

**Utah Board of Tourism Development**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
Friday, May 10, 2024

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Board Members Present	Jared Berrett, Kym Buttschardt, Lesha Coltharp, Kaitlin Eskelson, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Jason Murray, Graydon Pearson, Melva Sine, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer
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Board Members Excused	Nathan Rafferty, CJ Wade
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Tourism & Film Staff	Kevin Blomquist, Rachel Bremer, Ben Cook, Rachel Creer, Lorraine Daly, Sorell Grow, Kim Heys, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Carli Mahas, Virginia Pearce, Natalie Randall, Arianna Rees, Sydney Sappenfield, Todd Tanner, Dave Williams, Diane Wilson, Liz Wilson, Heather Zang, Stacey Zoller
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Public	Julie Comstock, Carrie Cox, Megan DeAngelis, Cody Draper, Annie Franel, Sydnie Furton, Megan Griffin, Jim Grover, Joan Hammer, Susan Hayward, Todd Jenson, Paul Jewkes, Ethan Koeller, Nick Larson, Dallas Miller, Becky Mumford, Claire Petty, Val Rasmussen, Randy Rhodes, Jen Shakespeare, Celina Sinclair, Jonathan Smithgill, Chad Taylor, Maria Twitchell, Adam Whalen
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**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Kym Buttschardt** called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked for board member introductions.

**MEETING MINUTE**

**MOTION: Shayne Wittwer motioned to approve the April 5, 2024, board meeting minutes. Jason Murray seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT**

**Natalie Randall**, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Thanked the board for the engagement and support of the tourism and film teams.
- Utah Film Commission currently working through the Sundance RFP in partnership with stakeholders that have formed the Utah Sundance Film Festival Host Committee. The host committee is robust. Gov. Cox, Speaker of the House Mike Schultz, Senate President Stuart Adams, mayors and council members, and significant individuals from the private sector are engaged.
- Participated in WESTO conference with team members. Opportunity for western states tourism offices to come together to learn from each other and collaborate on common issues. Greatest takeaway is we are ahead of the game. Utah is a leader.

- Attended IPW and spent time with many partners and in-market international representatives. UOT was selected to be one of five states to hold a press conference during the event, immediately following U.S. Travel. More than 250 members of the domestic and international media attended and a lot of interest in the 100 years of film and the Utah Film Trail.
- The Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity has been leading executive team leadership county tours. Focus has been on broader economic opportunity but great for tourism to also be engaged.
- Presented to the American Planning Association of Utah annual meeting in Cedar City with Camille Johnson. A good opportunity for tourism and community planners to be in the same space.
- Finalizing a firm to assist with the next phase of the *Forever Mighty*® initiative. Leaning in on efforts and creating resources for broader stakeholder outreach on responsible visitation throughout the state.
- June 13 is the board retreat and June 14 board meeting in Park City.
- Presenting on May 15 during the Economic Development and Workforce Services interim committee meeting. Top study item is tourism development and management. Also on agenda is a sunset review of our board but do not anticipate any changes.
- Joan Hammer will be confirmed on May 15 as the newest board member, representing UTIA.

**UTAH FILM COMMISSION**

**Virginia Pearce**, Utah Film Commissioner

- Recent projects include *Fallout* on Amazon Prime Video; *The Chosen: Season 4*; *Escape from Germany*; and, the “Bacon to Payson” event. First three received incentive funding and the benefits of Footloose, filmed 40 years ago, are still ongoing.
- Utah Film Incentive Funding equals \$20M and is divided into three program or grant categories – community (\$1.5M), motion picture (\$6.79M) and rural (\$12M).
- Film incentive subcommittee created with Jennifer Wesselhoff, Commissioner Iverson and Kaitlin Eskelson. Three projects were reviewed with this subcommittee in detail and recommended all three projects come to the full board for approval.

**MOTION: Jennifer Wesselhoff motioned to approve a total of \$4,018,376 for incentives for the following productions which have met the criteria defined by statute. Graydon Pearson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

<i>Take 21</i>	\$1,500,000
<i>The Chosen Season 5</i>	\$1,660,461
<i>Oops All Berries</i>	\$857,915

**MARKETING UPDATES**

**Southern Utah Mid-Campaign Performance Update**

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

**Adam Whalen**, Vice President Analytics & Research, Love Communications

- The Ski campaign finished in March, currently in the middle of the Southern Utah campaign and the Northern Utah campaign launched on May 1.
- Reporting is mid-campaign as Southern Utah runs from February 2-June 30.

- Key performance indicators (KPI) show the total ad exposed pageviews, this includes all partner sites, are down 30% compared to last year. But [visitutah.com](http://visitutah.com) pageviews have increased by 4%.
- Enriched hotel revenue is \$19.3M and hotel bookings 63,000.
- Salt Lake region has almost 27% of bookings but specifically Southern Utah bookings see growth from western markets – Seattle, San Francisco, Denver.
- Paid search environment (ads that appear in google when you type in a query) shows the click-thru rate is 7% about average and cost per click is lower than average.
- Data is monitored weekly, positive growth in performance, and pacing is nice.

