



# NEW MEXICO

## TOURISM DEPARTMENT

### New Mexico Tourism Commission

#### Q4 – FY24 Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 3, 2024, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Lake Fork Building – Taos Ski Valley

200 Thunderbird Road, Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico 87525

#### Meeting Minutes

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 1:05pm by Chair Jennifer Kimball.

#### **Roll Call:**

##### **Commissioners Present:**

Jennifer L. Kimball (Chair)  
Ben Abruzzo  
Tania Armenta  
Emerson R. Vallo

##### **Commissioners not present:**

Bill Lee  
Belia Alvarez

**Chairwoman Kimball asks all members of the public to introduce themselves and thanks them for coming.**

**Approval of Agenda:** Commissioner Abruzzo moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Armenta, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from previous meeting:** Due to Commission Vallo's requested edits, the approval of minutes was tabled and will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Taos Destination Stewardship Plan – Town of Taos – Mayor Pasqual Maestas:** Mayor Maestas thanked the commission for having them on the agenda. He wanted to take the opportunity to talk about our destination stewardship plan, which we are just about to formally adopt at the next Council meeting. We're trying to help guide the future of tourism in Taos. We started this a year and a half ago recognizing that tourism is a very important economic factor in Taos, but also recognizing that it can be a double-edged sword. There are a lot of community residents that felt that much tourism or that it negatively affected either that personally, the environment, the economy. We decided to go through this process to guide us and get some feedback from our community members, figure out how best to move forward and to improve them. Recognizing that more is not always the answer. We're here at Taos Ski Valley and other representatives from Taos Ski Valley are here, correct me if I'm wrong, I've heard the phrase that the answer is not just getting more skiers onto the mountain, that the experience is very important. So again, the answer is not always just more tourism. We had a very good survey response, and these are the main issues identified by our community, 3300 residents respond to the survey. Several of their businesses responded to the survey.

- A. Labor shortage - as we're seeing around the country, what it means to the tourism industry and what that means to the tourism experience. When a tourist comes in and has a bad experience at a restaurant, that reflects poorly on Taos because we want our visitors to have a great time.
- B. Lack of affordable workforce housing. This ties into the labor shortage. We're seeing this here at the town of Taos as well, we can't hire people because they look at our housing market and they realize they just can't afford to live here.

- C. Gentrification and displacement of long-term residents and the loss of local culture and identity. This one really jumped out of this because what we hear from tourists is that they liked Taos because it's genuine, it's authentic, it's real. We want to make sure that we can preserve our local culture and identity.
- D. Absence of sustainability guidelines and communication strategies for businesses, visitor behavior and promoting respectful travel and resident ongoing engagement and educated residents. I've got a very personal story with this one. I was down at the bridge where a lot of people like to go fishing and rafting. There were some people there that left trash and when they were asked to take their trash out, their response was, that's the BLM's job. We want to make sure that we are attracting tourists that respect our land, respect our culture, respect our people. Now that we're in a place where we can decide who we want to market to, this is one of the important pieces that we're looking at how we attract tourists that respect who we are and want to come in and take care of the land, pack it in, pack it out. For those of us who are in New Mexico, that's a common phrase that we all know, but it's not something that everybody believes in. We want to make sure we're attracting that kind of tourist.
- E. Deficiency in tourism planning and management, including the absence of a destination management organization and insufficient government support for tourism.
- F. Inconsistent distribution of tourism economic benefits, felt most acutely by the Hispanic or Latino community. This one really jumped out. This was number one for us. We discovered this is where a lot of the negative feelings towards tourism came from. In terms of business economic opportunities, the Hispanic and Latino community was really feeling left out. Because of this, there are some ideas and action plans on how we can address this. Right now, everybody's saying not so much more yet, let's solve this first and then we can talk about how we're getting more so that way everybody's feeling the positive benefits of tourism.
- G. Inadequate infrastructure, notably public parking and restroom facilities. We're going through this right now as the town of Taos has adopted a new parking plan, getting a lot of public push back on new meters. We also recognize that if we want the restrooms downtown, walkability signage, we must have some revenue.
- H. Lack integrated monitoring of tourism impacts. We have really been analyzing over the last 20 years what it really needs, what it needs in terms of the workforce, what it needs derivative in terms of benefits.
- I. Lack of collaborative response to addressing the challenges of climate change. This one I think really became evident because of the fire that we experienced a couple of years ago. Even though it was more than Las Vegas, the plume was visible. We were all very scared that it was going to cross over to the mountain on the other side and start affecting us. Our rafting industry, what does it mean to the runoff when the waters are blackened with ash. What would it mean to the Ski Valley? There's a direct connection to tourism and climate change and ensuring that our natural resources are protected.

The plan identified these main issues and offered some suggestions on how to address some of these. I think what's most important and the most notable of the town of Taos is for the person we need to do this in New Mexico. We're one of about thirty communities to do this in the country. And it has been a real eye-opening experience to hear from our residents about how they feel about tourism. Here are businesses who are thinking in terms of economics and sometimes it's very short term. We know who we're hearing often how the road construction for example is affecting their business today. This is giving us a long-term perspective and climate change is an example that if we're not planning 10, 15, 20, 30 years from now and something major happens like fire, if that were to have a major impact on tourism in Northern New Mexico. I'm going to turn this over to John. I'd like him to talk a little bit about the plan and some identified strategies to address these issues.

