TOURISM TAX ADVISORY BOARD
PENDING MEETING MINUTES AUGUST 22, 2024

Commissioner Victor Iverson called the meeting of the Tourism Tax Advisory Board of Washington County to order at 9:30 AM on Thursday, August 22, 2024, in room #312 of the Washington County Administration Building, 111 East Tabernacle, St. George, UT.
Those in attendance: Tourism Tax Advisory Board: Commissioner Victor Iverson, Dorothy Heers, Brett Burgess, Kevin Smith, Shayne Wittwer, Tracey Welsh, Nate Wells, and Ken Neilson. Other attendees include Deputy County Attorney Steven Scott, Tourism Director Brittany McMichael, and Tourism staff members Sara Otto, Joyce Kelly, Jamie Allen, Trista Nielson, Matthew Watson, Leslie Fonger, and Heath Hansen.

WELCOME

Commissioner Victor Iverson welcomed all in attendance and determined that a quorum existed for voting on action items.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME OF NEW T.A.B. MEMBER

Commissioner Iverson welcomed Shayne Wittwer with Wittwer Hospitality as the newest member of the Tourism Advisory Board. Shayne is replacing the seat held by Rich Stehmeier.

CONSIDERATION OF MAY 23, 2024 MINUTES

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to approve the May 23, 2024 Minutes.
Motion seconded by Tracey Welsh and carried by a unanimous vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Brittany McMichael, Greater Zion Director, reported on current tourism statistics. TRT is up 15% over 2023. 2024 hotel occupancy is down -.5% from 2023. RevPar average through June is $94.98, up 1% from 2023. ADR average through June is $143.32, down -.6% from 2023. Zion National Park visitation is up 9% from 2023.

ZION NATIONAL PARK UPDATE

Heath Hansen, Greater Zion Regional Tourism Regulatory Affairs Director, reported on recent developments within Zion National Park. He noted that the park has experienced mechanical issues with its new electric shuttles, reducing shuttle capacity by half and leading to longer wait times for visitors. Reserve shuttles are being deployed to address these challenges, and Washington County is working on a plan to mitigate the issues by contracting with St. George Shuttle.

CONSIDERATION OF DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT REQUESTS

ST. GEORGE MUSICAL THEATER

St. George Musical Theater is seeking up to $1,500,000 for its new theater and performing arts campus. Dimon McPherson, Chairman of the Board, explained that the new theater will increase seating capacity from 125 to 400, effectively tripling the current capacity. The theater is expected to be double-cast and open six days a week. Construction is expected to take 18 months from the groundbreaking date, with Westland Construction as the general contractor. The total project cost is estimated at around $14 million.

MOTION: Motion by Tracey Welsh to table the decision for further discussion.
Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by unanimous vote.

OLD GYMNASIUM RENOVATION

Washington City is seeking $500,000 to renovate its Old Gymnasium complex. Brad Shelton, Consultant for Washington City, explained that the project will add 2,500 square feet of meeting space and a stage. The upgraded facility will be available for rental for future events. The project is currently under construction, with an estimated completion date at the end of the year.

MOTION: Kevin Smith made a motion to recommend up to $500,000 from TRCCA funds (Tourism, Recreation, Culture, Convention, and Airport) for the Old Gym renovation.
Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by unanimous vote.

COVINGTON HOME EXPANSION

Washington City is seeking $175,000 to expand the Historic Covington Home, a three-story structure with 3,000 square feet of usable space, constructed in 1859. Brad Shelton, Consultant for Washington City, said the project will include adding a parking lot, an ADA-compliant bathroom, and event space, which will be available for rent for future events.

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to recommend up to $100,000 from TRCCA funds (Tourism, Recreation, Culture, Convention and Airport) for construction of the Covington Home.
Motion seconded by Tracey Welsh and carried by unanimous vote.

MILLCREEK TRAIL

Washington City is seeking $500,000 to finish construction of phase 1 of the Millcreek Trail. This project will add .07 miles of paved trail and allow access under 1-15. It will connect two main parks within the city, Nisson Park and Boilers Park. More phases are expected, connecting to other trails in the area. Construction is expected to begin as soon as plans are finalized.

MOTION: Brett Burgess made a motion to recommend up to $500,000 from TRT funds for the construction of the Millcreek Trail.
Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by unanimous vote.

GRAPEVINE TRAIL

Jordan Hess, Legislative Affairs Director for Washington City, presented that Washington City is seeking $750,000 to construct the Grapevine Trail and Trailhead. The trail and trailhead will feature bathrooms, bike repair stations, chilled water, and parking for vehicles with 92 paved and 57 unpaved stalls. There will also be an additional lot for up to 10 horse trailers, along with horse tie-ups and trails specifically for horses. This site will serve as the main access point into the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and connect to other trails such as Dino Cliffs, Elephant Arch, and Brackens Loop. The total project cost is estimated at $5 million.

