

**Utah Board of Tourism Development**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, February 14, 2025

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Board Members Present	Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Kaitlin Eskelson, Joan Hammer, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Jason Murray, Graydon Pearson, Nathan Rafferty, Melva Sine, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer
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Board Members Excused	Jared Berrett, CJ Wade
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Tourism & Film Staff	Tera Atwood, Jenica Barber, Kevin Blomquist, Rachel Bremer, Rachel Creer, Ben Cook, Lorraine Daly, Sorell Grow, Kim Heys, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Emma Kwanin, Anna Loughridge, Carli Mahas, Virginia Pearce, Natalie Randall, Arianna Rees, Dave Williams, Diane Wilson, Liz Wilson, Heather Zang, Stacey Zoller
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Public	Stacey Boney, Suzanne Brose, Kevin Christensen, Julie Comstock, Colette Cox, Machel Devin, Dana Erickson, Ben Fredregill, August Granath, Colin Greenberg, Ali Harford, Jordyn Hewitt, Todd K. Jenson, Ryan Lundstrom, Debra McKee, Marissa Mallory, Amy Myers, Val Rasmussen, Chris Reed, Mike Roe, Kevin Rosen, Emily Rovello, Jonathan Smithgall, Maria Twitchell, Matthew Watson, Rachel West, Erin Wiggins, 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.

**MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION: Joan Hammer** motioned to approve the January 10, 2025, board meeting minutes. **Graydon Pearson** seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

**OPEN & PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT (OPMA) TRAINING**

**Todd K. Jenson**, Assistant Attorney General, Utah Attorney General's Office

- State law requires that all boards have yearly OPMA training.
- Reviewed the conflict of interest form with the board and asked all to fill out and send back to him.
- The governor's handbook for boards and commissions also will be emailed to all board members.
- This board is created by statute and when a quorum meets it has to be an open, public meeting.
- A quorum must be present to have a public board meeting.
- Meeting notices and agendas must be posted publicly at least 24 hours in advance. All items posted on the [Utah Public Notice Website](#). Audio recording of the meeting and meeting minutes also must be posted following the meeting.
- Written minutes must record votes and if not unanimous, will do a roll call vote.
- Minutes include the name of each person who makes a public comment.

- A group email to the board is not a public meeting, but it is recommended to avoid conducting board business via email. Emails are public record.
- There are procedures for emergency meetings or closed meetings, if needed. These are rare.
- The Utah Board of Tourism Development allows for public comment at the end of a meeting but it is not required.

## **COMMUNITY and PARTNER RELATIONS REPORT**

**Diane Wilson**, Administrative Assistant, Utah Office of Tourism

[travel.utah.gov](http://travel.utah.gov) | updated industry website

- UOT has a consumer website and an industry website. The industry website is geared toward our Utah tourism industry partners, and a location to share resources and collaborative opportunities.
- Added video to home page, currently the ski ad, and will update this every few weeks.
- Featured areas on the home page are the blocks - what is hot, what is new.
- Bigger Utah Film Commission presence on updated site.
- Welcome feedback and suggestions from the board and industry partners.
- On the top toolbar, the *about us* page links to staff information and each team has their own page that introduces team members and what they do. Help partners get to know tourism and film staff better.
- The *opportunities* page has a lot of good information for partners.
- The *research* page is the most visited area and has a lot of information partners are looking for.
- Please subscribe to our monthly newsletter.
- Three different ways to search for something on the website. Go to the *teams* section, or through *opportunities* and *resources* tabs, or through the search bar.
- The website is being updated weekly, still developing and growing.
- Hope to add more industry photos with partners' faces to complement the scenic photos.

## **MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Ben Cook**, Director of Marketing & Communications, Utah Office of Tourism

Parks and Beyond - Spring Campaign

- UOT marketing efforts have the biggest impact in the awareness, consideration and evaluation phases of the customer journey.
- Types of media focused on during the campaign - paid, earned, owned and adding shared.
- Parks & Beyond winter campaign has completed and planning the launch of the spring campaign. Ski & Winter is currently running and Urban & Outdoors will begin later in the year.
- Goals of the Parks & Beyond spring campaign:
  - Inspire awareness and interest in a trip to Utah's parks and beyond in the spring and summer.
  - Increase average length of stay and spend per trip.
  - Educate visitors on responsible and prepared travel practices.
- Measure campaign success with Key Performance Indications (KPIs). Closely monitor brand awareness and look to maintain. The impressions and engagement give a good sense of how people are planning and preparing. Try to increase and optimize time on our website. Monitor how those that see our ads, spend more and stay longer.
- Targeted audiences for this campaign are enthusiasts, families and venturistas.
- Key messages and themes include love and connection as this is the third year with the *In Love, In Utah* campaign. Also breathtaking scenery and *The Mighty 5®* is our primary product message.
- Updated assets (video and banner ads) focusing on ventrurista and family audiences.
- Campaign budget is \$4.1M and the flight dates are 2/15/2025-5/30/2025
- Connected television (CTV) collaboration with Warner Brothers Discovery - includes HBO, Hulu. First destination (collaborating with Visit Park City and Visit Heber Valley) to run an ad campaign with them. They will share their data through Adara. Interested to see results of premium streaming platforms.
- Endemic partnerships with Lonely Planet, who is doing unique, long form content around Canyonlands. Canyonlands is on Lonely Planet's "most under rated parks list".

