

Utah Board of Tourism Development
Meeting Minutes
Friday, August 11, 2023
Ken Garff Scholarship Club at Rice-Eccles Stadium
Salt Lake City, UT

Board Members Present Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Kaitlin Eskleson, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Graydon Pearson, Natalie Randall, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith, CJ Wade, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer

Board Members Virtual Jared Berrett, Jason Murray, Nathan Rafferty

Board Members Excused Melva Sine

UOT Staff Tera Atwood, Kevin Blomquist, Rachel Bremer, Ben Cook, Lorraine Daly, Becky Keeney, Anna Loughridge, Virginia Pearce, Sydney Sappenfield, Vicki Varela, David Williams, Liz Wilson-Peck, Heather Zang

Public Brittney Costello, Carrie Cox, Raelene Davis, Megan DeAngelis, Sydnie Furton, Joanie Hammer, Kaylin Jones, Nick Larson, Todd Jenson, Kylie Kullack, Dallas Miller, Chris Newton, Claire Petty, Falyn Owens, Jeanette Peatross, Gabe Schultz, Jen Shakespeare, Jonathan Smithgall, Ryan Starks, Mike Taylor, Maria Twitchell

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Kym Buttschardt called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked for introductions. She welcomed Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Ryan Starks and invited him to speak.

- Ryan Starks, who shared his Tourism background as an employee in Heber Valley Tourism, is a past member on the board. He has served on/worked on various boards and notes that Tourism is the most coveted board in state government.
- He welcomed the new board members and noted we need a unified voice and board to articulate the positive impact of the tourism industry – Tourism is Economic Development.
- Ryan said Governor Cox is very happy with the direction tourism is going. Keep on going and doing the good work, even with tricky conversations ahead, as the Governor is focused on supporting the industry.

MINUTES

MOTION: Jennifer Wesselhoff motioned to approve the June 9 board meeting minutes. Shayne Wittwer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Welcomed the new board members, a thoughtful process with a lot of recommendations.
- Two updates from the Outdoor Adventure Commission (OAC), legislature formed in 2020 to think about a long term strategy for outdoor recreation in the state. Important because it is congruent with our Red Emerald Strategy.
 - First, recognizing the mission of the UOT team of storytelling a beautiful message. Important as this is the first pillar of OAC strategy. UOT is charged to distill the story of responsible visitation for all outdoor recreation. A lot of work and collaboration ahead.
 - Secondly, we are moving toward recognition and responsibility for recreation management far beyond what can happen with TRT. Many of the people who need recreation assistance services are Utahns - not out-of-state visitors. Ideally the message to recreate responsibly will reduce the amount of assistance and services needed, but it still will be needed and funding will be paid through state revenues instead of accomplishing everything through TRT.
- Through legislative committee work, a change to how UDOT and UOT manage the scenic byways. The management will be the same between the groups but the committee will be in a working group and not by statute. Camille Johnson chairs the Scenic Byway Committee and she will continue to do so.
- Wednesday, Aug. 9, Vicki, Natalie Randall, Kaitlin Eskelson and Jennifer Leaver sat on a panel for the Kem C. Gardner newsmaker event on Utah Tourism Research & Outlook. This is part of an effort to get our story out to the general public much more frequently.
- Happy to announce that Love Communications has been selected as UOT's creative agency of record. Shifting to Love after 17 years with Struck.
- Few items regarding the Co-op Committee, outgoing board member Mike Taylor still dedicated hours to the committee following the end of his term. It was a year of transition with new staff (Camille Johnson and Kevin Blomquist) and new software program. Announced a new Co-op Marketing Committee Chair – Lesha Coltharp.
- The “In Love, In Utah” campaign had 2 million page visits, the first-time a campaign has hit that threshold. However, noted that these are challenging times for the visitor economy including National Park visitation numbers have flattened to pre-pandemic numbers (2019). Timed entry pilot program in Arches is something Natalie Randall and Vicki are exchanging information on, and working with the Public Land Policy Council to understand what we can do.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Becky Kenney, Director of Strategy, Utah Office of Tourism

