

**Utah Office of Tourism
Board Meeting
Friday, May 14, 2021
Online ZOOM Meeting**

Members Present: Lance Syrett, Kym Buttschardt, Dean Cox, Glen Overton, Jim Powell, Shayne Wittwer, Mike Taylor, Sara Toliver

Members Excused: Brian Merrill, Dirk Clayson, Nathan Rafferty, Greg Miller, Elaine Gizler

Staff: Vicki Varela, Julia Barnhouse, Becky Keeney, Dave Williams, Andrew Gillman, Anna Loughridge, Rachel Bremer, Bianca Lyon, Celina Sinclair, Denise Jordan, Flint Timmins, Haley Rodgers, Jody Blaney, Lorraine Daly

Visitors: Jonathan Smithgall, Chris Newton, Des Barker, Eric Thompson, Ethan Koehler, Joan Hammer, Justin Anderson, Kevin Lewis, Kylie Kullack, Lee Banov, Lizzy Duffy Anderson, Maria Twitchell, Martin Stoll, Megan Griffin, Melanie Marier, Molly O’Neill, Nicole Parara, Randy Rhodes, Robert Stephenson, Samantha Browning, Sara Otto, Stacie Boney, Sydnie Furton, Tom Love, Raelene Davis, Cody Draper, Monique Beeley

WELCOME

Lance Syrett called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

MOTION: KYM BUTTSCHARDT MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 9, 2021 MEETING THAT WAS HELD ONLINE VIA ZOOM. SHAYNE WITWTER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism (UOT), reported on the following items:

- Media interviews – UOT is receiving a lot of feedback from local residents that are critical of the office and tourism industry. It is essential to show strong leadership with the Red Emerald Strategic Plan and Forever Mighty content. The vandalism that happened in the petroglyphs in Moab is devastating and we are working with other land management teams to convey the importance of maintaining our environment and its history. A resident survey is being put together to ensure that we are aligned with the local community and their priorities.
- Legislative Special Session – Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will be distributed by the legislature in the upcoming special session. We have proposed that a tourism infrastructure fund be created with the money to create generational and statewide benefits in our tourism communities.
- EDA Grants – Flint Timmins secured an EDA grant for the office. There is \$75 million in funds available that will be distributed to tourism offices around the state in late May.

- Governor Cox has tasked Vicki to organize a strategy to generate a statewide perception campaign.

RED EMERALD STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Becky Keeney, Tourism Operations & Marketing Director, and Denise Jordan, Marketing Analytics & Research Manager, provided the following update:

- Vision: A state united in welcoming the world to experience soul-awakening adventure.
- Mission: to elevate life in Utah through responsible tourism stewardship.
- Imperatives:
 - Prioritize quality visitation, not simply quantity of visitors
 - Forever Mighty®
 - She Travels
 - Audience Research
 - Continued growth of custom audiences to improve social targeting between channels
 - Timely COVID-Recovery Response
 - EDA (Economic Development Administration) grant
 - Tread lightly partnership
 - GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) membership and resources
 - Responsible Travel
 - Visitor-facing COVID-19 travel alert and responsible travel information page
 - Intercom Chat
 - Distribute visitation
 - Establishing Key Messages
 - Innovative virtual media experiences to Keep Utah front of mind during COVID-19
 - Meet in Utah grant
 - TravelZoo Ship in Utah promotion program
 - Urban storytelling unique access to the outdoors
 - Southern Utah+ Winter campaign
 - Establishment and promotion of Dark Sky month
 - Traditional co-op expanded to include in-State opportunities
 - Continue powerful branding
 - Advancing EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) work
 - Community-focused partnerships with ambassadors, influencers, UGC, writers, video production talent
 - Website launch
 - Local media relations strategy
 - Southern Utah+ Renaissance campaign
 - 2020 campaign
 - Advertising creative excels at delivering the right message and the right time and generating interest in traveling to Utah.
 - 9.9M ad-aware households
 - Ad-influenced travel >920K ad-influenced Utah trips, with ~\$1.3B in economic impact.
 - 2021 campaign
 - >170K pageviews to VisitUtah.com

