

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism  
Minutes May 2, 2025  
Kansas State Capitol, Auditorium 4-N

Council Members in Attendance: Karen Hibbard, Janet McRae, Donna Price, Susie Santo, Suzan Barnes, Susie Coleman, Rob Bergquist, Chuck Magerl, Rep Jason Goetz, Bridgette Jobe, and Patrick Zollner

Kansas Tourism staff in Attendance: Babette Dixon, Andrea Etzel, and Jordan Roemerman

Guests in Attendance: Alexis Radil, and Cori Sherman North

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

Susie Santo moved to approve the minutes from February 7, 2025. Susie Coleman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There were no requests to make public comments.

Bridgette Jobe presented the Directors Report.

- House Bill 2037, the "tourism clean-up bill", passed this legislative session. This bill adds 3 seats to the Council on Travel and Tourism, revises for-profit percentages for Attraction Development Grants, and updates language from when Tourism was at Wildlife and Parks.
- Budget update:
  - For FY26, Kansas Tourism had requested increased funding for World Cup marketing, the Mobile Visitor Center, Sunflower Summer program, and KANSAS! Kids issue. Of these requests, only Sunflower Summer was funded for \$3M. Tourism took an overall \$24,398 decrease from FY25.
  - There was discussion on World Cup 2026. Without any funding directed toward the Tourism Division for marketing during the World Cup, Tourism is looking at ways to adjust the Spring/Summer Marketing Campaign in the KC region to coincide with the World Cup schedule.
  - With no additional FY25 funding for the Sunflower Summer program, Tourism was not able to cover staff time working on the program. All remaining FY25 dollars had to be directed towards app expenses to have it ready for the FY26 program. This year's programs budget will be monitored daily, as there are no excess dollars in the Tourism budget to cover anything over the \$3M.
  - We did lose one staff position. The Tourism Byways and Signage Manager left for another job, and the position was not approved for restaffing.
- The Sunflower Summer program will have a few changes this year required by the legislature. Only one adult ticket per group will be reimbursed, plus non-admission attractions in counties with populations over 15,000 will not be able to receive the grant. Also, due to funding, the program has been shortened and will run July 13<sup>th</sup> through August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The program length could be extended or shortened if needed. Internally the change was made that reimbursement payments will be made once at the end of the program, rather than weekly as in past years. Participating attractions will be announced in late June.
- Kansas Tourism received eTSY award for Best Local Impact Campaign for the Sunflower Summer Program.
- The Fiscal Manager left in February and have started interviewing for the position. The Fiscal Manager was also handling grants, but that role has been now moved to Babette Dixon.
- The 2nd round of Attraction Development grants for State Fiscal Year 2025 recently closed with 44 applications requesting 3.5 million.
- The Tourism Office will be moving to the Docking Building in late Summer. The guest entrance area will have a video wall and two 55" interactive screens that Tourism is providing content for these displays.
- Monthly reports for January, February, and March were provided in the packet. These reports include hotel information, transient guest taxes collected, TravelKS.com performance and monthly highlights.

Jordan Roemerman, Deputy Director, presented on the Spring/Summer Visitor Marketing Campaign. The same markets will still be targeted as last year. The digital flight schedule is April through June, and the broadcast schedule is 6 weeks May through June. This year there will be print ads in select publications with each publication having their own trackable QR code. Going along with To The Stars, the visitor campaign is Kansas Constellations and offers pre-planned itineraries. The digital ads cover six topics including Quirky, Underground, History, Sky & Space, Unique Animals, and Rocks. Plus, online at TravelKS.com, there will be additional itineraries. Early reports from the website show the campaign is already performing well. Jordan displayed the print ads and played the two broadcast spots.

Past issues of KANSAS! magazine were passed out and Bridgette talked about the award-winning publication. There are currently 14,108 print subscribers and the digital issues sold are up 36%. Subscribers receive five issues, the special Kids! Issue, and an annual wall calendar. There was discussion on increasing the subscription price from \$20 to \$25.

Karen provided an update on Symphony in the Flint Hills and asked everyone to fill out the survey.

Cori Sherman North and Alexis Radil with Kansas Museums Association gave a presentation on their association. KMA was started 56 years ago and has 444 members. The KMA board has reps from three areas including West, Central and East Kansas, along with other reps. KMA will be filling one of the new seats on the Council starting with our next meeting.

#### Council Industry Members updates

- Suzan Barnes, Travel Industry Association of Kansas. Suzan spoke on the upcoming TIAK Education seminar, and the Kansas Tourism Conference to be held October 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> in Manhattan. They are also working on redoing their bylaws.
- Susie Coleman, Fuel Marketing Association. Susie gave an update on Governor Kelly's state of emergency due to pipeline failure and lack of supply.
- Rob Bergquist – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association – Lodging. Rob reported corporate travel is down, but government travel is up. He reported they haven't been hit with tariffs yet but spoke on linen being an expensive item for them. He reported labor is good and they are filling positions with quality people.
- Chuck Magerl – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association – Restaurants. Chuck reports revenue on food service is up 1.9% but doesn't factor in inflation and menu price increases. Real restaurant sales are flat.

#### Ex-Officio Members provided updates

- Patrick Zollner, Kansas Historical Society. Patrick reported that 2025 marks the 150-year anniversary for the Historical Society. The current timeline for opening of the museum is November of 2025. They have closed on Curtis House and will try to be open this summer.

Karen announced the next meeting is August 1, 2025. There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Susie Coleman, Rep Jason Goetz seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 AM CST.