**John Rodriguez** – When I was hired for this job, I went out to the Pueblo. It was a cold day, nobody was out there, and I walked into one of the homes. We got to talking about her grandkids, her nephew and her family. She was raking the earth in front of her, in front of her door. And you know, just wanting to get it ready. I thought that's what we're doing here. We're trying to take care of our home a little bit better, but we must constantly work on it. It's not like we need to build a new house. We just need to make the entrance way a little bit. That's what I told our destination search departments. So that's our goal. We're not trying to build this new house. We just need to be directed. So how do we get from A to B? The ingenious part of the time is

there's two main things. It gives us an implementation phase and then it gives us funding which is needed, or it prescribes we need funding. Then it does something important, it gives us project manager, it takes it from plan to project manager. So that when we get this funded there's somebody pushing this along. Right now, we have participation in the county and the town and we're excited that we were able to pull that together. The second thing this implementation plan did is get people on board over the year. Somebody said that maybe they wanted to kill tourism and they said you have an experience altogether. Over the life span of the planning this first year, the parties got together and started to talk. That's one of the important things that's happening that wasn't happening before. To achieve some of these goals, the housing groups need to talk with the tourism groups, the nonprofits need to talk with public works. Those two things weren't quite happening. Now they started to communicate. Where do we go from here? We have about a five-year plan. I have the PSP; I have a three-year plan inside my tourism department building it a little bit by the plan prescribes that in the first year we have some good points. We have already allocated a budget for this. We've allocated a staff that our entire effort should be to achieve the quick points. Structure of the organization first, the DSP is propped up, there's funding behind the DSP and then the quick ones would be, can we get a second to address the Hispanics from the area and then Adobe tourism to build that back in. These are just the quick points to give something back. The long term is more substantial. That's going to come with the group having some funding to go with what you want to call event development or product development. That's going to be crucial. The takeaway would be that we're trying to differentiate tasks and do it in a way that's true to what task is and then invest that money back into it. Over tourism Taos is not like over tourism Denver, or over tourism Albuquerque. Over tourism crushes housing prices, it skyrockets costs and then you add inflation. Over tourism in a small community like this can be catastrophic, which you don't know the needle move that much. What we're trying to do is give locals and plug them back in to say everything we do now with tourism, are we global minded? Can we plug them back into the economy? Can we help the local communities along the way? I don't think it's different from other towns and cities across New Mexico, but I think it must be built into our plan from the beginning. Otherwise, we just go look at our lodger's tax and go, oh, we hit some new Marks and were great, but we forgot why we're doing this. I'll leave it with this thing, I said this at our convention in Albuquerque a few weeks ago, because this project was sold so hard before I came on board, the public's now expecting results. So, we have to go. There's no backing out of this. They want tourism to work for them. I think if we pull this off, we will be not just the leader in New Mexico, but a leader in the West on how to redirect tourism, that's the goal. What the community wants is they just want it to work for themselves. They want Taos to remain special. The one thing that the district takes away from is your local communities want to remain special. They don't want the ubiquitous, every brand just gets labeled into one thing and there's no differentiation. I come from Colorado, I've seen what happens and that happened in 10 years. Denver, Salida, Steamboat Springs couldn't hire a public director in the municipality at \$180,000 salary. This happens relatively quickly. I just want to say thank you to the mayor for the support he's been instrumental in pulling this forward, the community's been able to pull the support. One thing I would like to say is we need some state funds to come in, so we don't have to do this all by ourselves. If there's options, we're going to say legislation to look at this in the future for tourism. Destination stewardship is going to become a crucial thing. The final thing I'll say is Taos does not have a brand problem anymore. You just have to get those great tourists that come in. I appreciate the time. I'm going to let the mayor say the final words.

**Mayor Maestas** – Thank you John. The one I'm most excited about is the acequia tours, acequias as part of Northern New Mexico and they really are left out of the traditional conversation. I really think a lot of people would love to come and see their history. I mean these are political subdivisions that predate the United States. They have kept Taos alive. It's ecotourism. And this is one that I think we're really missing out on. You know, there's a lot of tourism during the winter. During the summer I think we can help a lot of people who would really love to come in and understand one of the things that makes Taos special. This one I'm really excited about. We'd like to open it up for questions if anybody has any questions for a few minutes.

**Chair Kimball** asked, was Taos Ski Valley part of the survey? And secondly, what are your next steps there? This is fabulous. I'm from Santa Fe. These conversations have been going on. It's horrible to be honest, it's going to be a huge problem and I don't think the legislators are going to be able to write a check to fix that. I think it's not just Taos that's having these conversations and discussion. I'm really curious about what your next steps are to try and get around. Surveying is easy in the first steps. So at least you've identified major great issues. But I'm very curious how, what's the next steps?

**Mayor Maestas** – Well, I'll take the first question, I have to look to John for next steps. This really was a collaborative regional approach. Mona Nozhackum, who's the community relations director for Tuscany

Valley, sat on our steering committee. We also had Ilona Spruce, who is the Taos public tourism director. We had representation from Taos County. You know, the town of Taos was actually very small. We recognize that we may have the hotels and the restaurants, but the experiences are all in Taos County. It's very important for us to get representation. Taos Ski Valley responded to the business survey. Some of the businesses had also responded to the business survey and the residents are based in the towns of Taos, Penasco, and Questa.

