

Utah Board of Tourism Development
Meeting Minutes
Friday, November 17, 2023
RJ Law Community Building, Delta

Board Members Present Kym Buttschardt, Nathan Rafferty, Jared Berrett, Lesha Coltharp, Kaitlin Eskelson, Jason Murray, Graydon Pearson, Melva Sine, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer

Board Members Virtual Graydon Pearson, CJ Wade

Board Members Excused Jordan Smith

UOT Staff Tera Atwood, Rachel Bremer, Rachel Creer, Ben Cook, Zach Fyne, Sorell Grow, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Sydney Sappenfield, Todd Tanner, Vicki Varela, David Williams, Diane Wilson, Heather Zang

Public Commissioner Vicki Lyman, Commissioner Bill Wright, Julie Comstock, Lynnette Crockett, Megan DeAngelis, Brandon Flint, Andi Ford, Annie Frand, Sydnie Furton, Todd Jenson, Ethan Koehler, Nick Larson, Becca Mielke, Kevin Morris, Chris Newton, Jonathan Smithgall, Rachel West

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

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

Kevin Morris, Millard County Tourism Director, welcomed all to Delta. He introduced new Tourism Director Rachel West, who is replacing Kevin (retiring) on January 1, 2024. He also introduced Commissioners Vicki Lyman and Bill Wright. Brandi Roberts, Executive Director of the Great Basin National Heritage Area, welcomed the group as well.

- Millard County is home to Utah’s first [Territorial State House](#).
- Has the second-highest shear slip peak in North America - Notch Peak.
- The trilobite fossil site (U-dig) is the biggest attraction to visitors.

MINUTES

MOTION: Jason Murray motioned to approve the October 20, 2023, board meeting minutes. Lesha Coltharp seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

The 2024 meeting schedule was distributed to board members. (Also attached to these minutes).

MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Thanked the board for traveling to Delta for the meeting - 13 in attendance - and complimented the higher-quality meeting experience by being together.
- Recognized that Ethan Koehler, Vice President of Experience and Technology at Hanson Dodge (HD) traveled from Denver to be at the meeting. HD finds great value from board meetings and plans to send a person to all scheduled, in-person board meetings.
- Introduced Community and Partner Relations recent staff additions - Rachel Creer, Partner Relations Specialist and Todd Tanner, Destination Development Specialist.
- The Outdoor Adventure Commission has been working to define its strategic plan and it will rollout over the next month. The plan will invest allocated funds in the recreation infrastructure. Todd (Tanner) will be working with board members and DMO partners to make sure they are aware \$19M in grants will be allocated through the OAC strategic plan by the end of the year. Another \$19M in grants will be available in early 2024. Destination development is coming together in thoughtful ways as partnerships between our office and other infrastructure experts (building out campgrounds, trail systems, etc.) work together. The Commission's principles are being done right so our residents will enjoy outdoor recreation and be welcoming to visitors..
- Announced that state per diem will shift to the dynamic federal model over the next year.
- Scenic Byway Committee update is that the governor and legislature has asked for efforts in taking committees and commissions out of statute and trust agencies to collaborate and solve problems. We have been working with UDOT to establish a system where Scenic Byway matters will be handled through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). In the proposed statute form, the committee adds a seat for a billboard representative.
- Relief that the government shutdown has been averted. A lot of work went into anticipating different scenarios. Office has become experts by working with different administrations with different strategies. We now have a toolkit so Utah will show remarkable national leadership for any scenario.
- If future government shutdowns occur, state will pay for operations to keep our national parks - *The Mighty 5*[®] - open during high visitation windows. We have the governor's full support of this. Ryan Starks and the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity has a fund that they could access, up to \$5M, to make this happen.
- The Speaker of the House changed this week. Brad Wilson has been a remarkable friend and advocate, and has provided enormous guidance to our industry over time. We are looking forward to working with Mike Shultz. He is not as familiar and engaged in tourism but we look forward to building that relationship. I suggest we put together a proclamation thanking Brad Wilson for his contribution.

