKS Executive Committee gave a presentation on the impact of Sports Tourism in Kansas. They spoke on their current membership with 26 communities, their presence at different conferences, and data collected. The presentation spoke on the benefits of sports tourism not being completely shut down during COVID and helping to keep some of the supporting businesses such as restaurants and lodging open during that time. They talked about the financial impact of sports tourism to the communities and state and that Kansas is becoming a more desirable destination due many times to the central location.

Jordan Roemerman presented on Sunflower Summer results and survey results. Final number of tickets claimed for Sunflower Summer was 497,573, which is 55% YOY higher than 2023.

Bridgette Jobe provided a Directors Report. She spoke on the great year of growth

- Provided handouts of the Monthly Reports for July, August & September 2024 data.
- Provided the annual Economic Impact Report for Kansas. She also let the group know, the regional/county report for 2023 are available at TravelKS.com.
- Kansas Tourism Conference was held in Olathe with the largest attendance with over 240 registered. Next year, the conference will be held October 20-21 in Manhattan. Karen Hibbard was presented the Governor's Lifetime Achievement award.
- The Mobile Visitor Center launched in September at the State Fair and has received overwhelming positive response. Communities can request the MVC to attend their local events through TravelKS.com
- On The Road and To The Stars, the blogger style travel videos on WIBW have been successful and will be continued next year.
- North America Travel Journalist Association (NATJA) Kansas Tourism State Office was awarded as Destination of the Year for their state marketing initiatives.
- Love, Kansas has 59 active partner communities. July - September reports show 2,000 letters were sent out, 100,000 web page views, 200,000 followers on LinkedIn and confirmation that 14+ residents have moved back to Kansas.
- There are several significant projects coming up in the next 12 -24 months:
 - KANSAS! kids edition will come out in January and will be send to every 4th, 5th and 6th grader in school

- In October 2025 Kansas Tourism and Visit Wichita are partnering to bring the TBEX Summit to Kansas. It will bring 200-250 world class bloggers, journalists, and travel writers. After the Summit, Kansas Tourism team will be hosting about a dozen FAM tours throughout the state.
- 2026 will be a very busy year with the America 250 Semiquincentennial, the Route 66 Centennial, and World Cup.
- With all the growth, the Tourism office has some changes as well and next summer will be moving to the Docking building.
 - Jordan Roemerman has been promoted to Deputy Director. First Deputy Director for Kansas Tourism.
 - Roles and responsibilities have changed and increased for several employees.
 - A World Cup contractor position has been posted
- Budget requests we are submitting include an additional \$3 million per year for Sunflower Summer, \$1 million for World Cup marketing, \$500,000 for Mobile Visitor Center and \$125,000 for KANSAS! kids edition

Council Industry Members updates

- Ken Corbet, Sport Hunting Association – Reported the weather had been good for hunting and 84% of the hunters at his establishment are from out of state.
- Suzan Barnes, Travel Industry Association of Kansas – was not able to attend but sent a report that Bridgette shared. The last TIAK board meeting was held during the Kansas Tourism Conference. The next meeting will be December 12th.
- Susie Coleman, Fuel Marketing Association – Spoke on unknowns in the fuel industry due to the turnover in power during the election.
- Rob Bergquist – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association (Lodging) – Rob said hotels are doing ok. The occupancy is down but the revenue is flat so if tourism continues at the current rate, revenue will continue to grow. Still difficult to find and keep good employees.
- Chuck Magerl – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association (Restaurants) -Chuck shared data that food and beverage sales are up 2.3%. Breweries numbers are declining.

Ex-Officio Members provided updates

- Patrick Zollner, Kansas Historical Society – Patrick reported that there is no set date for the opening of the museum at this point, due to lack of responses to the RFP for construction of the interior walls.
- Secretary Chris Kennedy, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks – Bridgette announced that Secretary Kennedy appointed Laura Rose Clawson as the representative, but she was not able to attend this meeting.

Karen suggested four dates for next year's meetings and asked for discussion on keeping meetings in person or going virtual. After discussion, it was decided to continue meetings in-person and the 2025 dates were accepted for February 7, May 2, August 1, and November 7.

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Ken Corbet, Janet McRae seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 AM.