

**REGULAR MEETING**  
**Travel Council Advisory Board**

Held at Grand County, Utah Commission Chambers  
125 E Center  
Moab, Utah 84532

 **10/8/24 Travel Council Advisory Board**

**MINUTES**

**October 8, 2024 | 3:00pm**

**\*\*Time stamps (HH:MM:SS) correspond to the video\*\***

**Members in Attendance:** Alex Borichevsky, Jason Taylor, Lori McFarland, Sharon Kienzle, Ben Fredregill

**Members in Attendance Remotely:** Mary McGann, Rebecca Monceaux

**Non-members in Attendance:** Ben Alter, Bega Metzner, Pete Gross (citizen to be heard)

**Welcome**

00:02:00

**Introductions**

00:02:20

**Conflicts of interest, disclosures, ex parte communication**

00:03:20, none at this time

**Citizens to -be- heard**

00:03:25, Pete Gross

**Presentations, if any**

00:07:45, none at this time

**Discussion and Action Items:**

**Board Member Reports (00:07:55)**

- a. Alex reported that business at his restaurants have been “pretty good” but “still not quite what it used to be,” noting that the completion of 98 Center’s outdoor seating section was helping. He expressed frustration over new traffic patterns and bus parking as a result of the city’s Downtown Dispersed Parking project on E Center St. He noted his outreach to the City Manager.
- b. Sharon added that tour buses were able to get in and out of the Moab Information Center (MIC) parking lot until parallel parking spots were added on the north side of E Center St, also a result of the city’s Downtown Dispersed Parking project. Alex suggested that the Travel Council could play a part in messaging new traffic patterns to visitors.
- c. Bega reported on the success of her recent CineMoab film screening event and a future screening on November 8th.

- d. Jason discussed the city's progress on its dispersed parking project, adding that he both appreciated the project and recognized issues it had created. He also discussed upcoming City Council items related to repaving the section of 100 E behind City Market. He noted that work on Mill Creek Drive had not resumed as a result of the contractor and that the city regularly inquires as to when work will resume. He also discussed work at Kane Creek and the recent arts festival. He also speculated on the weather's effect on fall tourism and an interview he and Alex conducted with KSL. He briefly reported on the airport's services, Contour Air, and a lack of marketing.
- e. Lori reported on advertising and tourism conferences she had attended. She discussed the Utah Tourism Industry Association's (UTIA) toolkit and data she had reviewed.
- f. Sharon discussed visitors she had met from the Rocky Mountaineer train. She added that she hoped November would serve to recoup lost sales from July and August. She and the group discussed the dangers they've seen arise from the new dispersed parking layout. Alex suggested that the city prioritize code enforcement resources in these areas.
- g. Rebecca reported that September's occupancy rates were good and October was "turning low" in comparison to previous years. She noted that the hotel is preparing to host some events.
- h. Mary reported that the county is working on new land use maps and codes within the Planning and Zoning Department. She noted that the county also hired a new Human Resources Director and that a new Commission Administrator would likely start in the new year. She briefly reported on the county's progress in engineering flood mitigation plans as well as the county's budget process. She also discussed encouraging work at Arroyo Crossing.

#### **Red Canyon Powwow Special Event Grant Application (00:40:00)**

- a. Ben Alter introduced discussion on the event grant application, providing context on how the application was missed and noting the amount of unallocated funds. Ben Fredregill commented on how the item may have been missed by staff previously.
- b. Sharon shared her discomfort with reallocating funds to awardees previously decided on. Ben A. reiterated it was the board's decision on how to proceed, noting that other avenues for funding the Powwow may exist at levels above the board. Mary echoed Sharon's concern and expressed support for seeking a budget amendment to fund the Powwow.
- c. Sharon motioned to allocate the remaining funds from the Special Event Grant program, \$4,475, to the Red Canyon Powwow and recommend that the county commission "explore other avenues" to provide the remaining funds for the Powwow's request. Rebecca seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-1.
  - i. For: Sharon, Alex, Rebecca
  - ii. Against: Lori

#### **Approval of Minutes for September 10, 2024 (00:49:15)**

- a. Alex asked for comments on the meeting minutes. There were none.
- b. Sharon motioned to approve the meeting minutes from September 10, 2024. Lori seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Director's Report (00:49:50)**

