

**UTAH OFFICE OF TOURISM**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, May 12, 2023  
Homestead Resort, Midway, UT

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Board Members Present Lance Syrett, Nathan Rafferty, Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Greg Miller, Mike Taylor, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer

Board Members Virtual Sara Toliver

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Board Members Excused Jared Berrett, Brian Merrill, Jordan Smith, Glen Overton

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UOT Staff Tera Atwood, Rachel Bremer, Ben Cook, Lorraine Daly, Zach Fyne, Kim Heys, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Kenney, Vicki Varela, David Williams, Liz Wilson, Heather Zang

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Public Brittney Costello, Judy Cullen, Megan DeAngelis, Sydnie Furton, Susan Hayward, Kaylin Jones, Kylie Kullack, Dallin Koecher, Ethan Kohler, Nick Larsen, Tom Love, Tommy Joe Lucia, Becky McRae, Chris Newton, Natalie Randall, Jen Shakespeare, Marianne Shiner, Jonathan Smithgall,

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**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Lance Syrett** called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

**Dallin Koecher, Executive Director** of Heber Valley Tourism, Economic Development and Chamber of Commerce, welcomed everyone to the area.

**MINUTES**

**MOTION: Mike Taylor** motioned to approve the April 14, minutes from the meeting that was held in Helper, UT. **Kym Buttschardt** seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

**MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT**

**Vicki Varela**, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Headlined that Natalie Randall was honored as one of 30 Women to Watch by Utah Business. This, plus Sara Toliver recently awarded the Athena, is one of many symbols that our industry is capturing a lot of attention, and we have strong, dedicated leaders.
- UTIA trip to Washington, D.C., this week with a strong contingent of tourism leaders and a detailed agenda with many congressional meetings. One targeted item is to determine next steps with National Parks – working through the bureaucracy and the need for more funding. John Tanner, who is in a senior leadership position in the Department of Interior, has done great thinking, and we will collaborate with him and others on the Great American Outdoors Act next

round of funding. There are ways to improve how money is distributed and the transparency of how it is spent. This could lead to an opportunity for Utah to get a bigger share.

- Team of UOT staff attended Western States Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (WESTO) recently at Lake Tahoe. Our team learned many things but also came away feeling proud of the unique ways we do things. One is the EDA money that Camille, Celina, Lorraine and others are working so hard on to get that money into the local communities. The easy way would be for the state to spend all of that money but that is not what Utah has done. The focus is to help communities advance their priorities. Another is our Co-op grants that are not formulated but instead we ask, “What is it that you want to do locally and how can we match your dollars?”

## **COMMUNITY & PARTNER RELATIONS UPDATE**

**Camille Johnson**, Director of Community and Partner Relations, Utah Office of Tourism

- Noted that Celina Sinclair returned from maternity leave, May 1. Currently interviewing for a grant specialist that is mostly funded by the EDA grant. Still looking to hire a Destination Lead, replacing Flint. Nan Anderson has been a great addition to help with the EDA program.
- Much time has been spent engaging with partners and driving around the state to meet community leaders. Attended parts of the Governor’s Connecting Utah Tour; participated in Utah Association of Counties events; One Utah Summit and WESTO.
- Also focusing on internal communication as we all get busy doing our job and forget to share that we are doing our job. Take time to brag about all things the UOT is doing with the state and partners. Important to find those opportunities to communicate more.
- Spending time working with and establishing relationships with other state agencies.
- Doing outreach with the Division of Outdoor Recreation and understanding their grants. There are so many grants and opportunities throughout the state but we are not always connecting the dots and how to best leverage those grants.
- Good discussions with the Public Lands Policy Coordination Office (PLPCO) about the Zion community and their vision. We are trying to support communities, like Zion, as they come up with the best solution.
- Commissioner Iverson explained that the Zion community is open to a partial reservation system on certain hikes but access to the canyon and the park remain open. Zion is a large park where everyone is funneled to a narrow canyon so working to find the best solution to disperse visitors. Asking the park to first gather good, thorough data so a successful plan can be formulated. NPS wants to do a reservation system year round but the community has worked hard to build up the shoulder season and feels that (reservation system) could take it away. The infrastructure was built in the 1930s so it needs upgrades, as well.
- UDOT and scenic byway conversations are occurring.
- Working with five outreach managers from GOEO to coordinate efforts and training them on our co-op process.
- Each community is ever-changing so we are looking to do community audits to help establish goals, projects, identify pain points and what programs we can create to help with DMO needs. Also have a goal to do more community outreach and education.
- Three opportunities for EDA grants. Round one is being reviewed and then the EDA will look at it. Round two will open on June 15.