BOARD MEMBER INDUSTRY UPDATES

Shayne Wittwer

The hotel occupancy rates are very high here in Millard County tied to industry projects and it is pushing into surrounding counties. Beaver continues to be steady matching previous years numbers. Washington County is seeing the same occupancies but average daily rates (ADR) are down. Booking patterns are changing constantly. There are a lot of projects happening in the center of our state so the TRT collection is coming from construction.

Lesha Coltharp

In Uinta, we have a lot of oil and gas industry workers staying in our hotels so the ADR is up and the occupancy is up compared to last year. They aren't tourists but they are visitors - staying in hotels and eating at our restaurants. In Daggett County, winter fly fishing is an attraction and they are holding steady.

Jason Murray

In Grand County, we had a really good meeting organized by the Public Land Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO) talking about timed entry at Arches. Hotel partners were engaged and shared their occupancy rates and they have been down.

Jared Berrett

In San Juan County we are down a little bit. This time of year is difficult for the southeastern counties and they are always working hard to bring events.

Kevin Smith

Sporting events in our area are increasing and will be a bigger part of tourism in Washington County. Tuacahn, this past summer season, was a little bit down. The Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City saw that as well. Although apprehension due to inflation is reported, we are seeing a resurgence for December and next year. Indoor Christmas show is 95% sold and it hasn't started yet. That has never happened. Because of the show line up for next season (Frozen), we have sold double the number of season tickets. We have to pay close attention to programming because even during tough financial times, people want to be entertained and still have fun.

GOVERNOR'S TRADE MISSION TO MEXICO

Dave Williams, Associate Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

Rachel Bremer, Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Goals of the mission to develop trade relationships with Mexico, and tourism was a large part of the conversation. A lot of the governor's time was focused on tourism.
- Adding direct flights from Mexico City and Monterrey to Salt Lake City on Aeromexico.
- Utah gets a lot of visitors from Mexico and there is a lot of opportunity there. In 2022 we had 32,000 Mexico visitors. This is an increase of almost 25% from 2021.
- Data research is forecasting a 44% growth in visits from Mexico from 2019-2027, as well as an increase of almost 28% in dollars spent.
- Spent the first three days in Mexico City and then spent the final days in Monterrey and scheduled 18 travel trade meetings.
- Arranged meeting with Mexico's Minister of Tourism and Gov. Cox. The minister and his wife have family that own a home in Park City and enjoy visiting.
- Public relations efforts while there included a media brunch with more than 40 top media, Gov. Cox and delegation members. We have seen earned media coverage from this. The governor also did one-on-one interviews.
- Next steps for UOT include hosting two Mexican journalists and two travel trade representatives; in the spring launching a digital media campaign with Price Travel/Televisa Brand USA; travel back to Mexico in January 2024 with Brand USA; and evaluating additional opportunities to expand efforts in this market.
- Biggest draw for travelers from Mexico to come to Utah is skiing and winter.
- Commissioner Iverson noted that Mexico has a large middle class and a lot of opportunity is there and glad to know Utah is aware of it.

MARKETING UPDATES

Campaign Updates

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

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

- Ski Campaign was started more than a month earlier than in the previous years so ad expose views are down 38% compared to the first month last year. Not concerned since the efforts of earlier launch were to spur early bookings.
- The ADR is up 26% compared to the first 30 days of last year's campaign.

- Campaign efficiency is performing better than it did at the start last year.
- The top markets booking (outside of Utah) are Denver, New York, San Francisco and Washington D.C.
- Southern Utah/Winter campaign is live (Sept. 15, 2023-Jan. 31, 2024). Ad expose page views are down 15% but we've been able to track the decrease to Utah.com so we will do some troubleshooting
- Hotel revenue generated is up \$2.3M.
- Campaign efficiency for driving visitors to [visitutah.com](https://www.visitutah.com) is doing very well - up 11%..
- Southern Utah/Winter creative is now aligned with our In Love, In Utah spring creative which was very successful.
- Shared the new [ski landing page](#). Highlights include great footage, personalized options for type of skier, live snow tracker and an immersive, magical experience as you scroll through. Preliminary data is showing that the scroll depth is deep. Acknowledged the hard work of Hanson Dodge and UOT's web editor Kim Heys.

