

TOURISM TAX ADVISORY BOARD
PENDING MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 4, 2025

Commissioner Victor Iverson called the meeting of the Tourism Tax Advisory Board of Washington County to order at 9:30 AM on Thursday, September 4, 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: Dorothy Heers, Nate Wells, Dave Moody, Zac Nixon, Ken Neilson, Kevin Smith (via Zoom), and Shayne Wittwer (via Zoom). Other attendees included Deputy County Attorney Steven Scott, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Tourism Director Brittany McMichael, and Tourism staff members Matthew Watson, Chad McWilliams, Joyce Kelly, Jamie Allen, Leslie Fonger, and Trista Nielson.

WELCOME

Commissioner Victor Iverson welcomed all attendees and confirmed that a quorum existed for voting on action items.

CONSIDERATION OF JUNE 26, 2025, MINUTES

MOTION: **Motion by Ken Neilson to approve the June 26, 2025, Minutes.**
Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers carried by a unanimous vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Brittany McMichael, Greater Zion Director, reported on current tourism statistics. TRT is up 4% through June over 2024, totaling \$9.2 million. Hotel occupancy is down 2.7% from 2024. RevPAR is down 2.9% from 2024. ADR is up 1% from 2024, with an average daily rate of \$143 through July. Zion National Park visitation is up 2.6% over 2024. St. George Regional Airport visitation is up 43% over 2024.

Brittany also commented that the 2024 Year in Review and new Visitor Guide are now available. She added that Greater Zion has planned Media Takeovers in New York (October) and Denver (November), and that the team is preparing to launch a new advertising campaign and host an upcoming Partner Series event.

CONSIDERATION OF DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FUNDING REQUESTS

Ryan Gubler, Director of Springdale Parks and Recreation, presented a request from the Town of Springdale to expand the George A. Barker Park by 0.91 acres, utilizing additional city property. The total project cost is \$1.25 million. Phase 1 will include enhanced and enlarged green space, new walking paths, increased ADA access into the park, additional parking, and restroom improvements. The request for this phase of the project is \$684,000. Phase 2 will focus on a river viewing platform, new restrooms, and a nature play area. The request for this phase is \$566,000.

MOTION: **Motion by Kevin Smith to approve up to \$684,000 in TRT funding for phase 1, in 2025, and up to \$566,000 in TRCCA funding for phase 2, \$566,000 in 2026.**

Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by a unanimous vote.

Paul Walker, Assistant Leisure Services Director, and Rusty Hughes, Economic Development Director for Washington City, presented a request from Washington City for the Buena Vista Trail, Phase 1, to construct a 0.7-mile trail connecting the Boilers and Grapevine Trailhead. The trail will link three parks, enhance connections to other trails, and is estimated to be completed in the fall of 2026. The request is \$300,000.

MOTION: **Motion by Shayne Wittwer to approve up to \$300,000 from TRT funding in 2026.**

Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by a unanimous vote.

Shane Moore, Director of Leisure Services, presented a request from the City of St. George for \$2 million for Phase 2 of the Thunder Junction Park. The expansion will take place in a previously undeveloped area of the park and will feature an Ice Age theme with new play structures including a woolly mammoth, saber-tooth tiger, and asteroid. The project will also include in-ground trampolines, shaded picnic areas, sensory-friendly spaces, and larger activity pads.

Shane also presented the Dixie Sunbowl Restoration Project, which will expand seating capacity to 7,000, increase the number of accessible seating, and relocate the announcer's booth.

MOTION: **Motion by Zac Nixon to approve up to \$2 million in TRCCA funding to be used between the two projects.**

Motion seconded by Ken Neilson and carried by a unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF SPORTS EVENT FUNDING AND MARKETING REQUESTS

Red Rock Events is seeking \$27,000 for its 2026 Intermountain Cup Racing Series. The 2026 season will increase to 13 events, with 7 events taking place within Washington County. The recommendation is \$25,000.

GRO Promotions is seeking \$15,000 for its 2026 True Grit Epic race. The event will feature a mountain biking and gravel race. The recommendation is \$5,000.

Your Cause Events is seeking \$40,000 for its Sand Hollow Triathlon and \$10,000 for its Kokopelli Triathlon. The events will feature sprint and Olympic-distance triathlons. The recommendation is \$40,000 for the Sand Hollow Triathlon.