**John Rodriguez**—Next steps, my hope is that we have a project coordinator by July 1, we're currently flushing out how to set up the structure. My goal, the three goals that we want really this summer is a structure, a project manager. The other good thing is that our consultants, what we've negotiated with them was something called implementation guidance. The consultants didn't go away. They're still involved with us. They will go through the end of the year and say we will help you but at some time the training wheels are going have to come off and you're going to have to do this. This is trying to anticipate every problem that you've all experienced in these master plans and then they fall onto wherever because of the department's duplicity or just can't do the work. This is really structured to look at those problems and say no why master plan has failed. How do we get this one not to fail because it's too critical to do that. We hope to have that person in place in June, really set up July.

**Mayor Maestas**—Your third question on housing, a couple years ago town and county started its Taos housing partnership to look at housing. It's nice that this in terms of the short-term rental ordinance that the town has taken place now that the county's probably working on. So now they can look to this some of the surveys and some of the business sentiments to help guide that question. Before it was just kind of an open season on short term rentals, anybody can get one. Now we're recognizing that if there isn't affordable workforce housing that supports the labor force to work in the tourism industry, short term rentals may have to provide a place for you to stay. But if they're not having a good experience here, because I hear there's a lot of the restaurants are closed, if you go out on Tuesday, there's literally nothing open in Taos because you can't find the workforce. So now we're starting to, you know, put all the pieces together and say, yes, the short-term rental ordinance that the county's looking at needs to get passed and how restrictive does it needs to be so that way we're maintaining the workforce and providing good experience for our residents.

**Commissioner Armenta** asked, out of curiosity who were your consultants, who did you partner with on this? **Mayor Maestas** answered, George Washington University.

**Chair Kimball** asked, who paid for it? **Mayor Maestas** answered, the town of Taos paid for it, came out of our Lodgers Tax. This is a very important piece of tourism. **Chair Kimball** asked if Lodgers Tax was supposed to be paid to market the destination? Did I make that up? Oh, I guess it's Santa Fe. It can only be used for you know trash cleanup at markets, stuff for tourism or studies on all the problems at the end. **Mayor Maestas** answered, so our set up some 40% which I believe is the minimum needs to go for direct marketing, the other 60% there's some flexibility on how you define tourism related facilities and attractions being that this one is really solely tourism driven, responsible use and the necessities.

**Commissioner Vallo** asked, how's the collaboration between the Pueblo and the Town of Taos? Is there any partnership? **Mayor Maestas** answered, right now the collaboration's going very well. We've been building our partnership the past couple of years, this extends beyond just tourism, we've been working on wastewater intervention agreements. We're in the midst of the Abeyta settlement implementation, water rights sublets and we recognize that you know, we're a small valley, but we've all got to work together that in the past town and county couldn't even sit down at the table together or town and pueblo couldn't sit down at the table together and it was really hurting us. And in terms of trying to apply for grants and funding, you know, we want to show that we are really working collaboratively. So, the relationship is very good. As John mentioned, a lot of people thought it's just going to be another plan on the shelf. Is it a waste of money? Are you really going to listen to us? It was, you know, over the year and a half, lots of community meetings, lots of surveys. I think when the public thoughts made it, they said, they really we're listening to us. This is really what we said. So now the pressure is I'm asked to implement.

**Chair Kimball** asked, any questions from the audience?

**Elena Fernandez** added, I think one way that we can begin is to do some interpretive signs to the tours of the park and to see how the water flows through the town or all once flows to this town to feed the town. So, the parcel has an infrastructure that has been restored and it's quite beautiful and you see it's just imaginative.

**John Rodriguez**—But if you can do that grant, we do have that little sentence because it's such an easy plan that we're supposed to. I thought to use the destination forward grant to do a master plan of about what that

would look like to do archaeological engineering research and in terms of feasibility study so that when we can go, we can do implementation phase of that brand. We can educate consumers and do it in a non-sort of threatening way. And final time we'll say that or that Grant would make it so much easier.

**Mayor Maestas** – They need \$5000 a year to run the acequias. They're dealing with water disputes. We may have a bad year or if there isn't any water. You know this is the opportunity. I've seen that if you get their buy in, they could make some more money to give you the tourists. Well, I'll put a plug in this time if, if the grant is awarded, we'll have an opportunity to start these tours. We just finished the destination stewardship plan. It hasn't even been adopted by the council; the town of Taos put in about \$300,000 in our budget this year for it. The county put in about \$100,000. So, we're right there to start implementing this.

**Secretary Adams** – I really want to thank you for coming again. I just want to make sure that I expressed it as far as the NMTD and our collaboration really whatever you need from us, lets have conversations. Obviously, we have the grants, we're in our grant selection now, we'll have those awards out. I went to the kickoff meeting that you all had for this plan, it was so great to see the turn out, I think a lot of people really want to do things the right way. So, I just wanted to offer on behalf of our staff in our department, please keep in touch with us and please see us as a partner in this.