- ~\$6M in tracked hotel revenue, with an estimated overall revenue of ~\$79M
 - >4.6M hotel searches
 - Ski+ Get More Mountain Time campaign
 - Advertising creative excels (again!) at communicating key messages and ability to generate interest
 - 6.8M ad-aware households
 - >247K ad-influenced Utah Trips
 - ~\$557M in economic impact
 - Revamped international consumer marketing strategies to include tailored messaging, timing and markets
 - Utah U “online school” for media
- Enable community-led visitor readiness
 - Hired a partner relations lead
 - VisaVue partner program
 - Four destination development projects
 - Two for Heber Valley
 - In 2019, Heber Valley was one of the fastest growing communities in the country
 - Opportunities for residents(more jobs, ability to work where they live) and visitors(reservoirs, backcountry wilderness, family friendly events)
 - Desire to maximize assets while protecting what they love
 - What to watch:
 - County TRT
 - Lodging metrics
 - State Park and area points of interest
 - Community sentiment and visitor satisfaction
 - Employment
 - Visit Ogden
 - Emery County
- Improve organizational effectiveness
 - Investment in Travefy/streamlined FAM tools/best practices with FAM playbooks
 - Utilizing operations budget for ongoing contracted support (Juanita, Keaton, Arianna)
 - More frequent international rep communication increasing adaptability
 - Increased meetings with and industry reports for the marketing committee.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT & PARTNER RELATIONS UPDATE

Bianca Lyon, Director of Community and Partner Relations, Flint Timmins, Destination Development Lead, and Celina Sinclair, Partner Relations Lead all provided the following update ([presentation](#)):

- Red Emerald Strategic Plan
 - Prioritize Quality Visitors
 - Distribute Visitation
 - Continue Powerful Branding
 - Enable Community-led Visitor Readiness
 - Improve Organizational Effectiveness
- Destination Development & Management

- Destination Development – activities, investments, and decisions that increase and promote the quality of a destination
 - Our team works with communities and other stakeholders to coordinate the management and development efforts and improve visitor readiness.
 - We promote destination management and development at federal, state, and local levels.
- Destination Management – The policies, practices, and professional proficiencies related to the administration of a destination and its resource
- Together, this is often called Destination Stewardship
- Destination Development & Management
 - Destination Development Grants
 - Community Assessments
 - Branding & Marketing
 - Strategic Plan
 - EDA Grant – Destination Recovery Planning
 - Industry Toolkits
- Partner Relations
 - Works to develop and leverage partnerships across our state. This is done through industry communications, stakeholder collaboration, events/activations and resource development.
 - Our team is working to be more responsive to our local DMOs and other stakeholders.
 - New Position – Partner Relations Lead
 - Community Readiness Surveys
 - EDA Grant- Industry Training
 - Monthly DMO Lunch & Learns
- Sustainable Tourism & Responsible Visitation
 - Responsible Travel – the behavior and attitudes of individual travelers aspiring to make choices that promote sustainable tourism practices
 - Sustainable Tourism – tourism that takes full account of economic, social, and environmental impacts to a destination.
 - Ecotourism – a niche segment of tourism that focuses on the environment and nature, particularly natural areas
 - UOT’s Red Emerald Strategic Plan promotes sustainable tourism and wants to attract responsible travelers.
 - Our team lead out on encouraging partners and stakeholders to practice sustainable tourism.
 - Membership in Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)
 - Staff are working toward individual GSTC certifications
 - Master’s intern from U of U Parks, Recreation and Tourism (PRT) gathered industry data and stakeholder sentiment on sustainable tourism in Utah.
 - EDA Grant – Forever Mighty® Marketing
 - Forever Mighty® is the consumer-facing initiative that implements the Red Emerald Strategic Plan by encouraging responsible travel and sustainable tourism.
 - Our team is leading out on developing and sharing Forever Mighty® with visitors, residents and industry.
 - Forever Mighty Traveler Ethics
 - Practicing responsible and prepared travel and Leave No Trace principles
 - Fostering pride in place, as locals and visitors
 - Supporting local businesses and immersing yourself in communities while traveling.