### **VisitUtah.com**

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

**Kim Heys**, Web & Content Manager, Utah Office of Tourism

**Megan DeAngelis**, Account Director, Hanson Dodge

**Ethan Koehler**, Vice President Digital Experience & Technology, Hanson Dodge

- HD has managed the email program since October. Time spent thoroughly learning mailchimp, measuring what content is performing the best and testing template colors.
- Goals for the email newsletter include a 35% open rate and maintain the 1% click through rate and increase subscribers.
- Over the past 6 months, performance has increased with an open rate of 37%, click through rate of 1.64% and subscribers have grown 6%. Added a newsletter sign up call to action button on the landing page.
- Tracking subscribers' preferences of what Utah specific items they want to learn more about – arts & entertainment, food & nightlife, history & culture, national parks, outdoor activities or ski & snowboard. The goal is to personalize the newsletter content for subscriber groups and tie it back to the campaigns.
- Built and launched a Southern Utah landing page where visitors can choose experiences and it will optimize based on selections. It is engaging and interactive so visitors stay longer on the site. Features travel itineraries, as well.
- Engaged sessions, one that lasts more than 10 seconds and has key events or includes two or more pageviews, on the overall site have increased 27% from FY23.
- Travel guide downloads are up 182% with the new travel guide produced in January.
- Itinerary pageviews are up 54% and users engage longer once they click on itineraries.
- Overall site performance, the average engagement time increased 4% to 1 minute, 19 seconds; average engagement time compared to goal increased 31% and the engagement rate is up 13%.
- HD and UOT collaborating on adding an AI feature to [visitutah.com](http://visitutah.com) and see it as a strategic opportunity. Trip planning has always performed well on the website and with AI, it creates a new type of personalization. This will hopefully inspire people and lead them to booking.
- AI has rapidly matured and the tools that support AI integration have also developed quickly.
- Benefits of AI trip planning on the site would include it will be on-strategy, personalized, current, efficient and adaptable. Want to do something unique and valuable for our target audiences.
- Envisioning it to be a guided experience where the website is the intermediary between AI engine and consumer. Controlled prompting with results that include guided priorities and is structured output that is integrated into the look and feel of the website.
- Additional benefits of using AI this way includes capturing emails, developing user analytics, log interactions and personalizing the experience.
- Next steps include refine prompts, design output, develop and launch in the next two months.
- *In Love, in Utah* contest had almost 1700 submissions and four winners have been identified.

## **COMMUNITY & PARTNER RELATIONS UPDATE**

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

- Rachel Creer promoted to Partner Resource Manager.
- Three buckets CaPR team works in are relationships, resources and education. Strategic priorities for FY24, increase two-way feedback with DMO partners; create and empower visitor economy champions with community collaboration; and, prioritize access to grant programs for local tourism communities.
- CaPR team uses a “three gear” process of partner relations, resources and education.
- Two surveys per year to get feedback from DMOs. Most recent survey had 17 of 29 counties respond. As partners see survey feedback results in action, hope more counties will respond.
- DMO goals from the survey include destination development, increase visitation and sustainable tourism. Noted challenges were funding, resources and low occupancy.
- Counties replied areas they’d like assistance include marketing, funding/grants, partner tours and fam tours.
- CaPR team doing partner tours throughout the year and visiting 19 counties.
- Established UADMO connects - monthly virtual meetings with an agenda focused on areas DMOs have requested more information on. Also created a partner communication calendar.
- Created a tracking system in Asana to document survey results, follow-ups and progress.
- FY24 Co-op Marketing grant program will have \$4.6M to allocate. Applications close on June 28 and awards will be announced on August 9.
- EDA round one awarded \$175K to four DMOs, and EDA round two has 11 projects approved so far and \$425K will be awarded.
- Monthly partner newsletter has a new design and encourage all partners to subscribe.
- UOT speakers bureau continues to be active and CaPR created local press release templates to help publicize grant programs in communities.
- Updated partner tool kits and planning for additional tool kits to assist DMOs.
- Education opportunities for DMOs include attending ESTO with UOT paying the registration fee for one staff member; co-funding with UADMO a three-part social media training; and, press release training for grant recipients.

## **UTIA UPDATE**

**Celina Sinclair**, Executive Director, Utah Tourism Industry Association

- Hospitality Show Utah being held at Hyatt Regency in Salt Lake City on May 23. UTIA co-hosting this free event.
- Registration open for Utah Tourism Conference in Layton, Sept. 24-27.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Lesha Coltharp shared that Uintah County is hosting the Mountain West Trails Conference, May 13-15.
- Kevin Smith shared that Utah was named U.S. News & World Report’s 2024 overall best-of-state. Also 2024 best state to start a business, University of Utah and BYU ranked in the top 10 of graduating entrepreneurship students and consistently top five of happiest states in the nation. One of the reasons we are in these rankings is because we have a vibrant visitor economy.
- Jennifer Wesselhoff and Park City are excited to host the board retreat and meeting in June.
- Melva Sine mentioned the Utah Restaurant Association gala is May 15.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED**

*The next board meeting will be held in Park City on Friday, June 14 at 10am.*