

Utah Board of Tourism Development

Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 20, 2023

Brigham Academy Center

Brigham City

Board Members Present	Kym Buttschardt, Nathan Rafferty, Jared Berrett, Lesha Coltharp, Jason Murray, Graydon Pearson, Melva Sine, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith
Board Members Virtual	Jennifer Wesselhoff
Board Members Excused	Kaitlin Eskleson, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Natalie Randall, CJ Wade, Shayne Wittwer
UOT Staff	Tera Atwood, Jody Blaney, Kevin Blomquist, Rachel Bremer, Rachel Creer, Ben Cook, Lorraine Daly, Sorell Grow, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Todd Tanner, Vicki Varela, David Williams, Diane Wilson, Liz Wilson-Peck, Heather Zang
Public	Candance Anderson, Mayor DJ Bott, Julie Comstock, Lynnette Crockett, Brandon Flint, Andi Ford, Sydnie Furton, Rep. Matthew Gwynn, Joan Hammer, Corinna Harris, Jonathan Harris, Todd Jenson, Nick Larson, Paul Larsen, Zach LeFevre, Brian Masingale, Mike Dunphy, Com. Lee Perry, Jan Rhodes, Elise Richards, Jonathan Smithgall, Rep. Tom Peterson, Marissa Valdez

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Chair **Kym Buttschardt** called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Box Elder County Tourism Director Joan Hammer welcomed everyone and introduced community leaders in attendance:

DJ Bott, Mayor of Brigham City

Lee Perry, Box Elder County Commissioner

Matthew Gwynn, State Representative, District 6

Tom Peterson, State Representative, District 1

MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Recognized Joan Hammer for her induction into the Tourism Hall of Fame.
- Thanked the community stakeholders for taking time to attend the meeting.
- Shared that the Co-op Marketing Committee met and recognized that there was \$1.8M more requested than was available to allocate. Committee members, led by Chair Lesha Coltharp, will continue to work to refine the strategy and process and keep partners engaged.
- The Marketing Committee (Nathan Rafferty, Chair; Jennifer Wesselhoff and Shayne Witwer) is adding technical experts - Raelene Davis, Ski Utah; Jessica Merrill, Discover Davis; and, Elaine

Gizler, San Juan County. They will join two new board members - Jason Murray and Natalie Randall.

- Continue to monitor closely the November 17 government shutdown. Communicating and negotiating with the Department of Interior and working on best messaging to not disrupt visitor experience if the shutdown occurs.
- Recently, at the Governor's One Utah Summit, Camille Johnson represented us well by telling the tourism strategic story and how it integrates with all the great outreach work being done.
- The Outdoor Recreation Commission, which Vicki serves on, and Jordan Smith are working hard to make Utah the center of outdoor recreation by investing properly, building infrastructure and having a clear strategy.
- Dave Williams and Rachel Bremer are representing Utah Office of Tourism on the Governor's Trade Mission to Mexico, Oct. 21-25.

MINUTES

MOTION: Jason Murray motioned to approve the September 27, 2023, board meeting minutes. Lesha Coltharp seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

MOTION TO APPROVE NEW ATTENDANCE POLICY

Kym reviewed the proposed new attendance policy and opened it up for discussion.

This policy applies to each board member for scheduled meetings each fiscal year (July-June):

- *Physically attend 60% of in-person meetings (3 out of 5 meetings).*
- *Attend 60% of virtual meetings (3 out of 5 meetings).*
- *Four (4) missed meetings results in chair and/or vice chair recommending a replacement to the governor*

MOTION: Nathan Rafferty motioned to adopt the board attendance policy. Jason Murray seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

COMMUNITY and PARTNER RELATIONS UPDATE

Camille Johnson, Community & Partner Relations Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Introduced new, complete Community and Partner Relations (CAPR) team - Rachel Creer, Partner Relations Specialist; Todd Tanner - Destination Development Specialist; Kevin Blomquist, Grants Compliance Specialist; Diane Wilson, Administrative Assistant.
- Red Emerald Strategy is named after the gem found only in Utah. It is rare, precious and highly sought after. The CAPR team is working hard to put the plan in action.
- Completed round 23 of the Co-op Marketing Grants and the committee will continue to refine the process.
- Providing toolkits on the industry website - travel.utah.gov - to assist our industry partners.
- Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants are available to assist communities conducting feasibility and economic impact studies; product development studies; and, implementation grants.
- CAPR communicates with the travel industry through a dedicated website, newsletter and surveys.
- Continued work with many organizations to network with communities, partners and other state agencies. Presented at many events including the Governor's One Utah Summit, Outdoor Recreation Summit and many chamber meetings.
- Board members were given a symbolic red emerald and tasked with finding a way to prop it up or display it in a way that represents how they are supporting the goals of the Red Emerald Strategy.