**Litter, Pollutants & Recycling needs in Taos – Elena Fernandez, Project Specialist for Amigos Bravos & NM Clean & Beautiful Advisory Committee Member:** Provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the subject. A lot of pollution is obviously human caused. Recycling issues in Taos come and go. A lot of people would like to recycle. Unfortunately, it's also market based. If there isn't a market for recycling then we don't have a way to fund our center, the recycling center is in town, and it's funded by town of Taos residents. Our county residents don't really pay into it. Taos County itself is now trying to build their own recycling center to serve the county's needs and hopefully we can get the Taos recycling center back on track. We talk about how tourism is impacted by litter, we also need to consider how tourism impacts litter in New Mexico. I was very pleased to see Taos Ski Valley has aluminum cups because you can recycle those. My presentation today is about the offensive litter and trash, I must warn you, some images on these slides that may be disturbing to some of you. They are here to highlight the true cost of lunar pollution in New Mexico. These are the things that I see and work with every day as well as a lot of crews that I send out, volunteers. Anyone who's working cleaning up trash in New Mexico sees these things. We need to see these things to think about how we can prevent them. We see how illegal dumping and everyday pollution in New Mexico effects not only the beauty of our landscape of the environmental ecosystems that sustain us as well as the overall economy of our state and that depends on our health and sustained natural resources. That's why we the people in New Mexico value our rivers and lands for agriculture, recreation, subsistence of wildlife, as well as their respective economies. This is in Albuquerque; this is trash escaped from the dump trucks. So even though this was disposed of properly, because it was starting to accumulate people throw more trash there. This is an image from the NM Recycling Coalition, Miranda Canyon here in Taos County, this is a one of my big projects and there's quite a lot of illegal dumping out there. Lots of shot gun shells out of there because it's a fun place to go shooting, I pulled out car parts, dead animals, sofas, hot tubs. It's really quite disgusting and sad. It's a beautiful place you can go to pick Pinon, it is a very deep cultural, traditional thing to do here in New Mexico and when you have that pollution there leaching from these tires, these mattresses, pieces of houses, the pollutants from this waste leaches into the soil and it leaches into the watershed. It doesn't stay in the soil. It also air crystallizes, goes with the air and travels into your lungs and the plants and the animals, they obtain that pollution. Trash and litter have been an ongoing plight. Illegal dumping was on the rise in New Mexico and has continued to today. We are still recovering from the pandemic in many ways, especially Grand Canyon here and the resource damage from that trash is so bad that I personally have concerns that being able to recover and with that see that's a watershed oncology and being told me one proposed tactic to reduce illegal dumping was to create a recreation area and that's something that we're under Canyon Commission has tried to address and that may lessen some of the illegal dumping issues, may have more general use of people. That creates more problems by introducing more toxic pollutants to an already fragile ecosystem. It introduces more litter as there are fewer resources. We can see that illegal dumping also not only is it the support without active behaviors, but it's also sometimes I've noticed I encourage from some residents.

I believe it's also a reaction to some tourism, the only tourism. Let's make this place unattractive or they don't want you to come here. Human caused waste in acequias, our forests, our recreation areas, our hunting grounds, our public lands, our land grants and our waters, trash is not only unsightly but causes the spreading of disease. Before I move on, I'd like to mention that the wedding industry is now moving toward New Mexico,



this would be more of a wedding destination in the coming years. This comes with different types of land use and different types of celebrations and weddings. The way we celebrate is an issue. The image on the next slide is kind of disturbing, if you do not want to see dead animals don't look. (Image was a dead duck wrapped in a balloon string hanging on an electric wire) What are your intentions or celebrations to something else? If we're doing balloon releases, note that animals can become tangled in the strings, the ribbons and hanging from the balloons. This image is courtesy of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Taos Pueblo was the one who discussed this in depth. Just know that your intentions can go anywhere without a balloon because those balloons come back down, and they cause a lot of harm. Balloons releases, fishing lines and plastics strangle animals. What is disposed of today can be a deadly problem. Provided a timeline for decomposition. It's been worthwhile for us to also recycle glass and some facilities in the US are now able to turn that glass back into sand, that's pretty remarkable. We all know about wish cycling, is recycling something that's not recyclable but we want it to be, that can contaminate. If you're not sure, throw it away. 83% of our town water is contaminated with plastic fibers. The major exposure with microplastics is through inhalation. Microplastics aerosolize entering the food chain, the air, water and soil. Plants and animals do the same. Please support your local recycling center and support our solid waste personnel, they have a very difficult job, and they aren't always well resourced. They don't always have a lot of people, it's very distressing some of the things they encounter things they see. With respect to ourselves, we expected more visitors. We need to make sure that we have that messaging built in and that's something we're talking destination stewardship, how long can we have buying in from the industry, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses. Perhaps we would have a talking with bullet points, a one sheet. Make sure everyone's on the same page and that we can give out to visitors to let them know that we have a clean community here. Let's keep that. Thank you for visiting. What is expected of everyone? What's no to throw New Mexico. These are resources under state technology regulatory council. Thank you, thank you.

