

Utah Board of Tourism Development
Meeting Minutes
Utah Tourism Conference, Bryce Canyon City
Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Board Members Present	Lesha Coltharp, Joanie Hammer, Jessica Merrill, Jason Murray, Nathan Rafferty, Harold Simpson, Jordan Smith, Kevin Smith, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Shayne Wittwer
Board Members Virtual	Kaitlin Eskelson, Melva Sine, CJ Wade
Board Members Excused	Victor Iverson, Graydon Pearson
Tourism & Film Staff	Tera Atwood, Jenica Barber, Rachel Bremer, Ben Cook, Rachel Creer, Lorraine Daly, Ben Dodds, Michelle Evans, Sorell Grow, Kim Heys, Melissa Jackson, Todd K. Jenson, Camille Johnson, Denise Jordan, Becky Keeney, Emma Kwanin, Anna Loughridge, Carli Mahas, Ben Mangelsdorf, Christina Martin, Josh Paluh, Virginia Pearce, Natalie Randall, Arianna Rees, Laici Shumway, Jasmine Simpson, Dave Williams, Diane Wilson, Liz Wilson, Heather Zang, Stacy Zoller

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chair Nathan Rafferty called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and asked for board member introductions.

MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: **Jennifer Wesselhoff motioned to approve the September 12, 2025, board meeting minutes. Jessica Merrill seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Natalie Randall, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism

- Recognized and thanked Celina Sinclair and the Utah Tourism Industry Association. This conference is because of UTIA, and the reason why we have a strong industry. We are able to do the work we do because of UTIA and all of its members.
- Recognized the Utah Office of Tourism and Film team members and asked them to stand.
- The government shutdown has occupied a lot of time during this conference. The partnership and engagement within the industry is unmatched. Tourism directors from other states have said they do not have the network that we do.
- This network has gotten the governor and the state to ensure that our national parks remain open and accessible during the shutdown and federally funded.
- We have had conversations with community leaders across the state. We hosted a virtual meeting this morning with mayors, commissioners, city officials, DMO partners and gateway communities to share all updates.
- Please share this information with your partners and communities as well.

- The key pieces are first, protecting the visitor experience and secondly, protecting our public lands to ensure they will be here for generations to come. Third is ensuring that the economies and gateway communities continue to be vibrant and support local businesses.
- National parks and federal lands will remain accessible during the government shutdown. Specifically, *The Mighty 5®* will remain open with limited services. Utah state parks are not affected by the federal shutdown and remain fully operational.
- The National Parks Service released a contingency plan and we have combed through it. Have discussed it with all the superintendents, with parks nonprofit groups and the federal delegation. Want to make sure that the national parks responses include plans, templates and frameworks that are in line with what is best for our state.
- We do know that parks will not be able to provide regular updates on park conditions - including roads and trails. They will not be updating their social channels or websites.
- All the most updated information will be available at VisitUtah.com/shutdown.
- Governor Cox is leading this charge and is supportive of keeping our public lands open, and we are working collaboratively with many state agencies. GOEO is ensuring that there is strategic support ready. It is through statewide coordination that we are able to prioritize that federal funding supports these areas.
- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has engaged their volunteer stewardship program that works to protect heritage sites. They've notified their stewards of the shutdown and are prepared to be boots on the ground for us. They will be positioned at popular sites and trail heads to welcome visitors and provide visitor information. SHPO is working to prioritize what sites they will be at and position their stewards based on anticipated traffic and needs.
- A press release was sent out early this morning (Oct. 1) outlining what visitors can expect at our national parks.
- Still actively working with the Department of Interior and National Parks Service to finalize the list of services the federal government will fund. We do know resources including shuttle, custodial, water, wastewater, emergency services and law enforcement will remain funded.
- Visitor centers are top of mind for many and those operations are still being reviewed. The state is strongly advocating that this is an essential service as this is a visitor's first stop.
- Bryce Canyon's visitors center will remain open and they are working in coordination with their nonprofit group.
- If state strategic support is needed, there are defined rules to prioritize and it outlines three tiers. Tier I includes the national parks, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Cedar Breaks National Monument. Tiers II and III are connected to many other public areas. The Department of Natural Resources and Division of Outdoor Recreation are working collaboratively with state parks to engage in solutions around law enforcement and custodial resources.

UTAH FILM COMMISSION

Virginia Pearce, Utah Film Commissioner

- Utah Film Commission is a state agency that fits under the Utah Office of Tourism. In spring of 2024, the film incentive approval process was changed to fall under the Utah Board of Tourism Development and it has been a great change.
- Our office's goal is similar to the tourism office, as we market the state for film production. We work to talk about all of the beautiful areas in the state and assist partners in taking advantage of film production in areas. Having films made in Utah has economic and cultural benefits.
- Recent projects include *One Big Happy Family* This one was approved for an incentive in 2023. It is premiering Oct. 3 in select theaters.
- *Home Turf* comes out on October 4 on the Hallmark Channel. It is filmed in and around Salt Lake City, including at the Alta Club.
- *Beauty and the Billionaire* is from a Utah County production company, Candlelight Media. This is season 2 and will be out on Spark TV, Oct. 15.
- Just a reminder that we are having a Utah Film Trail celebration tomorrow night at Sunset Point which is the marker celebrating *Deadwood Coach*, which was filmed in the park in 1924. Sadly, this silent film does not exist anymore.

- The film incentive program was allocated \$20M for FY26. The rural film program is \$12M, the motion picture program is \$6.79M in tax credit and \$1.5M in cash rebate.
- We have approved seven projects this fiscal year and these have filmed in Davis, Salt Lake, Utah, Wasatch, Uintah and Grand counties.
- Have awarded almost \$2.6M which has resulted in almost \$11M in economic impact.

MOTION: Jason Murray motioned to approve \$3,720,441 for an incentive for the following productions which have met the criteria defined by statute. Joanie Hammer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Production	Estimated Utah Spend	Incentive Amount Per Production	Locations (Counties)
<i>Jesus Sees Us</i>	\$300,000	\$60,000 - 20%	Utah
<i>Into the Wilderness</i>	\$329,994	\$65,999 - 20%	Washington & Wayne
<i>Monsters & Aliens</i>	\$480,000	\$96,000 - 20%	Salt Lake & Summit
<i>Ladybug's Garden</i>	\$1,192,027	\$298,007 - 25%	Utah
<i>The Bachelorette</i>	\$2,502,175	\$500,435 - 20%	Various
<i>Iconoclast</i>	\$3,500,000	\$875,000 - 25%	Salt Lake & Weber
<i>Blood on the Promontory</i>	\$7,300,000	\$1,825,000 - 25%	Washington
	\$15,604,196 TOTAL Spend	\$3,720,441 TOTAL Incentives	

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Jason Murray shared that visitor fee increases on federal lands and parks are being reviewed. It is an opportunity for industry representatives to engage and be part of the conversation.
- Kevin Smith commented in the arts and cultural industry that attendance and ticket sales across the state have flattened or gone down. Utah is consistently a leader in theatre attendance and arts participation across the nation. Encouraging residents and visitors to enjoy an event, visit a museum or theater. It benefits all of the state's communities.

MEETING ADJOURNED