



State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Ben Popp, Chair

**Wisconsin Council on Tourism Minutes
Wednesday, April 12, 2023
Wisconsin Department of Tourism
Madison, WI**

I. Roll Call

PRESENT: Secretary Anne Sayers, Dr. Bert Davis, Darren Bush, Deb Carey, Dr. Natalie Chin, Genyne Edwards, A.J. Frels, Michelle Martin, Mary McPhetridge, Christian Overland, Ben Popp, Senator Jeff Smith, Denise Stillman, Representative Sheila Stubbs, Missy Tracy, George Tzougros, Krystal Westfahl

EXCUSED: Senator Joan Ballweg, Nathan Gordon, Representative Travis Tranel, Luke Zahm

II. Call Meeting to Order and Welcome

Ben Popp called the meeting to order at 1:32pm.

III. Approval of November 16, 2022 Minutes

Michelle Martin made a motion to approve the November 16, 2022 minutes. Krystal Westfahl seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Committee Reports

Committee chairs or staff leads representing each of the seven Department of Tourism committees provided updates on the recent work of the committees. The Council heard from the following:

- Meetings and Conventions Committee report provided by A.J. Frels
- Sports Marketing Committee report provided by Dawn Zanoni
- Meetings Mean Business, Ready Set Go! and Joint Effort Marketing Committee reports provided by Heidi Schultz
- Office of Outdoor Recreation Committee report provided by Ben Popp
- Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Committee report provided by Krystal Westfahl
- Marketing Committee Report provided by Missy Tracy

V. Update on Department Business

Secretary Anne Sayers shared the following department updates:

Legislative

The Department was invited to testify before the Senate Agriculture and Tourism Committee (Chaired by Sen. Ballweg) in mid-February where the Department presented on economic impact, strategy, and the Office of Outdoor Recreation, among other items, for informational purposes.



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A clean-up bill (authored by Senator Ballweg and Representative Plumer) is being voted on to clean up four outdated items in the statutes related to Tourism:

- Modifying Tourism's annual reporting duties
- Distributing donated cheese
- Requiring the WPGA submit an audit of the revenue from the sale of golf license plates.
- Considering celebrities in marketing campaigns

The Office of Outdoor Recreation was invited to testify for information purposes only to the Assembly Committee on Rural Development and again before the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation.

Secretary Sayers is completing meetings with members of the Joint Finance Committee related to Tourism's budget, and discussing the need for additional Department staff.

Staffing Update

Secretary Sayers restated the transition plan for Northwest Wisconsin following the retirement of NW Regional Tourism Specialist Julie Fox. The region will be split in half and covered by current Regional Tourism Specialists Drew Nussbaum and Jeff Anderson. Drew previously represented the NW region, so he is familiar to partners.

Federal Relief Dollars Project Update

Using \$500,000 in federal ARPA grants, the Department created a new brand for the Welcome Centers and refreshed the interiors and external signage of six centers.

These updates maintained the unique characteristics of each site while also updating the colors and creative. Digital screens were installed that will be updated from the Travel Wisconsin home office with relevant, seasonal content. This was the largest investment in the official Welcome Centers in over a decade.

Marketing

Federal relief funds went primarily to marketing allowing us to run larger campaigns than ever through 2021 and 2022.

Council members viewed the new Travel Guide publication containing no traditional advertisements. The publication is entirely advertorials.

VI. Election of Officers

Mary McPhetridge provided a review of the election process as established by Council bylaws. Nominations submitted ahead of time as allowed in Article IV, Section 5 of the bylaws were included in the vote. All members of the Council were able to make nominations. Voting was held by oral roll call voice vote.



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Election of Chair:

Mary McPhetridge read the pre submitted nomination of Ben Pop as nominated by A.J. Frels and Mary McPhetridge. There were no further nominations from the floor. Ben Popp received 14 votes and was elected as Chair.

Election of Vice Chair:

Mary McPhetridge read the pre submitted nomination of A.J. Frels as nominated by Michelle Martin and Mary McPhetridge. There were no further nominations from the floor. A.J. Frels received 14 votes and was elected as Vice Chair.

Election of Secretary:

Chelsey Bence read the pre submitted nomination of Mary McPhetridge as nominated by Michelle Martin. There were no further nominations from the floor. Mary McPhetridge received 15 votes and was elected as Secretary.

VII. Next Meeting Topics

The Council agreed that the next meeting of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism will be an outstate meeting held in Fall 2023. The Council will explore the option of meeting in either the Minocqua, Ashland, or La Crosse area.

VIII. Adjournment

Dr. Bert Davis made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Krystal Westfahl. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 3:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Mary McPhetridge, Secretary

Approved by Ben Popp, Chair