**New Mexico Tourism Department Presentation – Secretary Adams:** Thank you Madam Chair and thank you guys. Really exciting news is coming up. I wanted to share a few highlights. Route 66, we've talked a lot about this, we're getting to a point where we're looking to launch a program. We received 2.5 million from the Legislature for a program in fiscal year 2025, some real broad strokes as to how we're looking at, at deploying this fund. When we talk about awareness, we must make sure that we're doing the production. We're doing the advertising to drive awareness. We're going to have to set aside dollars to do that within our existing agency record, our existing marketing. We're going to be putting some money directly into new productions and into some partnerships which Erin will speak more to with Brand USA to really follow a group that knows the international audience perhaps better than we think we do. I think that that partnership is going to be great. Looking at having dollars go towards production advertising, have dollars that are going to go directly into brands supporting infrastructure, marketing and special events. We are going to be looking at deploying an app and mapping software for the visitor. And then we're going to be also looking at leveraging New Mexico Magazine as an advertising opportunity for those dollars. 2026, there's the Route 66 Centennial, which is the big deal because it's 100 years of Route 66. We're one of eight states that Rt. 66 goes through, and there's going to be a big marketing effort nationally and internationally. So, we're trying to capitalize. This is huge news, recently I had the opportunity to go to Roswell to celebrate. Roswell was selected as the future home of the Reno Air Races. That's a huge deal. We're talking about an air race show that will bring 60-70,000 attendees to Roswell. This was something very community driven. This was something the community wanted going into that kind of celebratory press conference. Every part of Roswell that we're excited about this, but we're talking about an estimated hundred-million-dollar event. We're talking about getting into the league of Balloon Fiesta type events here or at least into the future. We can be successful. That's a big deal. This was an effort led by the Roswell Mayor. We supported along with Lieutenant Governor, Governor and I think it's going to be a big deal for Roswell. So, September 2025 is when they're hoping to have that race. Then I'm providing this slide for everyone's context because I want to really show the success and the momentum that we have within this agency. Looking at the 10-to-12-year time frame, where we came from, where we are right now in terms of the budget going from, \$12 million to \$53 million has been just the result of all the hard work of our partners continuously driving those numbers. Not just looking at volume, but also looking at the type of traveler, looking at visitor spending, looking at being as sophisticated and data driven as possible. As we've seen those dollars towards tourism increase, we've seen that ROI sustain. We're at a place now where we're seeing the funding rise in tandem, I guess to where we're seeing our visitation and visitors. We're seeing visitors spending at an all-time high. We're seeing visitor volume at an all-time high and so we need to look at that. We need reminders of where we came from, where we are right now and the obligation, responsibility

that we must do this the right way because we do have these resources now. I wanted to throw that up there to support a celebration, but also just that we really must take this seriously. So, with that, if there aren't any questions for me, I'm going to turn it over to Erin and I'll run the computer.

**Tourism Department Marketing Update – Erin Ladd:** Madam Chair, members of the Commission always fun to come present at the quarterly Commission meetings and give you guys some sort of update on what we've been doing in the Marketing Division. The big news for us is that in the last month we do have our FY25 Co-op awards out there. They have been communicated to all the partners and we are finalizing the agreements right now. I did want to give you guys an update on sort of what those numbers ended up being for FY25. We are looking at our largest ever Co-op award cycle. This year we have 50 awardees, that's up 6% year over year and we are awarding \$3.87 million which is up 13% for a total media value of \$5.8 million. This is our biggest ever. We have more partners where opportunity for big juicy digital packages than ever before, we're doing super high-quality creative production on behalf of partners. I have some examples from the last quarter of Taos and Taos Ski Valley. These are ads done through the FY24 Co-op program. So FY25 we are expecting to be our largest ever. It was a huge lift for the team to do all the assessing and all the awarding and it's been a very busy award season for the marketing team. We're off to the races for FY25 and super, super excited about it. In other marketing programs that we have out on the street. We're currently live with our New Mexico True Summer Gift Guide. We did do a big sort of in state campaign around our last holiday gift guide. It was a super, huge success. You can find it on the home page at the top of [newmexico.org](http://newmexico.org). This is a fun summer selection of 106 goods made right here in the state of New Mexico. That is our biggest ever summer participation. We're kind of always trying to tweak and make this more interesting and make this more specific for the partners that want to service the New Mexico True Certified program and what the program that we started with this gift guide is, you can now order custom pieces through the summer gift guide, which we're never able to offer before, but we found a way to make it work with our artisans who make one piece at a time. We will be developing and creating another big holiday push. We're going to be working on that for the next handful of months. I will come back and everyone in this room with more updates on that. We keep acting on what Secretary Adams was talking about in terms of developing some exciting stuff to celebrate and be prepared for the upcoming 2026 Centennial celebration is we are going to access talks for the first time seriously with Brand USA. To give everyone in here a little bit of context on what Brand USA does at the federal level. I will harken back to what we do on the state level with the Co-op, which is we work with communities all over the state to do drive market advertising to support those communities with, Co funding with the money and Co branching with New Mexico's group. Brand USA does a similar the federal level, which is they work with states, regions, et cetera, just like us to promote New Mexico internationally. So, they are the international advertising marketing arm for the United States of America. We can work cooperatively with them very much in a similar way because our communities work cooperatively with us. So, in our very early talks about this, I will come with extra updates on all things Route 66, but we're having promising conversations on the travel trade side, certainly on the market, and advertising side. I will come back at everyone with some examples of what we're creating and what markets we're planning on going into, New Mexico True in its part is a domestic campaign pretty much always has been. This will be our first international push. So more to come on who we're targeting was what kind of advertising we're in very early talks, but it's very exciting. Then just a few things. We are in market with lots of advertising. We started in market in March. We have made some tweaks to our marketing output specifically for the month of June. Here's one thing that perhaps I've shown you, but I wanted to show it again because it is now currently in market. I had the distinct pleasure of sitting at DFW for a lot of hours over Memorial Day weekend. I want to show everybody the 30 second version. We shot this at Navajo Dam in the fall. This is a piece about fishing on the San Juan River. It is in market right now. (show San Juan ad) So this is a piece currently in market now through the end of the month. We'll take a slight breather in July. We'll get back to market with this from the end of July into September when all those beautiful fall colors will be super contextual. That's one, I should talk about another one, this is also super specific. This is one that we intended for marketing two years ago, then the wildfires hit, it did not get much airplay. So, we have updated it with some information about the Gila Centennial which is this month, this is also in market. (show Gila ad) I will pause there for any questions. *Commissioner Armenta asked:* Is it fair say that those of us that are interested in our break in Brand USA initiative, so you will be coming back to us with the opportunity? *Erin answered:* Absolutely, especially with our Route 66 communities and absolutely because this will be an initiative that we make very specifically for Route 66 promotion, and it is not engineered or imagined to be all over the state.