TRAVEL TRENDS UPDATE

Becky Keeney, Director of Strategy, Utah Office of Tourism

Jonathan Smithgill, Executive Vice President, Digital Marketing & Media, Love Communications

- Gas prices are dropping nationwide.
- Only 28.1% of travelers feel it is a good time to spend money on leisure travel. This is much lower than July of 2021 when 44.6% felt it was a good time.
- The Gen X generation (41-56 years old) are one of the highest spenders that visit Utah and almost 45% of that group lists travel as too expensive.
- Recent consumer price inflation has led 32% to cancel upcoming travel plans. This is up from 23.2% in April of 2022. Board members reported on whether this trend was holding true in their areas.
- Lesha Coltharp shared that her areas were seeing that travelers were limiting the number of trips taken. For example, instead of a fall break and spring break, summer trips were the main/only travel times. Projections for summer reported well but cancellations for the fall definitely occurring.
- Jason Murray shared bookings for his business (medium-sized) have stayed consistent from last year to current. Also trending up into 2024. Larger outfitters and tour operators have had more groups cancel this year than last year.
- Jared Berrett shared that bookings have softened for his business - Bluff Dwellings and Wild Expeditions - in Southeastern Utah. Bookings are similar to last year but a few percentage points lower. Since covid, it is a lot more difficult to project and plan. People book more at the last minute.
- Jennifer Wesselhoff reported that Wasatch, Utah and Juab counties haven't seen a lot of cancellations related to inflation but a significant drop in booking numbers. Park City was very soft in the previous season (May-September) compared to last summer (which was a record summer). Bookings for late fall and winter are tracking very well.
- Although the cost of traveling is top of mind, 92% plan to travel in the next 6 months.
- Travel planning window remains short with a mean of 6.2 weeks, and more than 50% plan only a month or less in advance.
- Nationwide community sentiment toward tourism making places better to live is almost 50 percent. Only 16 percent of respondents disagreed.
- In the resident sentiment survey, the West region of the country reported almost 52% feel tourism makes their communities better.

MARKETING UPDATE

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

Syndie Furton, Group Account Director, Tourism, Love Communications

- Utah Office of Tourism role in the customer journey includes awareness and consideration. It is important for all in the industry to think about the influence we all have on visitors' experiences.
- Marketing strategic priorities for the year - increase awareness and consideration of Utah; increase average length of stay and spend per trip; and, educate visitors on responsible and prepared travel practices.
- Three campaigns: Southern Utah/*The Mighty 5*[®], Ski/*The Greatest Snow on Earth*[®], and Northern Utah/Urban & Outdoors.
- Campaign results for Southern Utah (the winter flight). For 22/23 campaign, marked 550k ad exposed page views which was a 41% increase from 21/22.
- Same budget for this year's campaign with flight dates of 9/15/2023 to 1/30/2024.
- Campaign is live and seeing a very strong performance. Media plan includes connected television (Hulu, Netflix, streaming services); programmatic display; and, endemic and native.
- Target markets are regional including Washington, Wyoming, Nevada, Oregon, Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, California, New Mexico and Texas.

- Campaign is built with flexibility so the targets can ebb and flow based on results.
- Reflecting on the 22/23 Ski campaign, it reached 6.7M targeted households and influenced 453K ski trips. Top of mind awareness is a metric we track and Utah's mind share was 47%. The average trip spend was \$200 higher for people that saw our ads, as well as the average number of activities were higher.
- Ski campaign has also been launched. Although the same budget as last year, Love can optimize and keep the campaign very efficient, so we hope to increase top of mind consideration and *The Greatest Snow on Earth®* brand awareness.
- Media plan channels include connected TV, out of home/environmental (billboards, benches, programmatic pre-roll and display (ads when you are scrolling online or the video you might have to watch before watching online video). Endemic (ad placement that is natural to industry like Outside.com) and native (ad that connects to visitutah.com) partnerships have expanded.
- Target markets are more national and interest-based (skiing and snowboarding)
- Strategy will focus on competitive targeting, increased presence on online travel agencies (TripAdvisor), repeat travelers.
- The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently released an update to precipitation outlook and it does include heavier than normal for Utah.
- Launching a new ski landing page – visitutah.com – created by Hanson Dodge. An immersive experience with great video elements and personalization options.
- Nathan Rafferty commented the campaign plans are awesome and complimented the team for creative efforts and leadership.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Lesha Coltharp reported that PhenomeCon was in September and the Haunted Hotel, which is all for charity, is going on in Vernal right now.
- Tuacahn is doing Disney's Frozen next year. We've doubled the number of season ticket packages already. It runs May-October 2024.
- Jared Berrett reported about the solar eclipse in San Juan County. Bluff Dwellings hosted 55 NASA personnel for the entire week. Huge influx of people to the region but traffic was manageable.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The next board meeting will be held on Friday, Nov. 17 at 10 am, at the RJ Law Building in Delta.