

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism
Minutes August 2, 2024
Kansas State Capitol, Auditorium 4-N

Council Members in Attendance: Kim Anspach, Karen Hibbard, Janet McRae, Donna Price, Susie Santo, Suzan Barnes, Susie Coleman, Ken Corbet, Chuck Magerl, Rep Mary Ware, Bridgette Jobe, Sec. Chris Kennedy, and Tiffany Grassmuck for Patrick Zollner

Kansas Tourism staff in Attendance: Rosa Cavazos, Babette Dixon, Andrea Etzel, Kim Korber, Kelli Orender, Jordan Roerman, Colby Sharples-Terry, Kelsey Wendling

Guests in Attendance: Tom James

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 May 3, 2024, by Suzan Barnes, Susie Santo seconded. Passed unanimously.

There were no requests to make public comments.

Bridgette Jobe presented the Directors Report.

- Department of Commerce will be moving locations to the 2nd floor of the new docking building next summer.
- Carrie Doud, Fiscal and Grant Manager has moved to another area in Commerce and Kody Hardman will start this position on August 5th.
- Attraction Development grant update - \$500,000 was awarded to 14 communities. The list of grantees was distributed.
- The new BARN grant to help restore old barns as part of an Agritourism location closed this week. Received 10 applications and have \$100,000 to award.
- The Tourism Marketing grant closes August 2nd at midnight. \$100,000 to award with maximum amount of \$10,000 per awarded applicant. So far, 13 applications have been received. Discussion on grants and suggestion to share results.
- New round of Attraction Development grants opened August 1st with \$500,000 to award. The application window closes October 1st.
- The new Mobile Visitor Center, a partnership with KDOT, is currently being upfitted. Kevin Crockett has been hired as the Mobile Visitor Center Manager and will be based out of the Wichita office. Official launch will take place at the State Fair on Thursday, September 12th.
- Monthly reports for April, May, and June were distributed. These reports include hotel information, transient guest taxes collected, TravelKS.com performance and monthly highlights. Request to add hotel demand.

Bridgette provided an overview of the Love, Kansas initiative that launched in Manhattan on July 1st. This campaign is to encourage people to move to Kansas to fill the many jobs that we have available. The focus is on potential Boomerangs with target markets of Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado and California. Nineteen pilot communities were announced at the launch.

Colby Sharples-Terry, Kansas Tourism PR and Communications Manager provided an update on Kansas Tourism's public relations efforts. In 2024, six Familiarization (FAM) trips were hosted, one in each region. We are already seeing articles from the Northern regional FAMs that were hosted in the spring. For each of these regional FAMs, Colby trained two liaisons from each region how to select and host writers in preparation for the TBEX Summit 2025 that will be co-hosted by Wichita and Kansas Tourism. Wichita will host local FAMs during and prior to the event and Kansas Tourism will host 8-14 FAMs post event. Colby shared the TBEX Summit 25 video.

Jordan Roemerman, Kansas Tourism Marketing Manager reported on the Visitor Campaign and results. Kansas as a vacation destination messaging was continued from previous campaign. She showed campaign videos and reported 40 million more impressions than previous year.

Jordan presented an update on the Sunflower Summer program. She announced there were 223 participating attractions, which is a 97% growth YOY. There was a total of 319,796 tickets claimed in previous year and prior to the meeting, this year 401,038 tickets had been claimed surpassing last year with more than a week left of the program. The link to the coupons and deals page that was offered to businesses has received over 75,000 views since the program launched.

Council Industry Members updates

- Ken Corbet, Sport Hunting Association – Reported this year’s crops look good, which should lead to a good year for hunting.
- Suzan Barnes, Travel Industry Association of Kansas – The TIAK conference will be in Olathe, October 21st – 23rd. She reported on the recent TIAK board meeting and the next meeting will be August 8th.
- Susie Coleman, Fuel Marketing Association – Spoke on interest rates based on supply and sales flat to slightly down.
- Rob Bergquist – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association (Lodging) – Rob was unable to attend the meeting but sent a report to Bridgette, who reported that supply prices are still on the rise and hotels and restaurants are having a hard time reinvesting and still having staffing issues.
- Chuck Magerl – Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association (Restaurants) -Chuck announced in June, PBS was filming in Kansas for their America the Bountiful series. He reported businesses having challenges with staffing, seeing decline with price increases and small communities have been most impacted.

Ex-Officio Members provided updates

- Patrick Zollner, Kansas Historical Society – Tiffany Grassmuck reported for Patrick Zollner on an update of progress of Kansas Museum of History. 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.
- Secretary Chris Kennedy, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks – Gave an update of his findings that State Park employees are passionate about their work, all state parks are full, with lots of kayak rentals, and kid programs. Concerns over wildlife populations, homelessness, infrastructure, awareness of services, and water availability.

There was discussion about moving the date of the next meeting from Nov 1 to Nov 15 because it will be after the election. Everyone agreed that made sense and we should move it if a meeting room was available. Bridgette said that she would email everyone of the change once a meeting room was confirmed.

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Suzan Barnes, Susie Santo seconded. The meeting was adjourned.