

Utah Board of Tourism Development
Meeting Minutes
Friday, January 10, 2025
Snow College, Richfield

Board Members Present	Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Joan Hammer, Graydon Pearson, Nathan Rafferty, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith, CJ Wade, Shayne Wittwer
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Board Members Virtual	Jason Murray, Melva Sine
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Board Members Excused	Jared Berrett, Kaitlin Eskelson, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Jennifer Wesselhoff
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Tourism & Film Staff	Tera Atwood, Rachel Bremer, Lorraine Daly, Sorell Grow, Kim Heys, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Carli Mahas, Virginia Pearce, Natalie Randall, Dave Williams, Heather Zang, Stacey Zoller
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Public	Commissioner Ralph Brown, Kevin Christensen, Julie Comstock, Raelene Davis, Megan DeAngelis, Machel Devin, Dana Erickson, Terra Girvin, Colin Greenberg, Todd K. Jenson, Tami Leonhardt, Brittany McMichael, Marissa Mallory, AnnDee Mead, Shanna Memmott, Dallas Miller, Amy Myers, Chris Reed, Randy Rhodes, Rachel Roberson, Kevin Rosen, Emily Rovello, Celina Sinclair, Jonathan Smithgall, Chad Taylor, Shanny Wilson, Allison Yamamoto-Sparks
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WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chair Kym Buttschardt called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked for board member introductions.

Ralph Brown, Sevier County Commissioner

Amy Myers, Tourism Director

- +22k residents in the county and three high schools.
- Second largest producer of mineral resources in the State.
- Tourism in Sevier County has a wide variety of activities – horse trail riding, float the river, hot air balloon rides, fly hang gliders off two peaks, etc.
- Large ATV jamboree every September that attracts people from all over the United States and international participants.
- Mountain biking trails and it continues to grow in popularity.
- Paiute Trail is an OHV/ATV trail that goes almost 3,000 miles and includes surrounding counties.
- Trails systems has primarily grown word-of-mouth and the county has committed funds to market visitor activities for the first time.
- Additional unique things in Sevier county include hot springs, Pando, salt mines and state park.

MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Lesha Coltharp motioned to approve the December 13, 2024, board meeting minutes. **Shayne Wittwer** seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Natalie Randall, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Sevier County has done a great job in destination development and building a great community and then leaning into marketing.
- Navigated the government's potential shutdown. Fortunately it did not happen, however, we did see impacts and heard from community members.
- The ski patrol strike in Park City has been resolved but it is difficult to hear about the decrease in visitations, especially when it is out of our control.
- The tourism vision is *"A state united in welcoming the world to experience awe-inspiring adventure."* The industry and state are convening together and saw that with the shutdown and the strike.
- Legislative session updates include a committee bill that is focused on the sunset of our board. These come up every 5 years for all committees. This bill renews our board for another 5 years.
- Two additional items that will be tracked are related to appropriations. The Governor's budget recommended funding TMPF at \$21.8M and will continue to advocate for that.
- Appropriation of \$3M (\$1.5M ongoing; \$1.5M one-time) to support Sundance staying in Utah.
- This month's UOT Partner newsletter includes a new research dashboard created by our research team.
- Launched a redesigned industry website - travel.utah.gov.

INTERNATIONAL TEAM REPORT

Rachel Bremer, Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism

Q2 Review & Fiscal Year Outlook

- Forecast spend of international visitors is 93% and forecasted international visits is 45% of expected in 2023-2028. Comparing this to 2019, we are at 100% growth in visitor spending and the national average is 56%. Pacing above the national average.
- International's Red Emerald Strategic Priorities for FY25 include increasing Utah's share of focused global markets; increase awareness and consideration of Utah being an exceptional outdoor vacation destination; and, educate visitors on responsible and prepared travel practices.
- Fiscal year goals are to increase length of stay and visitor spending; and, maximize ROI and create avenues for international marketing for stakeholders. Been diligent to include DMO partners in our marketing.
- Product development with travel trade included cycling tours with Ride Holidays AU and cooperative marketing campaigns with Joker Reizen BE that included Kane County, Greater Zion, Visit Salt Lake and Grand County.
- Launched Spanish language agent training program in Mexico.
- In October, attended Discover America Nordics Roadshow. More than 270 travel trade and media for three days/three cities/three countries (Stockholm, Helsinki, Oslo).
- Also attended Joker Reizen Consumer show in Belgium and Brand USA Travel Week EU.
- Nordic markets forecasted spend is 141% and forecasted visits Nordic markets is 32% through 2028. See high spend per visitor from these markets.
- Joined a trade mission to France's Region Sud with DMO partners and state government members. Continue with LOI work and important relationships as France hosts the 2030 Olympic Winter Games right before 2024 in Salt Lake City.
- France continues to be a primary market as we have direct flights. Forecasted French visitors and spending is very good.
- Also spent two days in the Benelux region - Brussels and Amsterdam - meeting with media and buyers. It was led by Target travel, a new representation for the region. Joined by U.S. ambassador in Belgium and US Consul General in Amsterdam. Valuable conversations with dignitaries about what tourism means in Utah and what it means for local tour operators.
- Forecasted spend of Benelux region visitors is 198% and forecasted visits 105%.

