

TOURISM TAX ADVISORY BOARD
PENDING MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 24, 2024

Commissioner Victor Iverson called the meeting of the Tourism Tax Advisory Board of Washington County to order at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 24, 2024, in Conference Room #182 of the Washington County Administration Building, 111 East Tabernacle, St. George, UT. Those in attendance: Tourism Tax Advisory Board: Dorothy Heers, Brett Burgess, Kevin Smith, Shayne Wittwer and Ken Neilson. Other attendees include Deputy County Attorney Steven Scott, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Tourism Director Brittany McMichael, and Tourism staff members Matthew Watson, Trista Nielson, Joy Schroeder, Leslie Fonger, Chad McWilliams, Heath Hansen, and Jared Stephenson.

WELCOME

Tourism Director Brittany McMichael welcomed all in attendance and determined that a quorum existed for voting on action items.

CONSIDERATION OF AUGUST 22 & SEPTEMBER 13, 2024, MINUTES

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve the August 22 & September 13, 2024, Minutes.
Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by a unanimous vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Brittany McMichael, Greater Zion Director, reported on current tourism statistics. 2024 T.R.T. (Transient Room Tax) through August is up 9%. Average hotel occupancy through September is 71%. RevPar through September is up 1%. Average ADR through September is \$157.13. Zion National Park visitation through September is up 7% from 2023. St George Regional Airport visitation is up 16% from 2023.

CONSIDERATION OF T.A.B. BYLAWS

Deputy County Attorney Steven Scott introduced new bylaws for the TAB board to provide clearer guidance on meeting procedures and address questions. The TAB board has been operating under TRT ordinances, but these new bylaws add specific procedures and streamline processes. The board will adopt them with the option to amend them through a vote. The bylaws will then be presented to the commissioners for ratification before officially going into effect.

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to approve the Washington County Tourism Bylaws
Motion seconded by Brett Burgess and carried by a unanimous vote.

TOURISM UPDATES

Joy Schroeder, Greater Zion's Meeting, Convention, and Event Sales Manager, presented the Small Market Meetings & Conventions report. Greater Zion hosted the 2024 Small Market Meetings Conference from September 25-27 at the Dixie Convention Center, attended by 60-65 meeting planners and 165 hospitality professionals. The event was a big success and has generated new business opportunities for the region.

Chad McWilliams, Greater Zion's Sports and Adventure Sales Manager, reported on Utah's first PGA event in 60 years as part of the FedEx Fall Cup Series. The tournament attracted 3,000 - 5,000 fans daily and was supported by 1,200 volunteers who contributed 80,000 hours. The event received significant exposure through three commercials aired on the Golf Channel. Highlights included Jay Don Blake's 500th career start and positive player feedback on the course. Journalists hosted by Greater Zion PR explored local activities beyond golf, promoting the region's attractions alongside the tournament. In 2025, May will be Golf Month, featuring the LPGA at Black Desert and the return of the LPGA Epson Tour and LPGA Senior Championship at Copper Rock.

Jared Stephenson, General Manager of the Dixie Convention Center, provided updates. As of September 30, the center has hosted 56 local and 62 non-local events this year, with an attendance of around 80,000 (excluding the Huntsman World Senior Games) and an occupancy rate of 50 percent, resulting in an estimated economic impact of \$25 million. Current projects include a reconfigured exhibit hall, new monument signs, and plans to refresh carpets, painting, and guest kiosks. With the help of a design firm, the center is also considering an expansion to accommodate more ballroom and breakout space, driven by three factors: current occupancy rates, the 268 missed events this year due to space limits, and continued regional growth.

CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING REQUESTS:

Sporting Event Sponsorship Requests

Desert Roads & Trails Society is seeking \$12,000 to promote and market its 2025 Winter 4x4 Jamboree. The recommendation is \$12,000.

Senior Softball USA is seeking \$18,200 to cover field rental costs during its 2025 Senior Softball World Championship. The recommendation is \$18,200.

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

Sporting Event Marketing Agreement Requests

Red Slopes Soccer Foundation is seeking \$50,000 to promote and market its 2025 7 Elite International Soccer Tournaments. The recommendation is \$50,000.

The United States Practical Shooting Association is seeking \$94,700 to promote, sponsor and market its 2025 USPSA National event. The recommendation is \$70,000.

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to approve up to \$25,000 to promote and market the 2025 7 Elite International Soccer Tournaments and up to \$70,00 to promote and market the USPSA Nationals event.
Motion seconded by Brett Burgess and carried by unanimous vote.

Marketing Sponsorship Requests

St. George Area Chamber of Commerce is seeking \$30,000 to print its 2025 St. George Area Chamber Guide. The funding recommendation is \$30,000.

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

2025 PRELIMINARY BUDGET REVIEW:

Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office Director Brittany McMichael presented and reviewed the 2025 Preliminary Budget.

ZION NATIONAL PARK UPDATE:

Heath Hansen, Greater Zion Regional Tourism Regulatory Affairs Director, provided updates on the new St. George to Zion Shuttle route, the Zion Park transportation study, and Zion's critical infrastructure projects.

Starting November 1, the Zion Route shuttle will include stops from the Dixie Convention Center to the gate of Zion National Park. Riders will pay a \$5 one-way fare or \$100 monthly pass.

Nelson Nygaard's ongoing transportation study will evaluate a shuttle service from Zion's south entrance to Zion's east entrance, focusing on vehicle type and propulsion options for navigating the park's tunnels and switchbacks.

The Zion Sewer Project, planned in three phases, will extend sewer lines from Zion Lodge to the Temple of Sinawava. It is expected to be completed in 2027.

Phase one of Zion's South Entrance redesign, which will improve the park's south entrance, is slated to begin in 2025.

The next meeting will be held on December 5th, 2024.

Minutes prepared by Deputy Clerk Trista Nielson
Adjourned at 12:06 p.m.