



State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Ben Popp, Chair

**Wisconsin Department of Tourism
Wisconsin Council on Tourism Minutes
Wednesday, September 25, 2025
Al Ringling Theatre, Baraboo, WI**

I. Roll Call

PRESENT: Secretary Anne Sayers, Senator Joan Ballweg, Darren Bush, Deb Carey, Dr. Natalie Chin, A.J. Frels, Cindy Hoehne, Nic Mink, Christian Overland, Aaron Sherer, Representative Sheila Stubbs, George Tzougros

EXCUSED: Genyne Edwards, Nathan Gordon, Joe Klimczak, Ben Popp, Senator Jeff Smith, Denise Stillman, Representative Travis Tranel, Krystal Westfahl, Ellie Westman Chin

II. Call Meeting to Order and Welcome

A.J. Frels called the meeting to order at 2:01pm. The Council welcomed recently appointed members Ellie Westman Chin, President & CEO of Destination Madison and Cindy Hoehne, Owner, Rainbow Ridge Farms, Onalaska.

III. Approval of April 9, 2024 Minutes

Christian Overland made a motion to approve the April 9, 2024 minutes. Senator Ballweg seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Committee Reports

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

- Group Travel Committee report provided by Craig Trost
- Joint Effort Marketing, Tourist Information Center, Meetings Mean Business and Ready Set Go! Committee reports provided by Heidi Schultz
- Office of Outdoor Recreation Committee report provided by Cassie Mordini
- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee report provided by Deputy Secretary Maria Van Hoorn
- Marketing Committee report provided by Shane Brossard

V. Discussion: Seasonal Reports

Chief Marketing Officer Shane Brossard shared a presentation on Travel Wisconsin's three seasonal reports: the Fall Color Report, the Wisconsin Trail Report and the Wisconsin Snow Report. These helped generate 119,997 arrivals on Travel Wisconsin's website yielding a \$68.9 million return on investment. Shane Brossard highlighted how each of the three reports play out in the consumer journey when planning a trip, providing an interactive content space during research and planning. The floor was open for discussion for Council members to share ways to help get reports in front of



State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Ben Popp, Chair

more users and recruit and celebrate reporters. Christian Overland suggested the Wisconsin Historical Society can consider adding a link to the Trail Report on their Historic Site webpages, given that many sites have trails that run through the grounds and have guests participate in trail activities such as snowshoeing. The Council suggested considering a volunteer session developed for volunteers and reporters at our annual WIGCOT conference for engagement and to maintain a strong volunteer base.

VI. Secretary's Report

Secretary Anne Sayers shared the following department updates:

Agency operations

After some natural attrition earlier this year, the Department restructured its org chart and adjusted position descriptions to better align with current work and organizational needs. The Department is currently one hire away from being fully staffed. Our effort to recruit top talent will be reflected in our work and, ultimately, our economic impact. The Department is also onboarding a new agency of record, Laughlin Constable, following a recent RFP.

Recent numbers

The Department reached 1.99B impressions in August, including 70k saves of content creators. Travel Wisconsin's website has reached 8.5 million active users January 1 through September 24, putting it on pace to surpass the record setting 2023 year with an estimated 10.7 million active users by year end.

Good news updates

Major events saw some impressive and record setting numbers, including attendance records at Wisconsin State Fair, PrideFest Milwaukee and EAA. Milwaukee saw a boost in visitors after hosting both the RNC and Connect Marketplace. Passenger traffic at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport was up 10.9% during the first half of the year. Wisconsin's golf scene remains top of mind as we set the stage to host 8 notable events with bookings out to 2037.

VII. Election of Marketing Committee Member

Natalie Chin provided a review of the Marketing Committee as established by Council bylaws. The Marketing Committee had one vacancy to be filled by a Council member, by vote of Council following the departure of Mary McPhetridge whose term had expired on the Council.

A.J. Frels submitted an email nomination ahead of the meeting for Ellie Chin. Ellie Chin accepted her nomination. The floor was open for nominations. There were no further nominations from the floor. Roll call votes were taken; Ellie Westman Chin received 9 votes and was elected to the Marketing Committee.



State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Ben Popp, Chair

VIII. Next Meeting Topics

No open discussion. The Wisconsin Council on Tourism will follow the same meeting cadence set in 2023. The next meeting will occur in the Spring, after the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism.

IX. Adjournment

Senator Ballweg made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Natalie Chin. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Natalie Chin, Secretary

Approved by A.J. Frels, Vice Chair