## **FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 BUDGET REVIEW & APPROVAL**

**David Williams**, Associate Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

**Becky Keeney**, Director of Strategy, Utah Office of Tourism

- Going through the budget yearly is a ritual and UOT takes it very seriously. We've been fortunate to have a strong, healthy budget - which took a lot of work from the whole industry. We accomplish a lot with this money so we make sure it is spent wisely to benefit our industry.
- For FY24 (begins July 1), we have the same budget as last year - \$22,822,800. You will see an overview of the programs planned. But at future board meetings, we will go into more detail of how we are spending the money within those programs..
- The Sports Commission is allocated 10 percent (\$2,282,280) and 20 percent (\$4,564,560) is allocated through the Co-op grant process to communities and partners. The remaining 70 percent equals \$15,975,960.
- We have the same amount of money next year, however, we will not have the same amount to carry forward as we had during the Covid years (FY21, FY22). Great news is with international travel increasing, we have been able to spend most of our budget.
- Asking for approval of this budget today, and then our staff will take these breakouts and define our plans - which include strategies, goals and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- The key areas include Agency Retainers, Research and Development and items that are constant: social media, pay per click (PPC), search engine optimization (SEO), travel guides, trade shows/missions, email marketing.
- Campaigns are Northern Utah + Sponsorships; Southern Utah + Domestic; Southern Utah + International & Travel Trade; Ski + Domestic; and Ski + International.
- Northern Utah sponsorship of Utah Days of '47 Cowboy Games remains at \$150,000. FY23 had carried forward from FY22, so we only spent \$50k of budget.

## **SPONSORSHIP REQUEST & PRESENTATION**

**Tommy Joe Lucia**, Executive Director, Utah Days of 47 Rodeo

- Working to make it a destination location rodeo - not just a big Utah rodeo. Over the last seven years that has been our goal, and now we are one of the events that rodeo fans want to come to.
- Branding changed to Utah Days of 47 Rodeo and our messaging is saying "come to Utah".
- In 2022, rodeo had a 19 percent increase in ticket sales; 59 percent more television viewers.
- CBS did a one hour highlight show and it was repeated.
- Economic impact (completed by third party) was \$2.55M.
- Originally UOT asked Tommy Joe Lucia to go through the Co-op process but a few circumstances - including Bryce Canyon celebration - have gone through TMPF for sponsorships. UOT knew we wanted to fund this and taking money away from the Co-op hurt our partners/DMOs. Mike Taylor and Lance Syrett recalled the recommendation came out of the Co-op Marketing Committee.

**MOTION: Nathan Rafferty moved to fund the sponsorship request from Utah Days of 47 Rodeo (\$150,000) and approve the UOT's proposed breakdown of the TMPF of \$22,822,800. Mike Taylor seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

## **UTIA UPDATE**

**Natalie Randall**, Executive Director, Utah Tourism Industry Association

- Legislative Updates: May interim is next week. Industry partners will be active with it as some of us are in D.C. for AHLA.
- TOUR caucus is meeting on May 16 with focus being more on outdoor recreation topics, including meeting with UDOT and Utah Avalanche Center.

- May 17 will be the interim committee meetings, noting the Economic Development Workforce Services Interim Committee. They have many priorities but a few of them include tourism topics. They also will be hearing from the Film Commission on the rural film incentive.
- The Utah Tourism Delegation will begin this year rotating schedules for D.C. visit in conjunction with AHLA or U.S. Travel. UTIA is a partner with both organizations. This year falls during AHLA and we have a strong lodging delegation. Key topics in addition to National Parks, workforce shortages, visa program and the Legal Immigration and Border Enforcement Reform This Year (LIBERTY) Campaign. We did sign on with many chambers and industry groups, and it is a call to action for Congress to do something about the workforce shortages and the visa pain points we are experiencing.
- UTIA signed on to the Capital Access Alliance (CAA), a Delta coalition with all the Delta hub states encouraging an increase for more flights into Reagan National Airport (DCA). Unique legislation that passed many years ago that limited the number of flights going into the Nation's Capital due to air pollution, sound and many layers. Opportunity now to adjust some of those flights.
- Utah Tourism Conference registration is now open and early bird pricing closes June 30. Will launch destination discovery activities soon. Sponsorship, exhibitor and vendor opportunities are live and room blocks are open as well. All details can be found at [utahtourismconference.com](http://utahtourismconference.com).

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Lance Syrett reminded the group that the next board meeting will be at Bryce Canyon on June 9 and celebration of the park's 100-year anniversary on June 8.
- Nathan Rafferty shared that ski season is still rolling. This year's all-time record of 903" of snow. Still open are Brighton, Snowbird, Solitude, Woodward and Sundance is reopening for this weekend, Mother's Day. The National Skiers Association announced at a recent conference that the all-time record of skier day numbers - 64 million.

#### **MEETING ADJOURNED**

*The next board meeting will be held on Friday, June 9, 2023 at Bryce Canyon City, Utah.*