- Atlas Obscura opportunity for custom video content and custom articles on “Explorer’s Guide to National Parks”.
- Balanced media flow throughout campaign dates and also have paid search throughout the dates, too.

**Anna Loughridge**, Public Relations Manager, Utah Office of Tourism

**Marrissa Mallory**, Senior Vice President, J/PR

#### 2025 Public Relations Plan

- Public relations roll is to increase national and local media exposure to Utah’s tourism product. Utah is a top tier travel destination and showcasing all it has to offer. Play an active role in shaping and sharing the stories and end up in the headlines in the right way.
- J/PR has been working with UOT for more than six years.
- In 2024, 1.35B media impressions; 142 earned placements; average Barcelona Principles score of 91; hosted 16 media trips; and, 28% share of voice with 94% positive coverage. Hit or exceed all of the yearly goals.
- Showcased and supported 100 Years of Film in Utah and the media were very interested in the stories.
- Broadcast media highlights included Moab on the Today show.
- Created the 2025 editorial calendar by being proactive, tying into trends and getting in front of things in the media and it sets monthly headlines that will be pitched.
- Planned three media FAM trips this year including winter one that just wrapped, Moab and southern Utah in June and an urban adventure in the fall.
- Go to markets to share the Utah story, and 2025 media missions include Denver, Los Angeles, New York and Texas.
- When bringing media to Utah, like to create intimate, memorable experiences like silversmithing with Sundance or dark sky experience at Compass Rose Lodge.
- U.S. travel trends in the media landscape that also tie in with Utah include: taking detours to explore new areas off the beaten path, solo female travel and nature-based vacations.
- Media landscape is always changing. Journalists are doing more and more, with less. Many freelance writers work for travel publications so they need to get out and experience the adventure as they write. Working on deadlines further out and planning coverage 8-10 months ahead.
- Hotel and booking trends include shorter booking windows (4 weeks or less) but staying longer; increased emphasis on technology; and personalized and customized guest experiences.
- Jason Murray commented that conversations at IITA included some industry partners receiving pushback from Canada and wondered if seeing this trend in the media. Rachel Bremer is keeping a pulse on this with Heather and the Canadian team and not seeing concern from Canadian media. It is a very important market for Utah.

#### **UTAH FILM COMMISSION**

**Virginia Pearce**, Utah Film Commissioner

#### Incentive Program Allocation

- Utah Film Trail markers are being delivered and installed.
- Recent projects include *Standout: The Ben Kjar Story* that is premiering at Slamdance Film Festival at the end of February. This project did receive an incentive a few years ago.
- *The Electric State* did film in Utah but did not receive an incentive. Worked closely with Moab film commission and is being streamed on Netflix in March.
- The Super Bowl included a few made in Utah commercials including Oreos and Post Malone collaboration that was shot at the Utah Film Studio in Park City. One for Ritz crackers that was filmed at the Salt Flats.
- 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 18 projects so far in FY25 - 7 in the rural program, 6 in motion picture tax credit and 5 in motion picture cash rebate.

- The incentive program has awarded approximately \$8.7M this fiscal year which has resulted in almost \$38M in economic impact.

**MOTION: Nathan Rafferty motioned to approve \$3,150,113 for an incentive for the following productions which have met the criteria defined by statute. Kaitlin Eskelson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

Production	Estimated Utah Spend	Incentive Amount Per Production	Locations (county)
<i>Wild Horse Nine</i>	\$1,820,126	\$455,032	San Juan & Grand
<i>Home Turf</i>	\$2,000,000	\$500,000	Salt Lake
<i>Christmas on Duty</i>	\$2,000,000	\$500,000	Wasatch & Summit
<i>(Saint) Peter</i>	\$2,910,000	\$727,500	Salt Lake
<i>Zeus</i>	\$3,870,324	\$967,581	Grand
	\$12,600,450 TOTAL Spend	\$3,150,113 TOTAL Incentives	