- Red Emerald Strategic Plan developed in 2019 and launched in 2020. The plan has five imperatives and eighteen initiatives. UOT has an internal committee that plans for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Three strategic priorities for FY24 include community engagement, powerful branding and quality visitation.
- Community Engagement goal to engage leaders to support the visitor economy and the ways it improves Utahns' quality of life. Action items include working on quality local media coverage; expanded speakers bureau; targeted newsletters and social media; engage with Economic Opportunity Commission as tourism benefits the economy.
- Powerful branding goal to utilize campaigns to expand positive brand sentiment and awareness. Action items include get updated brand awareness measures (*Forever Mighty*[®], *Utah Life Elevated*[®], *The Greatest Snow on Earth*[®]), and ensure brands are represented and visible in campaigns.

- Quality Visitation goal is build a strong foundation for *Forever Mighty*[®] that provides purpose clarity, creates stakeholder buy-in and organizes the tools and resources. The action items will be to evaluate the brand, audit content, update the core principles, engage stakeholders for feedback and create resources.
- Commissioner Iverson inquired about the State assisting with data and information with communities so they better understand the positive impact the tourism industry has on the economy and resident's quality of life.

MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

FY2024 Marketing Plan

Ben Cook, Director of Communications & Marketing

- What is marketing? “Marketing is telling a story people want to hear” and where do we tell these stories? Three types of media - paid, earned and owned – that our campaigns cross. This is the very best way to market across the state. How do we do this? Consistency is important as it takes a lot of time to make impressions.
- Research and analysis helps to establish the best plan. Being in uncertain economic circumstances, consumers are still prioritizing travel but having to limit their spend when they do travel. Leisure travel has fully recovered from the pandemic, anticipating steady and strong growth. Remote workers are planning to travel and with a retirement boom, this group is eager to travel and less likely to cut back on what they spend.
- Utah looks at Arizona and Colorado as states that are also trying to tell a travel story similar to ours. Also think about Nevada, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.
- Our target audiences are the explorers, families, National Park visitors, achievers and skiers and snowboarders. There are micro audiences within these groups that we can really target.
- UOT's role in customer journey also needs the local DMOs and the industry partners (attractions, accommodations, restaurants, retail and transportation) to build consumer loyalty.
- The strategic priorities for marketing are to increase awareness that Utah is an exceptional, outdoor vacation destination; increase average length of stay and spend per trip among ad-exposed audiences; and, educate visitors on responsible and prepared travel practices.
- Three paid advertising campaigns for the year. First, National Parks and *The Mighty 5*[®], which inspires travel and activities in the south. The Ski campaign that promotes winters, *Greatest Snow on Earth*[®] and 15 ski resorts. Also Northern Utah campaign which promotes urban and outdoor adventures.
- Ongoing marketing and communication efforts include public relations and social media (earned), and website, creative content and email programs (owned).
- Jennifer Wesselhoff inquired what events are on UOTs radar for the upcoming communications planning year. Ben and Anna Loughridge mentioned Utah's 100 Years of Film, Dark Skies designations, Sundance, National Parks, and travel trends. Dave Williams also added the October eclipse as the National Parks are in the path of totality.
- Ben explained UOT follows a very vigorous process to determine how to spend marketing dollars - it is a lot and it is taxpayer money. Since 2005, we have worked with Strategic Marketing and Research Insights (SMARI), and for every campaign we run, they quantify it by telling us the return for every media dollar invested. As an organization, Vicki has challenged us to be very data-driven and measured.

MOTION: Jennifer Wesselhoff motioned to approve the Marketing Plan as presented and Kevin Smith seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

COOPERATIVE MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

Grant Recommendations

Kym Buttshardt, Cooperative Marketing Chair, Board of Tourism Development

- This year, had 63 applications and nine of those were below \$10K and could be reviewed by staff. The committee reviewed 54 applications and met for two days to do in-person and Zoom interviews. Funded 46 applications
- More than \$6.5M in requests but had \$4.7M to give away.
- Mike Taylor commented that the process is a commitment, but it is thoughtful, fair and has been perfected through the years. Every year it is re-evaluated.
- The grant recipient list was distributed to board members, staff and board meeting guests.
- Multiple board members announced their conflicts (see attached sheet)

MOTION: Lesha Coltharp motioned to approve the Round 23 Co-op Awards. Kaitlin Eskelson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

