

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism
Minutes December 4, 2020 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Council Members in Attendance: Suzan Barnes, Kevin Fern, Karen Hibbard, Jan Kessinger, Shannon Francis, Bridgette Jobe, Chuck Magerl, Mimi Meredith, Rosa Cavazos, Mary Ware, Janet McRae, Mary Madden, Donna Price, Jason Probst

Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism staff and guests in Attendance: Secretary Brad Loveless, Secretary David Toland, Jordan Hildebrand, Jaimee Salalac, Kelli Hilliard, , Andrea Etzel, Sue Stringer, Colby Sharples-Terry, Taylor Hartshorn

The meeting was held virtually on Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 9.02 AM by Chair Suzan Barnes

Council members made introductions

Suzan Barnes announced that the Dept of Commerce ex-officio seat has been vacated and Bridgette will be working with Commerce to fill the seat.

Suzan thanked Senator Julia Lynn and Representative Jan Kessinger for their contributions and commitment to this Council and to tourism and the important role it plays on our economy.

There was a motion to approve minutes from September 4, 2020 by Janet McRae, Kevin Fern, seconded. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment- Tammy Ensey owner of Historic Elgin Hotel in Marion, KS and previously the operator of Dorothy's Coffee Shop and Tea Room which closed due to pandemic presented to the council on concerns that the governor's decisions have greatly impacted small business such as the restaurant and hospitality business. She urged the governor to make policies that consider all businesses essential because we are all important to making our state great.

Bridgette Jobe discussed the Attraction Development Grant program which was established in 1990 by state statute and was first awarded in 1991. The intent of the program is to provide strategic economic assistance to public or private entities and nonprofit groups that are developing new or enhancing existing tourism attractions that will positively impact Kansas. In early years Tourism was able to provide up to 1 million dollars per year for these grants but due to Kansas Tourism budget restrictions, Tourism is only able to fund approximately \$100,000 per year. In FY20 Kansas Tourism received over \$1 million in grant requests and was able to fund \$123,000. The grant program is one of the most important ways that Kansas Tourism can directly affect our local communities and support the growth of new tourism businesses in our state.

Bridgette introduce Michael Zeller who is the developer and visionary behind the Kansas City Rock Island Bridge Project. Michael presented on the Rock Island Bridge Project which was recently funded through the Tourism Attraction Development Grant. This will be Americas first destination bridge bringing in about 360,000 visitors per year and creating 65 new jobs. Some features added for potential growth are to enclose the top deck, cross-river zipline, Kayak/Canoe rental, a steak house on top and more gardens, art, and more activities. The projected completion date for the project is Summer of 2022.

Chairman Suzan Barnes introduced KDWP Secretary Loveless and Commerce Secretary Toland to lead a conversation about a potential move for the Kansas Tourism Division. Secretary Loveless shared that a few months ago Governor Laura Kelly had a meeting with Secretary Toland and Secretary Loveless to discuss the idea of Kansas Tourism moving back to the Department of Commerce. Over the past few months, discussions have been ongoing to determine the benefits and consequences of a move and to develop a plan. Earlier that day, the plan was presented to the full Tourism staff for their feedback and questions. They were asking for feedback and questions from the Council during today's meeting and in the next few days, it will be presented to other tourism industry organizations to gather their input. .

Both Secretaries stated that Tourism is primarily an economic development function and would be better suited as a division of the Dept of Commerce. Secretary Toland provided information on the background of the tourism division, how this move could align the state's economic development activities, the linkage between tourism and rural development efforts and creation of unified marketing strategy for economic development. The current structure restricts the sharing of information, hinders the opportunity to align efforts, creates missed opportunities and creates confusion among industry partners. Secretary Toland announced that it is Governor Laura Kelly's intent to issue an ERO that would shift the Division of Tourism from Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism to the Department of Commerce. The ERO will be transmitted to the Legislature when it goes into session in January. If the legislature does not disapprove the ERO, the change will take place on July 1, 2021.

The meeting was opened for questions and discussion. There was discussion between Council members, Bridgette, Secretary Toland and Secretary Loveless. Comments were generally positive to the move. There was discussion on the importance of support for the ERO from the Tourism Industry. Bridgette, Secretary Loveless and Secretary Toland are meeting with TIAK Executive Board this afternoon to present the same presentation to get feedback from them. There will be meetings next week with the TIAK Full Board and Regional Representatives for feedback as well.

Bridgette reported that Kansas! Magazine is an award-winning lifestyle publication that Kansas Tourism produces for Kansans' and those that love Kansas. The magazine just celebrated its 75th Anniversary. Bridgette introduced Andrea Etzel, Editor of Kansas! Magazine to report on the objectives and action plans from the tourism strategic plan as they relate to Kansas Magazine.

Andrea presented that Kansas! Magazine was founded in 1945 by the Kansas Industrial Commission which evolved to become the Department of Commerce. It began as an eight-page business newsletter that's focus was business and industry. The name changed from "To the Stars" to Kansas! in 1957. In the 1970's, the magazine became leisure and lifestyle focused. Sunflower Publishing, Allen Press and SFG are all partners that work closely to Tourism to publish, print, and manage subscriptions.

Andrea presented how the KANSAS! magazine fits into the Kansas Tourism Strategic Plan. Focus Areas and Objectives include:
Focus area:

1. Increase Kansans awareness and pride for their state

Objectives:

1. Make Kansas Magazine self-sustainable
2. Continue to Improve the Magazine

Andrea presented multiple action steps for each of these objectives and shared how many are already in play. She also reported that Governor Kelly has proclaimed December 1, 2020 as KANSAS! magazine day.

Chairman Barnes invited each Council Industry member to provide updates.

- Ken Corbett, Kansas Sport Hunting Association- No report.
- Suzan Barnes, Travel Industry Association of KS- TIAK- The next TIAK board meeting is being held virtually on December 10, 2020. Destination Statehouse is scheduled for Wednesday Feb 10, 2021. The Kansas Tourism Conference is schedule to be in Liberal October 18-20, 2021.
- Susie Coleman, Petroleum Marketing Association- No report
- Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association-Lodging – Seat open.
- Chuck Magerl, Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association- Our biggest need is for a confident consumer at this point. There is a level of optimism that's beginning to arise with vaccines coming into most communities. Restaurants that offered dine in continue to struggle more than those that were able to adjust to carry out and drive thru.

Ex-Officio Reports

- Mary Madden, Kansas Historical Society- KS Museum and most historic sites are still closed. Archives are available by appointment only. Check out the website, KSHS.org for new virtual programs, tours and lectures that have been added. They are focusing on the 200th Anniversary of the Santa Fe Trail and new exhibits for Kaw Mission and the Last Chance Store that will open for the anniversary.
- Kansas Dept of Commerce- Seat Open
- Kansas Dept of Transportation- Seat Open

Chairman Suzan Barnes announced the 2021 meeting dates will be Feb 5, May 7, Aug 6, Nov 5. at 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Locations will be announced later.

There was a motion to adjourn by Mary Madden, Janet McRae seconded. Passed Unanimously.
The meeting was adjourned.