**Tourism Department Tourism Development Update – Holly Kelley:** Good afternoon, everyone, today I'm going to talk to you quickly about a few things that we've been doing in the Tourism Development Division. We have been talking a lot in the last couple of years about these 3 grant programs here, Tourism Event Growth & Sustainability program, our Destination Forward program and our Clean & Beautiful program. We're at the end of our FY24 program cycle. This FY24 cycle has supported 34 events representing 16 communities around the state. It's been a very busy, very exciting year with this grant program. It's been thrilling to see what this program has been able to do to many of our state signature events as well as smaller events that have just needed assistance to help them further grow. For FY25 we received a record number of applications for this grant program and sorry to tease but I'm not able to announce the award recipients yet. However, it does look like we will be investing again in more than \$500,000 this coming fiscal year with approximately 39 award recipients. That's a 14+ percent increase. We're excited about that. Then we have our Destination Forward program. For FY24, 10 communities were awarded, these tourism infrastructure related projects around the state were awarded just about \$1.9 million. It's been exciting to work closely with these communities as their projects come to a close, we'll be able to announce more in the way of the accomplishments for these projects. We are currently evaluating the applications for FY25 but we are anticipating a historical figure, but we're going through the details on it. There is a lot of demand, it's very exciting. Lancing and I have worked mostly over the last few years on capital outlay, infrastructure projects and those projects that are important priorities to our communities. It feels really good to be able to come to the table and be one of those finding sources. In the last couple of years, we've been partnering closely with the Economic Development Department and their Outdoor Rec Trails Plus grant program. What's been extremely beneficial is we've been partnering in a way in which we're both part of each other's application review panels and we're able to identify whether there's a need for co-funding or if we're unable to fund a particular project that may be more related to the Trails Plus grant program criteria. We're having those conversations and we're working closely together. It just makes our ability to help move the needle and these projects become even more possible in this collaborative effort. Our other grant program within our division is the Clean & Beautiful program, which Elena has touched on. She's part of our Clean & Beautiful committee. In FY24 here we were able to award the following 59 communities with the Clean Beautiful award. This program is about providing our communities with technical assistance and funding resources to help them address their litter eradication and beautification as well as education and empowering youth. Those are the goals of this program. It's been around quite a while, and it proves to also be growing year over year. For FY25 awards for this program, it looks like we can invest 1,000,000 this year, 10% increased investment over FY24 to approximately 68 communities. Again, 15% increase to our 59 communities that were awarded in FY24. So, another super exciting program that is extremely rewarding to see this growth and this interest and then execution. *Secretary Adams added:* I would just say that the growth has been and that's not just the dollars within a certain budget, but to go from 40 something partners to 68 is really impressive. Our advisory committee working with the grants are doing awesome. So, thanks to you and Chantal, who runs the program.

**Tourism Department Communications Update – Cody Johnson:** Hello, everyone. Madam Chair, members of the commission, my name's Cody Johnson, Director of Communications for the NM Tourism Department. I'd like to provide a brief update about some of our earned media stuff and some of our other merging initiatives that are coming through the communications division. I wanted to first start by going over what's basically kind of our FY24 recap for some of our major KPIs for earned media. You can see these numbers were massive as of late May. We can basically expect these to be what we will see for the entirety of the fiscal year. Through our direct efforts with our communications staff, with our tourism department staff and with our extended team, we secured coverage that equated 2.6 billion impressions, \$24.5 million in advertising value equivalents. Additionally, we did secure 14 separate feature articles in international media, which has been a trend we've seen over the past few years. There's been a lot of organic interest from international these travel publications to write about New Mexico. We continue to pursue those when they make sense for us. And then finally, I did want to tout our ROI for this fiscal year, came out to \$77 advertising value equivalents for every \$1.00 spent on taxes and strategies for the year. I think that's very important for us. We've seen our ROI increase over the four years that we've been working on this program. I did want to put these two screenshots in this PowerPoint because I wanted to highlight some of the things that we want to pursue more deeply strategically when it comes to our national earned media program. You might have seen one or both articles in your feed. Maybe you've received it from Tourism Talk, maybe you saw it on social media. These are two great examples of really deep storytelling and feature coverage of New Mexico. In the next four years, we want to further pursue this type of content. While the articles are great and they add to our KPIs we want to commit ourselves to