Red Slopes Soccer is seeking \$50,000 for the 7 Elite International Tournament, held February 5-7, 2026. They anticipate 450 teams, with 25-35 of them international. The recommendation is \$25,000.

VR Sports is seeking \$40,000 for its Zion Half Marathon and Zion Ultras. Approximately 2,800 athletes are expected to participate in the two events. The recommendation is \$15,000 (\$7,500 per event).

Underground Runner is seeking \$5,000 for its Red Mountain Ultra Marathon and Southern Utah Half Marathon. An estimated 700 non-local athletes are expected to participate. The recommendation is \$5,000.

Matt's Off-Road Recovery is seeking \$100,000 for its 2026 Matt's Off-Road Games. The recommendation is \$50,000.

St. George City is seeking \$75,000 to market and promote the 50th Anniversary of the St. George Marathon in 2026. The recommendation is \$60,000.

Desert Roads & Trails is seeking \$12,000 for its Winter 4x4 Jamboree. The recommendation is \$12,000.

Senior Softball USA is seeking \$25,000 for the 2026 Spring World Championship. The event will host approximately 120 teams. The recommendation is \$25,000.

Great Western Classic Events is seeking \$25,000 for its 2025 Great Western Classic Tournament. The recommendation is \$18,000, plus \$350 per non-local team to a maximum of \$25,000.

MOTION: Motion by Nate Wells to approve the Sports Event Funding & Marketing Requests as recommended.
Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by a unanimous vote.

Black Desert Resort is seeking \$1.9 million per year for its 2026 and 2027 PGA and LPGA tournaments. The funding recommendation is up to \$1.9 million in 2026 and \$1.9 million in 2027.

The Professional Pickleball Association is seeking \$100,000 per year for its 2026 & 2027 PPA tournaments. The funding recommendation is up to \$100,000 per year in 2026 and 2027.

Copper Rock is seeking \$140,000 for its 2026 LPGA Epson Tour. The recommendation is up to \$100,000.

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to approve funding as recommended.
Motion seconded by Zac Nixon and carried by a unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF EVENT FUNDING AND MARKETING REQUESTS

Arts to Zion is seeking \$14,073.25 for the design, print, and distribution of 80,000 Gallery and Museum maps. The recommendation is \$14,073.25.

Tuacahn is seeking \$190,000 to market and promote its 2026 and 2027 Broadway in the Canyon seasons. The recommendation is \$95,000 in 2025 and \$95,000 in 2026, contingent upon an agreeable marketing package.

Washington County Historical Society is seeking \$11,625.00 to print and distribute its 20,000 museum brochures. The recommendation is \$11,625.00.

FMASU is seeking \$3,000 for its Desertscape International Film Festival. The recommendation is \$2,000.

UTU is seeking \$8,000 for its DOCUTAH International Film Festival. The recommendation is \$5,000

Zion Forever Project is seeking \$13,000 for its 2025 Zion Park Invitational. The recommendation is \$5,000.

MOTION: **Motion by Zac Nixon to approve Event Funding & Marketing Requests as recommended.**
Motion seconded by Dave Moody and carried by a unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF FILM REQUESTS

Joyce Kelly, Greater Zion Sales Manager and Film Commission Representative, presented film incentive request of \$1 million to fund the 2025 film *Blood on the Promontory* and \$1.2 million to fund the 2026 TV series *Blue Planet Hotel*.

MOTION: **Motion by Ken Neilson to approve the film incentive requests of \$1 million for the 2025 film *Blood on the Promontory* and \$1.2 million for the TV series *Blue Planet Hotel*.**
Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by a unanimous vote.

CONSIDERATION OF NICA UPDATES AND REQUEST

Leslie Fonger, Greater Zion Destination Development Manager, presented a request to fund the construction of the NICA State Championship Course. The course will encompass more than 20 acres, including parking, the pit zone, and staging areas, with approximately 7 miles of trails. The request is for \$2.8 million over two years for land acquisition, course design, and construction.

MOTION: **Motion by Nate Wells to approve up to \$2.8 million in TRT funding, spread across two years, for the NICA championship mountain bike course. Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by a unanimous vote.**

BOARD AND STAFF UPDATES

Matthew Watson, Greater Zion Community and Partner Relations, reported that Greater Zion will host a Partner Training in the coming weeks for community partners and stakeholders.

MOTION: Motion by Ken Neilson to adjourn

Motion seconded by Dorothy Heers and carried by unanimous vote.

Minutes prepared by Trista Nielson
Adjourned at 12:56 PM