- Welcoming travelers from all backgrounds, races and abilities, and ensuring they feel comfortable, safe and inspired during their visit
- Visiting off-the-beaten-path destinations
- Forever Mighty®
 - EDA grant - Forever Mighty® Marketing Campaign launching in May-June
 - New Forever Mighty® Marketing Co-op to support partners' responsible visitation campaigns and initiatives
 - Partnerships with Tread Lightly! and the Utah Symphony

INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Rachel Bremer, Tourism Global Markets Director and Haley Rodgers, Global Content & Tour Specialist, provided the following update ([presentation](#)):

- International Outlook
 - AMS (Amsterdam) resumes May 27 – 4x weekly. Daily services resume June 5.
 - CDG (Paris) daily service resumes September 8, 2021
 - YYZ (Toronto) daily service resumes September 7, 2021
 - YVR (Vancouver) daily service resumes July 7, 2021
 - YYC (Calgary) daily service resumes July 7, 2021
 - China
 - United Airlines – SFO-Seoul-Shanghai
 - American Airlines – Seoul – Shanghai
 - Delta Airlines – Shanghai – Seattle
- Industry Updates/Borders/Recovery
 - EU tour operators are pre-selling and marketing for the '22 season now
 - Positive vaccine rollouts in the US have improved US sentiment
 - Canada 50% 1st dose
 - “Green” Passport for EU countries
 - UK has moved the US to the “Amber” classification
 - Trans-Tasman Bubble = consumer confidence
 - China domestic tourism boom/ Glamping on the rise in China (160% YOY increase)
- FAM Tour Innovations
 - Hosted US-based UK journalist in March '21
 - Award-winning British travel writer Aaron Millar was commissioned to write an exclusive feature in UK's Nat Geo Traveler about a family road trip through southern Utah, traveling with an Airstream trailer, visiting some of the Mighty 5® & exploring the in between, with a special interest in dark skies. His 2,500-word feature is scheduled to run over approximately 6-7 pages in the July/August '21 issue.
 - Refreshing our itineraries
 - Our itineraries were outdated – printed paper & emailed PDF as well as inefficient use of time to create this way
 - Presenting itineraries this way wasn't user-friendly for the visitor
 - We wanted to show imagery, include clickable links/addresses, provide confirmations without providing so much paperwork, etc.
 - Travefy was selected (see presentation for examples)

- Travel Trade Innovations
 - FY21 Virtual Sales Missions
 - Executed
 - Australia/NZ April 27th & 28th
 - Germany/Switzerland May 4th & 5th
 - Coming Soon
 - France/Belgium June 1st & 2nd
 - UK/Ireland June 8th & 9th
 - FY21 Travel Trade Training
 - Train and engage with key travel trade & media
 - Shanghai
 - Brand USA/US Consulate General
 - Delta/United/AA
 - Guangzhou
 - United/AA
 - Beijing
 - US Embassy & China Consulates
 - Delta
 - FY21 B2B Training Portal & Resource Center
 - B2B site that serves as an all-inclusive resource for planning, product development and educations
 - Assets, itineraries, webinars, agent training, supplier updates, and other resources
 - Measured success
 - Conversion rates, engagement rates, completion rates
 - Event/campaign source codes/tracking
 - Retention/market specific metrics
 - Red Emerald
 - Informed, educated industry
 - Increased length of stay, improved visitor experience
 - Dual-purpose capability Forever Mighty® Ambassadors

MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, provided the following update (note – there were many graphs displayed that are available by viewing the [presentation](#)):

- Traveler Trends
 - 51.6% of travelers reported that they felt traveling outside of the United States was either somewhat unsafe or very unsafe.
 - 70.3% of consumers report that they would be excited to travel for a weekend getaway in the next three months. Another 71.6% are excited to learn about new travel experiences or destinations to visit.
 - Trip Advisor’s Tourism Sentiment Index
 - This is a new tool that we can use that crawls news sites, social media platforms, and more to better understand the conversations occurring around tourism at a larger scale.
 - We are able to tap into the volume of conversation around certain topics and destinations, as well as the sentiment of those conversions.

UTIA UPDATE

Lance Syrett provided the update on Natalie Randall's behalf:

- The Tourism Conference is scheduled for August 10-13 2021 in Ogden, UT. Registration opens on Monday, May 17, 2021.
- Des Barker is working with UAC regarding TRT issues.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Dean Cox – Commissioner Cox is stepping down from the Board of Tourism Development.

Tom Love – The Utah Symphony and Utah Office of Tourism will be announcing a Forever Mighty Symphony Tour at the Utah State Capitol on Monday, May 27th.

MEETING ADJOURNED