- Consumer side, extending partner opportunities in India. Most partners cannot travel to India and it is a large market that is hard to market in. Creating media opportunities and bringing in influencers again. Hosting a FAM tour.
- In China after hosting the Winter Olympics, they are still very excited about skiing and winter sports. Staying active with good public relations and visibility opportunities. Destinations are back working in the Chinese market so competition is hard.
- Armchair explorer podcast on Utah: Life Elevated won prestigious award from British Guild of Travel Writers. There are five Utah episodes and as of December more than 69K episode downloads.
- PR highlights include very good coverage in the UK and China, and have a lot planned in January and February.
- Zach Fyne's last day with UOT is January 31. Thank him for all of his work and advancement of our efforts in Mexico.

UTAH FILM COMMISSION

Virginia Pearce, Utah Film Commissioner

Incentive Program Allocation

- The Sundance Film Festival is coming up, January 23-February 2.
- Expect to hear this spring if Sundance is staying in Utah.
- *Omaha* is premiering at Sundance and a project that received an incentive in 2023. It was filmed in Carbon, Juab, Salt Lake, Tooele and Weber counties. It was written and directed by two local BYU professors.
- *One Big Happy Family* premieres on streaming services in January.
- 2024 marked 100 years of film in Utah and the 50th anniversary of the Utah Film Commission. Hosted many events, film exhibits at the Utah State Capitol, community events, etc.
- Sevier County became the latest film ready county and have just three more to go.
- Calendar year 2024 summary:
 - Almost \$50M film direction direct spend
 - Including more than \$10M in rural areas
 - 22 projects received incentives through our program
 - Created more than 3,100 production jobs
- Filming locations in 2024: Carbon, Davis, Emery, Grand, Salt Lake, San Juan, Summit, Tooele, Utah, Uintah, Wasatch, and Washington Counties.
- Almost \$10.5M incentive awarded and created almost \$50M in economic impact.
- Many projects shot in Utah do not receive incentives but still have touchpoints with the Utah Film Commission.
- More than 78 commercials were shot in Utah although this is hard to track. Work with film ready counties to help track these.
- Looking at the 10-year impact of film, \$630M spent in Utah (almost half of this is rural), created 38,000 jobs and \$6B contribution to film tourism.
- Four projects that applied for an incentive program to review - 1 in community film; 2 in rural and 1 in motion picture.
- Film incentive program was allocated \$20M for FY25. The rural film program is \$12M, the motion picture program is \$6.79M in tax credit and \$1.5M in cash rebate.
- Have approved 14 projects so far in FY25 - 5 in the rural program, 5 in motion picture tax credit and 4 in motion picture cash rebate.
- The incentive program has awarded approximately \$4.4M this fiscal year which has resulted in \$20.5M in economic impact.
- The *Wayfinders* tax credit, because it is over \$2M, has the ability to split over three years. When this project is closed out, they will receive three tax credits to be used over the next three years.

MOTION: Shayne Wittwer motioned to approve \$4,279,081 for an incentive for the following productions which have met the criteria defined by statute. CJ Wade seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Production	Estimated Utah Spend	Incentive Amount Per Production
<i>The Genesis Project</i>	\$480,000	\$96,000
<i>Finding Mr. Christmas S2</i>	\$1,400,000	\$280,000
<i>The Edge of Normal</i>	\$2,741,079	\$685,270
<i>The Wayfinders</i>	\$12,871,243	\$3,217,811*
	\$17,492,322 TOTAL Spend	\$4,279,081 TOTAL Incentives

UTIA UPDATE

Joan Hammer, board member representing UTIA

- Tourism Day on the Hill is January 31, 2025, and registration is open. Encourage all to register and have the opportunity to sponsor their legislator.
- Tourism Outdoor Utah Recreation (TOUR) caucus sponsored by UTIA continuing for the third year. New caucus leadership is Sen. Vickers, chair, and Sen. Stratton, for the Senate; and, House Chairs will be Rep. Cuttler, chair, and Rep. Brooks, vice chair. Meeting twice this year. First one is Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 7am in the Senate Building. The second one will be Feb. 22 at Millcreek Common.
- Time also to renew UTIA memberships and new membership drive.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Nathan Rafferty shared details about the Park City ski patrol union that went on strike shortly before Christmas. Unfortunate collateral damage to hotels, restaurants, transportation, etc., and a lot of unsatisfied guests. It has been resolved and Park City is up and running again. Received extensive media coverage.
- Shayne Wittwer reported a strong holiday season in southern Utah. He also noted that Richfield does not get enough credit for all of the events they host.
- Jordan Smith reported at the end of December, the biggest piece of federal legislation related to the outdoor recreation industry in the past decade. The Explorer Act, which expands public access to recreation lands. It is a Christmas tree bill with a lot of good things in it. Mandates federal agencies to expand technologies at campgrounds, visitors centers, etc.; partner with private industries to collaboratively manage public lands; and, reduce or eliminate fees for a lot of guides who have to file permits or request special use permits to operate business on public lands.
- Melva Sine shared that the Utah Restaurant Association is working on a bill with Sen. Lincoln Filmore called restaurant tax revisions. The bill would tax restaurants located in grocery stores and convenience stores at the same rate it taxes food at traditional restaurants. Uncertain of the amount it may bring in. The Utah Association of Counties and Utah Taxpayer Association is supporting the bill.
- Jason Murray updated that REI has closed their experience division that may affect local industry partners. GoWest participants are inquiring about updates on Zion tunnel restrictions that begin in 2026.