- a. Ben F. discussed his meeting with Natalie Randall's team during the Utah Association of Counties (UAC) meeting in Provo as well as his desire for Grand County to "build into" the state's Red Emerald strategy. He also discussed the success of the "In Love, In Utah" state campaign. He discussed attending a Utah Tourism Industry Association (UTIA) meeting. His analysis of numerous countries' public SWOT analyses is that many European nations' citizens are valuing safety and sustainability above other criteria when planning travel. He added that many look to book packages when traveling to the United States, and that these offerings being available well ahead of time is advantageous. He also discussed changing attitudes among travelers from India, noting the opportunities among a growing middle class for repeat travelers. He noted that Chinese travelers continue to pursue national parks when traveling. He discussed other nations' travel profiles, neurodivergent traveler profiles, dark sky "star parties," and the opportunity for Moab to "plug in" to Utah's upcoming Olympic games. He noted that he's eager to see the economic impact of the new Black Desert resort near St. George which hosted a recent PGA tournament.
- b. Ben F. mentioned an upcoming Uranium Tailings committee tour of Las Colonias Park in Grand Junction, which would include Alex as a representative of the board. He also discussed a recent familiarization tour held with 14 tour operators from Australia and New Zealand. He noted updates on his department's team and co-op marketing grant reporting. He provided other visitation and marketing updates as well.
- c. Jason asked for clarification on the new website building process. Jason also discussed the airport board's discussion for the Economic Development Department to begin marketing the airport on its site. Jason and Alex discussed the poor condition of the airport's webpages. Ben F. shared that he wasn't sure of the new website build timeline but that he would report back.

### **Board Openings - Moab Area Travel Council (01:13:35)**

- a. Alex noted the board's upcoming membership openings. Ben F. reiterated the application and interview process. Lori asked for clarification on board openings, related advertising and application deadlines. The board discussed the openings.

### **Update on the Advertising and Promotion Budget (01:18:40)**

- a. Ben F. noted that different rebranding opportunities would contribute to the department's strategic approach in the new year. He also discussed the acquisition of certain geo-fencing tools, noting the department already has a contract with Placer.ai. He noted that other budget and strategic considerations included assessing all contracted tools, looking at events to attend in the new year, and possible marketing partnerships.

### **Mitigation suggestions for budget (01:25:00)**

- a. The board reviewed last year's funding recommendations. Ben F. discussed progress made on the previous year's budget recommendations and funding thoughts for the next fiscal year. The board set a timeline for finalizing its budget advisory letter.
- b. The board reviewed the transient room tax (TRT) impact mitigation expenses section of the previous year's letter. Ben A. provided state code, noting that museums are included within the state's allowable expenses for TRT impact mitigation funds.

**At 01:33:00, Lori left the meeting.**

- c. Alex suggested that Grand County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) be added to the letter for proposed funding from Tourism, Recreation, Cultural, and Convention (TRCC) taxes. Sharon agreed that this should be added. Ben A. clarified that EMS funding is an allowable use under TRCC code. The board reviewed past mitigation funding recommendations. Jason and Alex added the pool at the city's recreation and aquatic center, and the board clarified that it would be best to fund this from TRCC-A dollars.
- d. Jason asked for clarification regarding the county's funding of the Grand Center amidst the findings listed in the state auditor's recent Grand County report. Ben A. suggested that the board consider preparing two options, one for if funds are allowed to remain at the Grand Center and one for if funds are not, adding that, should the county retain its ability to fund the Grand Center, it is likely to continue funding.

**Discussion on Tourism Works in Grand County in conjunction with UTIA (01:45:45)**

- a. Ben F. noted that Brian was to present on this item but is absent. Ben F. speculated that the discussion may have focused on UTIA's new tool kit, which he discussed briefly. The board decided to skip the item.

**New creative partners and winter advertising campaign proposal (01:47:50)**

- a. Ben presented the "Optional shoulder season ad campaign" presentation. He discussed the prospect of marketing Moab during the winter months to prospective visitors within a day's drive of the area. He added that the campaign would allow the department to engage a new creative agency. The board expressed general approval for a winter marketing campaign, encouraging the department to work with local businesses to ensure the plan was known to local operators who could benefit from increased winter visitation. Sharon added that the campaign may even help build excitement for normal spring visitation. Alex advocated for spending closer to \$250,000 on the campaign.
- b. Ben F. asked that the minutes reflect that, though the board lacked a quorum during this presentation, all members present voiced support for a winter advertising campaign.

**Consideration of future agenda items**

At 5:05 PM (01:58:20), Alex adjourned the meeting.