further pursuing this type of deeper coverage for New Mexico. The big news I wanted to share from the communications division, is that as of 2 days ago, we officially went into contract with the new PR agency. We signed on with the Abbi Agency, they are in an agency based out of Nevada. They are the PR contract of record for Travel Nevada. They represent a variety of local DMO's in California, the State of Nevada, Montana and a couple of other western states in general. They also work with a variety of leisure hospitality brands, which is important to us as well. Two things that really stood out to us when it came to this firm that when you look at Nevada, right? Nevada is similar to New Mexico in the sense where they have a couple of major metros and then they're very rural. That is that is something that's important for us in New Mexico to address when it comes to representation in the earned media space. That was big and then they are very committed to measuring and evaluating the correlation between earned media coverage and conversion or impact on travel. That is something that we are also exploring when it comes to this new phase like the national market media program. So those two things stood out to us. The other thing I wanted to talk about is travel trade. Up there is a picture of our New Mexico crew from IPW 2024 Los Angeles. This was the second time the tourism department has returned to IPW since covid. It's a lot of work, we met with over 100 international buyers from markets around the world. A lot of them are very interested in New Mexico, it was very successful. For Gospel, the work is just beginning when it comes to using the insights and the feedback from buyers from partners to evaluate. But what does a sustainable statewide travel trade program look like? I'd also be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge that Holly Marquez is with us today. She joined us a couple of months ago as our travel trade program coordinator. She's been hard at work with the event, post event and then working on just putting together a program that benefits the state. We did a presentation on this topic at the Governor's Conference on Hospitality Tourism a few weeks ago. I want to touch on some of the elements that we're working on and that I think the state can probably expect to see from this program as we move into the next fiscal year. One of the things we're looking at is really auditing bookable product to New Mexico. I think this is important to us, particularly when it comes to the events to make sure that when we're investing and going to trade shows like IPW we want to make sure that more of these operators are selling a product after we go to these events. I think that's very important. We're figuring out some processes about how to audit that product right now and #2 enhancing our travel trade show presence. We're hoping to find a more sustainable option when it comes to our investments and trade shows. That is a priority for us right now as we enter FY25, we're also evaluating the operative model. What are some options going to look like for partners to work with us more closely, for trade shows and other types of strategies that we ultimately end up putting together. We hope to come to the industry with something in early FY25. We're also working on travel trade micro sites and then we're developing strategic partnerships to support travel trade and some of those partnerships are going to look like working with our Southwestern peers, Texas, Colorado, Arizona to address travel trade more regionally because feedback from a lot of these buyers shows us is that's how international travelers works. They don't just come one place and bounce out. They do want to experience different regions in the United States. So, we're looking at being more cooperative. Any questions for Cody? *Question from audience:* Wondering if you're marketing through TikTok? There's a couple of British guys I follow. They're in New Mexico right now. They have 100,000 likes all the time. *Cody answered:* New Mexico True did join TikTok maybe what a year ago, two years ago? *Erin added:* about a year and a half ago, we do have active New Mexico True advertising on TikTok. We do use it as an advertising arm for those usually 15 second cut downs of our 30 second commercial pieces.

**Tourism Department New Mexico Magazine Update – Steve Gleydura:** Thank you for having me, Steve Gleydura Editor of New Mexico Magazine. Our June issue is out on the newsstands right now. It's How to Have the Best Summer Ever. I've already taken my own advice and was camping up the Cimarron Canyon over Memorial Day weekend. Really enjoyed the enchanted circle. Upcoming editorial coverage for us, the July issue is going to be our water issue. Since I took over our cover stories, they've almost all been service stories, things to go and do to enjoy the state. It's going to be a little bit more newsy for us, but I think it's as we kind of heard earlier, it's just such an important topic for us. But there's going to be some fun stuff in there as well. Then our August issue Guide New Mexico. Try to find a deeper connection to New Mexico through guides and tours, a lot of people come here and don't know what to do and guides and tours can really help people. September Western Fashion, something a little different for us. This has been part of sort of a staple for the magazine in its 100-year history, but really kind of the moment right now and everybody from Ralph Lauren to Beyoncé's kind of Western fashion and we were in the forefront of that 100 years ago. So that's kind of fun. I just really want to go to Saints and Sinners bar so that's up there. I just need an excuse for that thing. Film and TV, we're going to try this again, this was on our editorial calendar last year, but the strikes kind of

put that off. Hoping to make that happen. Holidays True Heroes for December. We've got some special partnerships with the tourism department. We've got a great Zozobra poster for its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in our August issue. We're going to do an events calendar, which was really successful the first time we did it. We've got our own holiday gift guide as well, we're accepting nominations right now for our True Heroes which runs through the end of the month. This is a program that recognizes neighbors and community members who have gone above and beyond in their community. We've really only had one or two from this region, so I really encourage you to think about people who are making a difference here and go to our website and make that nomination. Our 24th annual New Mexico Magazine photo contest kicks off on July 1st. Those winners run in the magazine in our January, February issue. This year, which is really exciting for us, we're launching a new Route 66 category, which will turn itself into Route 66 calendar for 2025 leading into the anniversary. We're really excited about that, it's part of our efforts to help with Route 66. Thank you.

**Commissioner Updates – Chairwoman Kimball:** We're going to do quick conventional updates hopefully, but I just want to stop a minute and acknowledge our guests, Chris Stagg. Chris sat in my chair for 28 years and chaired this Commission. The reason I want to acknowledge that is we are all volunteers. We have seven-year tours of duty, and we go all around the state every quarter to meet folks in tourism in the regions to try and learn, to go between the tourism industry and the tourism department. We go to the legislature and lobby for more money for regions for tourism projects. And the thought of doing this, engineering this for 28 years blows my mind. So anyway, I'd just like to give a real round of applause from Taos allowing Chris Stagg to sit here and be chair for 28 years. *Applause.* All right, let me give you a quick one. I am based in Santa Fe. I work at a hotel called La Fonda. We're getting into our huge high season. We just finished our third annual Santa Fe Literary Festival, third year, 15,000 tickets, 15,000 people came here as well as the authors. So that's something that's really exciting. They've already announced Michael Cunningham and Heather Cox Richardson for next year. So, they are definitely going to have a fourth year. Every year we're like oh we hope because it's a nonprofit and any of you that are interested in reading is really fabulous new festival for part of Santa Fe's market season. Folk Art Market will be July 12<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup>, Santa Fe Rail Yard tickets are on sale. After that we have Spanish Colonial Art Market July 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> and rounding out our festival season is Indian Market August 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup>. Put them on your calendar, come visit. They're all different. They're all interesting. Other than the Rail Yard they are all outside La Fonda's front doors. So come take the train, come spend money at La Fonda. That would be great. That is my update for Santa Fe.