MOTION: Shayne Wittwer made a motion to recommend up to $750,000 from TRT funds for the construction of the Grapevine Multi-use Trail and Trailhead. Motion seconded by Tracey Welsh and carried by unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF SPORTS MARKETING TRT FUNDING REQUESTS

Vacation Races is seeking $30,000 to market its Zion Half Marathon. The recommendation is up to $20,000.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve funding as recommended. Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by unanimous vote.

Zion Ultra Marathon is seeking $30,000 to market its Zion Ultra Marathon. The recommendation is $20,000.

MOTION: Motion by Tracey Welsh to approve funding as recommended. Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by unanimous vote.

Utah Summer Games is requesting $8,000 to help expand the summer games into Washington County, including funds to offset the rental of the shooting sports and softball complexes. The recommendation is $8,000.

MOTION: Motion by Shayne Wittwer to approve funding as recommended. Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by unanimous vote.

Kyle Case presented the Huntsman World Senior Games request for a presenting sponsor marketing partnership of $305,000 annually, in addition to offsetting the cost of using the Dixie Convention Center, beginning in 2025 and ending in 2029. The recommendation is to approve funding as requested.

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to approve funding as recommended. Motion seconded by Tracey Welsh and carried by unanimous vote.

True Grit is seeking $25,000 to promote and market the True Grit bike race. The recommendation is $12,500.

MOTION: Motion by Shayne Wittwer to approve funding as recommended.
Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF SPORTS EVENT TRT FUNDING REQUESTS

Great Western Basketball Classic is seeking $25,000 to promote and market the Great Western Basketball Classic. The recommendation is $25,000.

MOTION: Motion by Brett Burgess to approve funding as recommended.
Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by unanimous vote.

American Cancer Society is seeking $10,000 to promote and market the 2024 American Cancer Society Tournament. The recommendation is $1,500 + Auction item worth $800.00. The recommendation is to fund up to $1,500 + an auction item worth up to $800.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve funding as recommended.
Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF MARKETING TRT SPONSORSHIP REQUESTS

Film and Media Alliance of Southern Utah is seeking $2,500 to promote and market its Desertscape International Film Festival. The recommendation is $2,500.

Film and Media Alliance of Southern Utah is seeking $3,000 to promote and market its Horrorfest International Film Festival. The recommendation is $3,000.

Zion Canyon Music Festival is seeking $5,000 to promote and market its 2025 Zion Canyon Music Festival. The recommendation is $2,500.

Zion Canyon Visitors Bureau is seeking $20,000 to print and distribute its Zion Canyon Tear Sheet Maps. The recommendation is $20,000.

Zion National Park Forever Project is seeking $15,000 to promote and market its 2024 Zion Plein Air Event. The recommendation is $15,000

Applications from the Center for the Arts at Kayenta and Silver Reef Foundation were denied funding because the requests did not meet the requirements for tourism funding.

MOTION: Motion by Nate Wells to approve funding as recommended.
Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF EVENT FUNDING REQUESTS

Kayenta Arts Foundation is seeking $12,000 to promote and market the Art in Kayenta Festival. The recommendation is $5,000.

UTU is seeking $8000 to promote and market the 2025 DOCUTAH International Film Festival. The recommendation is $8,000.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve funding as recommended.
Motion seconded by Brett Burgess and carried by unanimous vote.

TOURISM UPDATES

Joyce Kelly, Greater Zion Sales Manager, spoke about a new series to be filmed in Greater Zion. *The Promised Land* is a mockumentary like *Parks and Rec* and *The Office, which* focuses on the story of Moses. Mitch Hudson, Assistant Director for *The Chosen*, will direct.

Sara Otto, Greater Zion Marketing Manager, invited board members to attend the viewing of the Greater Zion Golf Documentary.

Tracey Welsh, a member of the Tourism Advisory Board, announced that she will be leaving Red Mountain Resort in the coming weeks and, therefore, will be vacating her seat on the Tourism Advisory Board. The board and staff acknowledged and expressed appreciation for Tracey's contributions to the board and wished her well in her future endeavors.

Matthew Wattson announced Greater Zion's Enhancing the Visitor Experience Training course and invited board members to attend the training event and share the invitation.

The next meeting will be held on October 24, 2024.

Minutes prepared by Trista Nielson
Adjourned at 12:22 PM