

**Utah Board of Tourism Development**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, December 8, 2023

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

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UOT Staff Tera Atwood, Jody Blaney, Rachel Bremer, Emma Checketts, Ben Cook, Lorraine Daly, Sorell Grow, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Anna Loughridge, Sydney Sappenfield, Vicki Varela, David Williams, Heather Zang, Stacey Zoller

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Public Stacie Boney, Julie Comstock, Judy Cullen, Raelene Davis, Megan DeAngelis, Annie Franci, Sydnie Furton, Susan Hayward, Todd Jenson, Kaylin Jones, Nick Larson, Dallas Miller, Jonathan Smithgall, Sara Toliver, Christie Whipple

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**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair **Kym Buttschardt** called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Vice Chair **Nathan Rafferty** led introductions.

**MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Jennifer Wesselhoff motioned to approve the November 19, 2023, board meeting minutes. Natalie Randall seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

**MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT**

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Acknowledge the email announcement of her resignation effective February 10, 2024. Preparations for the legislative session and Tourism Day on the Hill (Feb. 9) will continue as needed.
- Noted that Ryan Starks sent an email to both UTIA and UOT board inviting all to a call about the selection of a new Managing Director.
- All invited to the 100 years of Utah Film & Television reception on Thu., January 11. Virginia Pearce and her team have worked tirelessly to unveil an exhibit at the Capitol (4th floor) that will be displayed throughout the year.
- Recently attended an event in Kentucky with National Council of State Tourism Directors, Western States Policy Council and U.S. Travel CEO Geoff Freedman. Continued efforts to get U.S. Travel to show strong leadership about the national parks.
- Introduced new UOT administrative assistant Stacey Zoller who is supporting Ben Cook and the Marketing and Communications team.

- Our social media project “Let’s Talk Utah” was recognized and won MarCom, Travel Weekly and Magellan awards.

## **OPEN & PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT**

**Todd K. Jenson**, Assistant Attorney General, Utah Attorney General’s Office

- We are required by statute to do training for our Open & Public Meetings Act once a year.
- Utah Board of Tourism Development is a public body that was created by Utah statute, and all business, meetings and votes are done in public.
- We record (audio) the meetings and take meeting minutes that are then posted to public website.
- Must have a quorum (8) for this board to conduct business, hold meetings.
- Meeting notices must be posted 24 hours in advance. Agendas, minutes, audio recordings, etc., are all posted at the Utah [Public Notice Website](#).
- For voting matters, it is best to recuse yourself, if you have a professional or personal interest in the topic. Grants are a good example and UOT board often recuse themselves if they are affiliated with a group applying for grants.
- Yes / No / Recusal votes should all be recorded in the minutes.
- During electronic / virtual meetings (Zoom or Google Meet), roll call votes must be recorded for non-unanimous action.
- Group emails with board members is not considered a meeting but it is public record.
- There are circumstances and situations that could arise to have emergency or closed meetings. The AG office would work very closely with the board if this situation arises.

## **INTERNATIONAL TEAM UPDATE**

**Rachel Bremer**, Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Recently held our quarterly travel trade advisory committee for partners throughout the state and shared our detailed data and forecasting updates.
- It is forecasted that we will see a huge jump in international visitor spending (71+) over the next three years in our primary and secondary markets.
- Also increase in forecasted visits (12%).
- This data reflects a more affluent international traveler, travelers willing to spend more in our state and those looking for more immersive experiences.
- Forecasting exponential spending growth from uncertain markets like China (+80%) and India (+200%); and France (+100%) through 2027.
- Starting to see some normalcy from primary markets in 2022 – Canada, France, Germany, UK and Australia. These are familiar, mature and resilient markets that have helped with recovery efforts.
- Looking ahead to 2027, forecasted that China will be atop the list.
- Recognize volatility and many variables in the forecasts. Still being cautious about work being done in China and have the right Utah messaging.
- India is a top 5 market for Arizona and Colorado, as they are a young demographic with influence and new money. We are still barely hitting the tip of the iceberg with India and there is a lot more market share to capture.