UTIA UPDATE

Natalie Randall, Executive Director, Utah Tourism Industry Association

- Recently wrapped up the August interim session. Will give a full update at the upcoming Utah Tourism Conference in September.
- The mission of UTIA is to be the collective voice for Utah's tourism industry, and two pillars to advocate and educate.
- Transient Room Tax (TRT) is back on the table this upcoming legislative session. However, it is optimistic as the conversations are that the tourism industry cannot hold all of the management responsibility. Work is being done by the Outdoor Adventure Commission and the TOUR caucus.
- UTIA has developed a partner toolkit after traveling around the state and meeting with industry participants and organizations. It will be launched at the tourism conference. It was developed so the messages are out there. It is helping partners to outline the positive impact tourism has throughout the state.
- Rolled out a quarterly survey in conjunction with Love Communications. Really look at what is happening at the local levels and listen to the stories in the industry.
- Upcoming tourism conference, Sept. 26-29, in St. George. Thank you to the Greater Zion Association for being gracious hosts and all of the planning energy.
- UTIA asked all the partners throughout the state to donate to the silent auction. The funds raised are used to create the education and advocacy work.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The next board meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 27 at 9:45 am, at the Dixie Convention Center in St. George, Utah

2023 Cooperative Marketing Grant Recipients

	Board Member Conflict Stated
Beaver County Travel Council	Natalie Randall
Blanding City	Jared Berrett, Natalie Randall
Brian Head Town	Natalie Randall
Business Owners of Bluff	Natalie Randall
Cache Valley Chamber of Commerce	Natalie Randall
Carbon County Government	Natalie Randall
Carbon County Government	Natalie Randall
Carbon County Government	Natalie Randall
Discover Davis	Natalie Randall
Discover Davis	Natalie Randall
Epicenter	Natalie Randall
Escalante Canyons Art Festival	
Friends of the Moab Folk Festival	
Garfield County Office of Tourism	Natalie Randall
Golden Spike Foundation	
Grand County Economic Development	Shayne Wittwer, Natalie Randall
Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office	Shayne Wittwer, Commissioner Iverson, Natalie Randall
Hale Center Theatre - Sandy	
Heber Valley Office of Tourism	Natalie Randall
Joe's Valley Fest	
Juab County Tourism and Travel	Natalie Randall
Kane County Office of Tourism & Film Commission	Natalie Randall
Kimball Art Center	Jennifer Wesselhoff
Loveland Living Planet Aquarium	
Museum of Moab	
National Ability Center	Jennifer Wesselhoff
Navajo Tourism Department	Natalie Randall
Ogden Friends of Acoustic Music (OFOAM)	Kym Buttschardt
Ogden Valley Adaptive Sports	
Ogden/Weber Convention and Visitor Bureau	Natalie Randall
Park City Chamber/Convention & Visitors Bureau	Jennifer Wesselhoff, Natalie Randall
Piute County Government	Natalie Randall
San Juan Co Office of Economic Development & Visitor Services	Jared Berrett, Natalie Randall
Ski Utah	Nathan Rafferty, Natalie Randall
Southern Utah National Parks	Shayne Wittwer, Natalie Randall
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Southern Utah University - Utah Shakespeare Festival	Natalie Randall
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife	
Tuacahn Center for the Performing Arts	Kevin Smith, Natalie Randall
Uintah County Travel and Tourism	Lesha Coltharp, Natalie Randall
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Utah Arts Alliance	
Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre	
Utah Metropolitan Ballet	
Utah Symphony & Opera	
Utah Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau- Airport	Natalie Randall
Utah Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau- Meetings	Natalie Randall
Utah Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau- Winter	Natalie Randall
Utah's Hogle Zoo	
Utahns for Culture dba Utah Cultural Alliance Foundation	Natalie Randall
Visit Cedar City - Brian Head	Shayne Wittwer, Natalie Randall
Visit Salt Lake	Kaitlin Eskelson, Natalie Randall
Wayne County Office of Tourism	Natalie Randall
Wayne County Office of Tourism	Natalie Randall
Weber Cultural Legacy Foundation dba GOAL Foundation	Kym Buttschardt