



## State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Ben Popp, Chair

**Wisconsin Department of Tourism  
Wisconsin Council on Tourism Minutes  
Tuesday, April 9, 2024  
Food + Farm Exploration Center, Plover, WI**

### **I. Roll Call**

PRESENT: Secretary Anne Sayers, Senator Joan Ballweg, Dr. Natalie Chin, Dr. Bert Davis, Genyne Edwards, A.J. Frels, Joe Klimczak, Mary McPhetridge, Nic Mink, Christian Overland, Ben Popp, Aaron Sherer, Denise Stillman, Representative Sheila Stubbs, George Tzougros, Krystal Westfahl

EXCUSED: Darren Bush, Deb Carey, Nathan Gordon, Senator Jeff Smith, Representative Travis Tranel

NOTES: A representative from Senator Jeff Smith's office was in attendance for a majority of the meeting

### **II. Call Meeting to Order and Welcome**

Ben Popp called the meeting to order at 1:01pm. The Council welcomed recently appointed member Aaron Sherer, Executive Director of the Paine Art Center and Gardens.

### **III. Approval of September 13, 2023 Minutes**

Joe Klimczak made a motion to approve the September 13, 2023 minutes. Christian Overland 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:

- Deputy Secretary shared committee process updates including implementing staggered terms for non-statutory committees as committee members' terms end and new members are welcomed.
- Group Travel Committee report provided by A.J. Frels
- 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
- Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Committee report provided by Dr. Bert Davis
- Marketing Committee report provided by Shane Brossard

### **V. Update on Department Business**

Secretary Anne Sayers shared the following department updates:



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### State of Tourism

It is predicted that 2024 will be a record-breaking year for the global travel industry, with the industry expected to contribute \$11.1 trillion to the global economy. The state's investment in this industry by way of a base budget increase of \$1 million per year and the one time funds of \$29 million will directly yield more tax revenue for our state.

We can measure the direct impact of our 2022 summer and fall campaign ads which resulted in an additional 1.9 million trips. Those trips accounted for \$290 million in spending. For every advertising dollar Travel Wisconsin spent in 2022, a new visitor spent \$31.

### Program Updates

The momentum of Top Chef continues. There were 1,963 media mentions about Top Chef Wisconsin from local and national outlets, resulting in 14.15 billion impressions over a 10-day period before and after the premiere. As the season continues, awareness of Wisconsin will continue to grow.

The annual Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism was very impactful, providing excellent programming and networking opportunities for 781 attendees. WIGCOT 2025 will be hosted in La Crosse.

Secretary Sayers shared that the Department is in the process of both a Marketing and Public Relations RFP. The Department is also persistently working on hiring following the recent announcements of two Department retirements, and is committed to building stability and experience into the organization for the long term.

### Budget

The next biennial budget is around the corner, and Secretary Sayers reminded Council members of how much of our current work and successes are made possible by one-time funds.

## **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 roll call voice vote.

### Election of Chairperson:

Mary McPhetridge read the pre-submitted nomination of Ben Popp as nominated by A.J. Frels and Mary McPhetridge. There were no further nominations from the floor. Ben Popp received 13 votes and was elected as Chairperson.

### Election of Vice Chairperson:



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Mary McPhetridge read the pre-submitted nomination of A.J. Frels as nominated by Ben Popp and Mary McPhetridge. There were no further nominations from the floor. A.J. Frels received 13 votes and was elected as Vice Chairperson.

Election of Secretary:

Mary McPhetridge read the pre-submitted nomination of Natalie Chin as nominated by Ben Popp. There were no further nominations from the floor. Natalie Chin received 13 votes and was elected as Secretary.

### **VII. Election of Marketing Committee Member**

Mary McPhetridge provided a review of the Marketing Committee as established by Council bylaws. Following the recent departure of Michelle Martin from Council, the Marketing Committee had one vacancy to be filled by a Council member, by vote of Council.

The floor was open for nominations. Council Chair Ben Popp nominated Aaron Sherer. Mary McPhetridge nominated Krystal Westfahl. Aaron Sherer declined his nomination. There were no further nominations. Roll call votes were taken; Krystal Westfahl received 13 votes and was elected to the Marketing Committee.

### **VIII. Next Meeting Topics**

Following discussion, the Council unanimously preferred to convene for the next meeting of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism in the fall. This schedule will follow the same meeting cadence set in 2023. If a council member is interested in hosting the next meeting in their region, they were asked to reach out to Chelsey Bence.

### **IX. Adjournment**

Mary McPhetridge made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Christan Overland. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:36pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by Mary McPhetridge, Secretary*

*Approved by Ben Popp, Chair*