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Natalie Randall**, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Official 2034 Olympic press event today announcing organizing committee leadership team members. Gives the tourism industry an opportunity to lean in and start working with the organizing committee.
- Just hit the one year mark in the role as managing director. Knew this role would be championing Utah's story and sharing why visitors should come to Utah. But also championing the overall statewide impact that the work of this team has on the entire state.
- Traveled with the CaPR team to St. George and spent time with the Greater Zion team. Attended the chamber's gala and presented the Red Emerald award to the Zion Forever Project.
- Experienced Sundance Film Festival with team and board members. A full page ad in the LA Times featured a "love letter to Sundance" signed by more than 80 statewide partners. Efforts to keep Sundance in Utah continue.
- Good news from the legislative session is that the film commission's cash incentive remains intact. It appeared on the "cut list" early but was removed.
- Initial recommendation was a \$5M cut to the Tourism Marketing Performance Fund (TMPF) but has been reduced to \$1.5M. Still needs to go through the Executive Appropriations Committee (EAC) for final approval.
- SB-12 is the bill to repel the sunset for this board and it passed. It was extended to July 1, 2030.
- HB-200 is a prioritization list if a federal government shutdown occurs. The Division of Outdoor Rec, which is housed under the Department of Natural Resources, role is to create the prioritization list for what public entities would stay open if a government shutdown occurs. UOT/GOEO role is supporting them when developing that list, and funding the areas the State would like to keep open. The only addition they have added is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which includes Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.
- HB-319 loops in the office of tourism into what public lands policy coordinating office (PLPCO) already does – manage the state resource plan. The goal of the bill is to elevate the importance of outdoor

recreation and tourism as public lands are managed. This allows tourism to provide official priorities to them and to have outdoor recreation and tourism as a part of the state resource plan.

- Staffing update: Rob Canfield is leaving our office and accepting a new, fulltime job with Go Heber Valley. Laici Shumway is joining the CaPR team. She is based in Moab and will work remotely from there.

## **UTIA UPDATE**

**Joan Hammer**, board member representing UTIA

- Tourism Day on the Hill was a great success and interaction with legislators was very productive.
- First TOUR caucus meeting was held on Tuesday, Feb. 11, and second meeting will be held on Feb. 25 at Millcreek Commons at 5:30pm.
- The legislative session remains very busy and UTIA appreciates all the efforts by industry partners to engage with their elected officials.
- Anticipate updates to the alcohol policy giving local governments additional proximity flexibility on assigning licenses (to schools, churches, libraries); portability in hotels and from common ownership bars to restaurants; wholesale pricing for licensees; wine service at on mountain licensees; and, 70/30 split. Isn't a bill yet but anticipate it soon.
- HB-256 is the short term rental (STR) bill and municipal zoning amendments. This is to take away what is known as the "Knotwell language". It modifies provisions that give municipalities and counties more authority. Can use the listing as evidence that STR are not in compliance.
- SB-91 is the restaurant tax revisions. Amends the restaurant tax to include portions of the grocery store that function like a restaurant. They will have to start paying restaurant tax, and adding in a convenience store piece.
- HB-456 is the transient room tax amendment. It modifies the outdoor rec mitigation grant program and the acceptable uses for transient room tax revenue. Defined tiered levels of how TRT could be used based on the amount that was collected. Expect adjustments and updates in the percentage that is used to establish and promote tourism by counties.
  - Commissioner Iverson shared his latest understanding of the bill language that stated a 1% TRT increase. Half of that 1% will go to the State; a quarter will go to a fund set up in DNR; and, the final quarter will go back to the counties. The bill is still fluid and more changes and conversations are occurring. The driving force for this bill is to assist rural counties with emergency services.
  - Natalie Randall clarified that there are two pieces of TRT being discussed – statewide TRT and county TRT.
  - Statewide TRT currently collects .325% and it goes into the Division of Outdoor Rec grant and the high school hospitality program. That will remain.
  - There will be a 1% increase on statewide TRT. It will become 1.325% and then 1% will be broken down as Commissioner Iverson explained.
  - On county TRT, based on the amount of TRT generated, counties will be expected to follow guidelines of establishing and promoting tourism, recreation, film production and conventions; paying for recreation related facilities, purchasing the facilities or securing the land; and, mitigating the impacts of tourism and recreation (solid waste disposal, EMS, search and rescue)
  - The establish and promoted piece will shift based on how much county TRT is collected.
  - Outdoor recreation mitigation was originally for class 4-6 counties. This bill would also include 3rd class counties. Piece that will add municipality representation on the TAB board.
  - Speculation is that half of the new 1% being collected in statewide TRT is for future projects like the 2034 Olympics.
  - Kaitlin Eskelson commented that hoteliers are starting to ask questions about this bill and wondering about talking points. UTIA is reaching out to many partners.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**