

TOURISM TAX ADVISORY BOARD
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES FEB 20, 2025

Commissioner Victor Iverson called the meeting of the Tourism Tax Advisory Board of Washington County to order at 9:30 AM on Thursday, February 20, 2025, in Conference Room #182 of the Washington County Administration Building, 111 East Tabernacle, St. George, UT. Those in attendance included the Tourism Tax Advisory Board: David Moody, Kevin Smith, Nate Wells, Shayne Wittwer, Zac Nixon, and Ken Neilson. Other attendees included Deputy County Attorney Steven Scott, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Tourism Director Brittany McMichael, and Tourism staff members Matthew Watson, Trista Nielson, Leslie Fonger, Chad McWilliams, Heath Hansen, and Jamie Allen.

WELCOME

Commissioner Victor Iverson welcomed all attendees, introduced and welcomed new board members Dave Moody and Zac Nixon, and confirmed that a quorum existed for voting on action items.

CONSIDERATION OF DECEMBER 10, 2024, MINUTES

MOTION: **Motion by Ken Neilson to approve the December 10, 2024, Minutes.**
 Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by a unanimous vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Brittany McMichael, Greater Zion Director, reported on current tourism statistics. Total TRT collections for 2024 were \$16.4 million, which is up 6% over 2023, up 8% over 2022 and up 8% over 2021. The 2025 hotel occupancy through January is up 8.5% over 2024. Zion National Park visitation through January is up 24% over 2024, and there were a total of 4.9 million visitors in 2024. St. George Regional Airport visitation through January 2025 is up 36% from 2024, up 56% from 2023, and up 79% from 2022.

TOURISM UPDATES

Brittany McMichael reported that the Greater Zion Tourism Office has hired a new Marketing Manager named Ed Aurrecoechea, who will join the team next week. Mrs. McMichael reported updates about marketing and public relations efforts. Stating that the creative arm of the Fahlgren Mortine PR team will visit the Greater Zion area next week to gain a deeper understanding of the area and develop a new campaign. She also spoke about recent influencer visits and familiarization (FAM) tours that have included two leisure writers and one golf writer.

Matthew Watson, Greater Zion's Community & Partner Relations Manager, provided an update on current TRT bills in Utah's legislative session.

CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING REQUESTS:

Destination Development

Washington City is seeking \$150,000 to construct the George Washington Plaza. With America's 250th anniversary approaching, the city plans to transform the space into a park that tells the story of Dixie and honors the founding fathers. The park will feature pathways highlighting the history of Washington County and the United States, including a life-size statue of George Washington as its centerpiece.

MOTION: Motion by Nate Wells to approve up to \$150,000 in TRCC funds to fund construction of the plaza.
Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by unanimous vote.

Washington City is seeking \$500,000 to construct 1.5 miles of the Washington City Historic Canal Trail. This trail is part of a planned 6.5-mile route that follows the canal, serving as a key north-south connection. Once completed, it will link to the Virgin River Trail and Washington Wheels Park, further enhancing the city's trail network. The project is being completed in phases, approximately 1.3 miles have already been completed.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve up to \$250,000 in TRCC funds and up to \$250,000 in TRT funds for construction of 1.5 miles of the Washington Canal paved trail.
Motion seconded by Shane Wittwer and carried by unanimous vote.

Hurricane City is seeking \$15,000 to finish constructing its bike park on 600 N. in the Spilsbury Sports Complex. The idea for the expansion was introduced by local BMX professional Tyler McCall, who has secured a \$25,000 grant to contribute to the project. The bike park is already a popular spot for local riders, and the proposed improvements will introduce new features to accommodate riders of various skill levels.

MOTION: Motion by Shayne Wittwer to approve up to \$15,000 in TRCC funds for construction of the Hurricane City Bike Park.
Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by unanimous vote.

Hurricane City is seeking \$2,000,000 to renovate its city pool, which was initially built in the 1990s. The current five-lane outdoor pool is primarily used as a practice facility for the local swim team, but the city plans to expand it to eight lanes to accommodate competitive swim meets. The renovation will also include the addition of grandstands for spectator seating. The project is expected to take 14 months, with construction set to begin as soon as the current swim season concludes.

MOTION: Motion by Zac Nixon to table the decision for further discussion.
Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by unanimous vote.

Sporting Event Requests

The American Fastpitch Association is seeking \$67,500 to help offset the cost of field rental during the 2025 AFA Nationals. The recommendation is \$18,200.

D1 Prospects is seeking \$6,000 to promote and market its Hurricane Heat Softball Tournaments. The recommendation is \$6,000.

Red Rock Events is seeking \$25,000 to promote and market its 2025 Intermountain Cup Racing Series. The recommendation is \$25,000.

Matt's Off-Road Recovery is seeking \$170,000 to promote and market the Matt's Off-Road Games. The recommendation is \$100,000.

PPA (Professional Pickleball Tour) is seeking \$100,000 to offset Little Valley Pickleball Court expenses and to promote and market its 2025 Red Rock Open. The recommendation is \$100,000.

**MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve funding as recommended.
 Motion seconded by Shane Wittwer and carried by unanimous vote.**

Marketing Requests

FMASU is seeking \$3,000 to promote and market its 2025 Horrorfest International Film Festival. The funding recommendation is \$3,000.

Silver Reef Foundation is seeking \$6,356.22 to print and distribute 35,000 Museum Rack Cards. The funding recommendation is \$6,356.22.

Red Rock Music Association is seeking \$10,000 to promote and market its Southern Utah Blues Festival. The funding recommendation is \$5,000.

Tuacahn Center for the Arts is seeking \$95,000 to promote and market its 2025 - 2026 Broadway in the Canyon Season. The funding recommendation is \$95,000.

Arts to Zion is seeking \$16,000 to print and distribute 80,000 Gallery and museum maps and for the construction of its centralized arts and culture online calendar. The funding recommendation is \$16,000.

**MOTION: Motion by Shayne Wittwer to approve funding as presented.
 Motion seconded by Zac Nixon and carried by unanimous vote.**

Event Funding

Kayenta Arts Foundation is seeking \$15,000 to market its Art in Kayenta Festival. The funding recommendation is \$4,500.

St. George Dance Company is seeking \$3,447.50 to market and promote its Red Rock Dance Festival. The funding recommendation is \$3,447.50

**MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to approve funding as presented.
Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by unanimous vote.**

ZION NATIONAL PARK UPDATE:

Heath Hansen, Greater Zion Regional Tourism Regulatory Affairs Director, provided updates on Zion National Park and the federal hiring freezes. One of the big issues was that the park could not hire seasonal and emergency personnel; however, the park received word yesterday that the hiring freeze had been lifted. Zion National Park has begun its hiring process for seasonal employees.

The next meeting will be held on April 24, 2025.

**MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to adjourn.
Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by unanimous vote.**

Minutes prepared by Trista Nielson,
Washington County Deputy Clerk
Adjourned at 11:58 AM