2023 Spring/Summer Campaign Reporting

Denise Jordan, Marketing Analytics & Research Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Strategic Marketing and Research Insights (SMARI) is the well-respected national and international company that we use.
- Two phases for each campaign - first is to study if we are communicating with effective messaging, targeting the right audiences and if they are aware of ads in their market, and generate interest to visit Utah. Second wave is a return on investment (ROI) study. Quantify advertising's impact on visitors traveling to Utah travel and its impact on visitors' trip specifics.
- We are required by statute to do reporting, and it also is a good way to measure how we are meeting our strategic plan imperatives.
- Advertising effectiveness study only looks at the paid media. The earned and owned is complimenting the study results.
- Key insights - the campaign awareness is 47 % which is in line with 2022 (48%) but with a little lower budget. We start with 97 million U.S. households and our awareness numbers are up - 45 million (42 million in 2022).
- Our campaign efficiency spend is \$0.11 per aware household. The industry average is \$0.19 so we are outperforming the industry benchmark.
- Calculations say we influenced 1.5M trips to Utah, with an average spend of almost \$2,000 per trip and that contributed to \$3B in visitor spending. This is huge as we consistently have seen around \$2B.
- This is UOT's strongest ROI ever on record - \$595 on each \$1 invested. In 18 years of using SMARI to track our ad awareness, we have never seen numbers this high.
- Also reporting all-time high on ad exposed page views on the website.
- Looking at the State and local tax revenue ROI - it is \$48 to every \$1 which also is very high.
- How they calculate the tax relief per household is a question board members get. That tax revenue is an induced, indirect number so it is all tax revenues. Previously that number was \$1200-\$1300 per household but this year it is up to \$1800.
- Often say it is the estimated benefit per household and is in the \$12K+ range because it is hard to understand the direct impact and it fluctuates.
- When communicating the household benefit, it can help to point out the outdoor recreation benefits. Tourism revenue leads to more restaurants, better parking lots, more trails, etc.
- Commissioner Iverson noted they do communicate the tax relief benefit often. Explain the benefits and impact of tourism is an upside for residents. It is a savings to residents, as we'd raise property taxes if we didn't have the visitor/tourism economy in Washington County.

- Jared Berrett from smaller communities perspective shared they do still hear “we’d rather not have it but we are grateful”. It is an interesting challenge and how to best educate communities. Maybe broaden the discussion to the DMOs to message their communities.
- Kevin Smith added a lot of people are employed in the industry and those people might be your neighbors who make a living by working in the industry.
- The UTIA toolkit is a great resource for DMOs to utilize and communicate with communities.
- Tie a lot of data reporting to the Red Strategic Plan - how we’ve impacted quality visits, powerful branding, etc. Visitors that are ad-aware do more activities, stay longer and spend more in a market.
- We also did a brand checkin on *The Mighty 5*[®] and 33% identify Utah as the state promoting *The Mighty 5*[®].
- For the visitor experience, 96% felt welcomed or very welcomed in Utah, and 61% said attractions were as crowded as they expected, while 23% said it was less crowded than they anticipated.

UTIA UPDATE

Natalie Randall, Board Member/UTIA Executive Director

- The legislative session begins January 16.
- We are currently working on Tourism Day on the Hill - Friday, February 9, 2024. Registration is live, visit [UTIA website](#).
- UTIA board met and passed a legislative priority sheet and it will be distributed to industry partners.
- There are a lot of new industry partners, county elected officials, etc., so UTIA is looking for veteran partners to help new partners navigate Tourism Day on the Hill and the legislative session.
- Pushing out a revitalized legislative toolkit for the industry and our partner toolkit is live on the website.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The next board meeting will be held virtually on Friday, Dec. 8 at 10 am.

**2024 UTAH BOARD OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
MEETING SCHEDULE**

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Friday, January 19, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	VIRTUAL
Thursday, February 8, 2024	2 - 4 pm	Salt Lake City
March	NO MEETING	
Friday, April 5, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	San Juan County
Friday, May 10, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	VIRTUAL
Friday, June 14, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	Park City
July	NO MEETING	
Friday, August 9, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	VIRTUAL
Wednesday, September 25, 2024	time TBD	Layton
Friday, October 11, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	VIRTUAL
Friday, November 8, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	Provo
Friday, December 13, 2024	10 am - 12 pm	VIRTUAL