**Jody Blaney**, Global Markets Specialist, Utah Office of Tourism

- Most recent sales mission in secondary markets – Germany, Austria and Switzerland.
- Kane, Garfield, Grand, Iron Counties and Greater Zion DMO partners traveled on sales missions as well.
- Hosted events for both trade and media; meetings and trainings with top tour operators; and a meeting with Air France, KLM and Delta airlines.

- Results from this mission include USA Travel Austria scheduling a FAM tour in May 2024 and FTI Product Manager FAM visiting DMO partners that were on the sales mission. DERTOURS head of product development plans to visit in 2024, visit new properties and experience recommended itineraries.
- Many international media members attended and we will look to see print and online media as a result.

**Emma Checketts, Global Content & Tour Specialist, Utah Office of Tourism**

- In 2023, we hosted more than 40 FAM tours which includes six each from Canada, Australia and the UK.
- Looking ahead to 2024 includes FAM tours with China, India, UK and Australia.
- UOT team visited and toured San Juan County to get to know that area better, and hope to visit more locations to highlight in FAM tours.
- Developed best practices for UOT and DMOs to use as a guide when planning FAMs, and sending out updated FAM Tour Playbooks soon.
- Sent surveys to many DMOs asking for feedback and received useful suggestions and ideas on planning future FAM tours.

**Rachel Bremer, Global Markets Director, Utah Office of Tourism**

- Planning for future and impact of international visitors as the forecasted numbers grow.
- Opportunities include named preferred host and most likely winning bid for 2024 Olympic Winter Games; reopening of Temple Square late 2025/early 2026 as this will attract many international visitors; and, continued build of the airport and all of the work being done to attract international flights.
- Also growth in Washington County and development of sporting events at Black Desert, Iron Triathlon, etc., and expansion at Deer Valley will attract international visitors.

## **MARKETING UPDATES**

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

**Syndie Furton, Tourism Group Account Director, Digital Marketing & Media, Love Communications**

- Held first Marketing Committee (with new members and technical advisors) meeting at the end of November. Thank you for the engagement and feedback.
- Southern Utah+/National Parks campaign holiday blitz launches Dec. 26 and runs through Jan. 6, 2024. This is Spring/Summer messaging as peak planning time for families to book travel after the cold, winter months.
- This campaign in 2022-23 performed very well with 110% increase in ad exposed page views.
- Target markets are nationwide. Prospecting with CTV ads (advertising that appears within streaming content) and then retargeting with a display ad. This tactic keeps our messaging top of mind.
- Taking time to strategize on our Northern Utah+/Urban & Outdoors campaign. Original proposed flight dates were 4/15-6/30/24. Take time to test campaign alignment, timing of media and how best to reach urban and rural audiences.

## **UTIA UPDATE**

**Natalie Randall, Board Member/UTIA Executive Director**

- The legislative session begins January 16.
- Recently met with all state lodging associations and National Parks conversations are percolating around the American Hotel & Lodging Association and its engagement with National Parks issues.
- Explorer Act - Potential federal bill looking into technologies (rec.gov) and new trails navigation.

- PLPCO, UOT and UTIA have been collaborating on Arches timed entry plans. Will roll out their third pilot program in 2024. UTIA participated in PLPCO-led conversations with businesses and industry partners in Grand County. PLPCO and the state submitted a letter to NPS highlighting priorities of park capacity, economic impacts, and multiple long-term infrastructure proposals.
- 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. Complex issues surfacing around lodging tax, other funding alternatives for recreation management, alcohol policy and portability, short term rentals, etc.
- Reengaging with Rep. Stenquist and the TOUR caucus to prepare. Still sorting who the Senate Chair will be.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Nathan Rafferty mentioned that ski resorts are opening every day and new terrain is opening. Brighton opened a new 6-passenger chair, and Solitude and Snowbasin also will be opening new chairs. Snow is a little slower to arrive in the Park City area but Big/Little Cottonwood Canyons are on track.
- Kym Buttschardt, Jen Wesselhoff and Nathan attended the relighting of the Olympic Cauldron. A lot of energy and enthusiasm in hosting another Olympics.

#### **MEETING ADJOURNED**

*The next board meeting will be held virtually on Friday, January 19 at 10 am.*