**Commissioner Updates – Commissioner Vallo:** Thank you Madam Chair, I don't have that much. I do have one for the Pueblo of Acoma. I just found out that their days of opening for tours have changed, they're now open Wednesday to Sunday from 9am to 5pm. They still do provide tours as well. Another thing small note for Isleta, they have a nice little museum they just opened up a few months ago. Visit there, it's pretty interesting, talks a little bit about their Pueblo and their people. Most of the Pueblos are now open for festivities throughout the summer. If you have a chance check out one of those cultural experiences and I'm sure you will get to make some friends. Please do visit and get to know your neighbors, especially here in Taos. That's all I have. Thank you.

**Commissioner Updates – Commissioner Abruzzo:** Ben Abruzzo, I am with Ski Santa Fe and Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway, sitting here looking at this beautiful weather. It's easy to forget that two weeks ago it felt like winter. Had quite the season overall, New Mexico had one of its best seasons in terms of secure visits, over 900,000. Christie's still getting the data compiled, but we could be close to a million. Which would be pretty exciting for sure. 50,000 over the year before, which was one of our better years. Christie's been working on an economic survey for the ski industry, with the data we're bringing hopefully we're going to have some better information on what the ski industry brings to New Mexico pretty soon. I think one of the top things is reinvestment in the ski industry in terms of people, wages are high, we're back fully staffed most part, we're putting our money and time into our folks. Our infrastructure, Red River is building a new chairlift, Taos continues to work on their lodging amenities, they're working on some other chair projects. Ski Santa Fe is putting in two chairlifts, first thing we've done in 20 years, we are installing them, so we're employing 80 people from our community all through the summer, which is pretty exciting. Sandia Peak is kind of a weird one for me. Sandia Ski Area was sold by us to non-Capital Partners. They run Pajarito and Sipapu. It's exciting, I think they're going to reinvest and put some new energy into that that part of our community. The tramway just upgraded its control system, so we'll get another 50 years out of that iconic machine in Albuquerque. So, what a great year! We feel very fortunate both for tourism and for locals, skiing continues to be an important part of being a New Mexican for so many people. And we're transitioning to summer Angel Fire, Taos, Red

River, Pajarito, Ski Apache, they do very strong summer business and they're in full swing. So, we'll go through a great summer low on wildfires, transition to a better way.

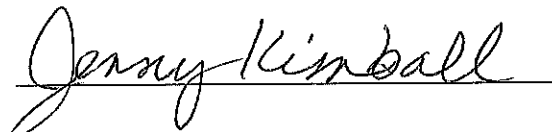
**Commissioner Updates – Commissioner Armenta:** Thank you, Tanya Armenta, Visit Albuquerque. So following suit with the chair, I think we'll start with some events in the Albuquerque area. Just to mark calendars coming up in June, we have Festival Flamenco is June 21st, the Mariachi Spectacular followed by the Lavender Village Festival. We also have the Great American Beer Festival and the Rule 66 Summer Fest, all of those held in July. An opportunity there for some in state travels to the Albuquerque area for some events. At previous Commission meetings, I've noticed that it's a banner year for sports tourism in Albuquerque and hopefully some of the state is seeing some benefits from those tournaments that are taking place in Albuquerque. We just wrapped up Taekwondo and he held our first Taekwondo USA Taekwondo event to the Convention Center. We held our first cricket tournament. We had an iconic Indian cricket player that came to Albuquerque. I think he had 20 million followers on Instagram. It was quite the draw. Those cricket pitches have been installed at Balloon Fiesta Park, so an opportunity for mixed-use there at Balloon Fiesta Park. I think one of the mini tournaments that will be coming also is BMX. Then we transition to some track and field events, some major baseball tournaments that will take place at our West Side Sports Complex and then USA Archery as well. It was great to hear about your destination stewardship plan. Albuquerque is about midway through a destination master plan. Also not going to sit on a shelf, commitment not to sit on a shelf. We are partnering with JLL in regard to that plan. It's a 10-year road map for the Albuquerque area and the notion is that we have quick wins along with the long-term investment sign of quick wins. That is something we're looking forward to, very inclusive projects there in the Albuquerque area and certainly willing to talk more about opportunities to be partners on that because I think collaborative effort is imperative. The last time we did a destination master plan was 2006, Albuquerque was due for an update of a destination master plan. Wanting to just note in terms of Route 66, just appreciate the partnership with the NMTD and with other destinations as we prepare for Route 66, the Centennial. I will say in Albuquerque we are starting early; we are starting our celebrations in May 2025. We're really going to look to capitalize on 2 summers in terms of the Route 66. And of course, we noted that I we've had a Route 66 Summerfest since the 75th anniversary. That was an event that was created back when Route 66 turned 75. Some opportunities for us to build legacy programs that are not just about one year Centennial, but things that that really move on.

**Public Comment:** Chair Kimball asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

**Adjourn:** Motion was made by Commissioner Abruzzo to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Armenta and passed unanimously. Chairwoman Kimball Adjourned the meeting at 2:53pm.

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Approved by Commission vote at public meeting held on September 10, 2024.



Commission Chair Jenny Kimball