

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism  
Minutes May 3, 2024  
Kansas State Capitol, Room 251-S

Council Members in Attendance: Kim Anspach, Karen Hibbard, Donna Price, Susie Santo, Suzan Barnes, Rob Bergquist, Susie Coleman, Ken Corbet, Rep Jason Goetz, Bridgette Jobe, Sec. Chris Kennedy, Patrick Zollner

Kansas Tourism staff in Attendance: Rosa Cavazos, Babette Dixon, Carrie Doud, Kelli Orender, Jordan Roemerman, Kelsey Wendling

Guests in Attendance: Sean Dixon, Martin DeBoer,

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

Council members made introductions.

There was a motion to approve minutes from February 2, 2024, by Suzan Barnes, Donna Price seconded. Passed unanimously.

There were no requests to make public comments.

Bridgette Jobe presented the Directors Report.

- The "tourism clean up bill" which adds 3 seats to the Council on Travel and Tourism, revises for-profit percentages for Attraction development grants, updates language from when Tourism was at Wildlife and Parks did not pass in the senate conference committee due to language added on the establishment of a port authority in Wyandotte County. We will work to move it forward next year.
- There were 36 eligible applications received for the recent round of Attraction Development Grants. Final approvals and announcements will be made around May 20<sup>th</sup>.
- A short overview of the Talent Attraction Project, that is to bring boomerangs back or entice people to move to Kansas. The launch will be July 1<sup>st</sup> in Manhattan. More information will be shared at the August meeting on this project.
- The new Byways guides were passed out.
- Monthly reports for January, February, and March were distributed. These reports include hotel information, transient guest taxes collected, TravelKS.com performance and monthly highlights. In March, Kansas Tourism was named Destination of the Year for successful marketing efforts by North American Travel Journalists Association.

Jordan Roemerman, Kansas Tourism Marketing Manager, and Sean Dixon, Visit Topeka President, presented on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. Kansas Tourism and Visit Topeka partner for membership with the organization, with both Jordan and Sean serving as board members. Brown v Board in Topeka is one of the sites on the Trail that is being considered for the UNESCO World Heritage Program. Kansas is committing \$125,000 over the next two years to help further the UNESCO application, understanding that it can take many years or decades for UNESCO designation.

Bridgette provided an update on the Tourism Mobile Visitors Center. This project is a partnership between KDOT and Kansas Tourism that includes a branded vehicle that will be wrapped in a Kansas Tourism themed look and feature amenities and tech to proactively engage potential visitors and inspire travel to Kansas. The position for Mobile Visitor Center Manager was posted today. The vehicle has been purchased – it is a Sprinter van and will be at the upfitter in the next several weeks. The Mobile Visitor Center will be unveiled at the State Fair.

Jordan presented an update on Sunflower Summer program. She announced there are 223 participating attractions, which is a 97% growth. 52% new attractions with 47 of the attractions being urban and 176 being rural. The rural attractions increased 120%. 53% of the attractions are admission based and 47% non-admission. Southwest region had the largest increase with 150%. She shared the website and there was a positive response to the program and Tourism's efforts.

Bridgette passed around a few issues of KANSAS! magazine. The award-winning magazine will celebrate 80 years next year. For the birthday celebration in 2025, there will be a year-long temporary exhibit at Kansas History Museum that will showcase the magazines history, plus there will be a kid-friendly issue to be released to all 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the state in mid-January, right before Kansas Day.

Bridgette asked for feedback on the Good News from Kansas Tourism e-newsletter that is sent to legislators weekly. There was positive feedback from legislators and Council members.

## Council Industry Members updates

- Suzan Barnes, Travel Industry Association of Kansas – She reported on the recent TIAK board meeting which included reports and discussions on delegations that went to DC, legislative session updates, upcoming TIAK events, the 2024 Tourism Conference, discussion on timely issues such as homelessness, and a special educational session on weather issues for events. She also announced the recent passing of Sylvia Rice, longtime Director of the Salina Convention & Visitors Bureau.
- Ken Corbet, Sport Hunting Association – Distributed a handout and spoke about bird flu, western Kansas drought and restricted waterfowl hunting restrictions for out-of-state hunters.
- Susie Coleman, Fuel Marketing Association – Spoke on interest rates and recession is now at a 2-year low.
- Rob Bergquist – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association – Lodging – He reported the rates are up in Topeka but down overall. The lodging industry is struggling as all supplies used have gone up in price.

## Ex-Officio Members provided updates

- Patrick Zollner, Kansas Historical Society – Reported Historical Society is in talks to acquire The Curtis House and also in negotiations with Fort Dodge.
- Martin DeBoer, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks – Reported for Secretary Chris Kenney who had to leave the meeting. Wildlife and Parks would like to improve communication, such as an e-newsletter with legislatures, to provide timely updates. The North Bison Conference will be June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

In Announcements, Jordan thanked Jaimee, Carrie, and Babette for their assistance with Sunflower Summer. Karen reminded everyone to turn in their mileage reimbursements.

Karen announced the next meeting is August 2, 2024. There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Suzan Barnes, Ken Corbet seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 AM CST.