

TOURISM TAX ADVISORY BOARD
PENDING MEETING MINUTES FEB 26, 2026

Brittany McMichael called the meeting of the Tourism Tax Advisory Board of Washington County to order at 9:00 AM on Thursday, February 26, 2026, 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: Kevin Smith, Nate Wells, Shayne Wittwer, and Zac Nixon. Other attendees included Deputy County Attorney Steven Scott, Commissioner Victor Iverson, Tourism Director Brittany McMichael, Dixie Convention Center General Manager Jared Stephenson, DCC Events Manager Emilie Bott, and Tourism staff members: Matthew Watson, Joy Schroeder, Joyce Kelly, Linné Marsh, Leslie Fonger, Chad McWilliams, and Jamie Allen.

WELCOME

Brittany McMichael welcomed all attendees, confirmed that a quorum existed for voting on action items, and informed members that Victor Iverson would be in attendance around 9:30 am.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 4, 2025 & JANUARY 22, 2026

MOTION: Motion by Zac Nixon to approve December 4, 2025, Meeting Minutes & January 22, 2026, Meeting Minutes
Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by a unanimous vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Brittany McMichael, Greater Zion Director, reported on current tourism statistics. TRT collections reached \$17.367 million, with October, November, and December setting record highs. This reflects a 6% increase over 2024, exceeding the projected 5% growth. Hotel occupancy through January is 44%, down 4% from January 2025. The average daily rate (ADR) for hotels through January 2026 is \$101.95, up 2.7%, while revenue per available room (RevPAR) is down 1%. Short-term rental occupancy is down 11% from 2025, ADR is up 6%, and RevPAR is up 13%. Zion National Park visitation is up 2% over 2025. The St. George Regional Airport is up 20% over 2025.

Commissioner Victor Iverson joined the meeting.

TOURISM UPDATES

Brittany McMichael reported that airport expansion remains a priority, with funding strategies still to be determined. The legislative session concludes in just over a week, and tourism-related items are focused on film incentives, restaurant tax policy, and alcohol policy updates. In preparation for the closure of the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway and tunnel beginning June 7, 2026, the tourism office is helping market the Zion Corridor Park & Ride to accommodate large vehicles.

The Greater Zion team continues active marketing and sales efforts for the entire region, including conference bids, sporting event recruitment, international sales missions, content development, and national media outreach. Recent coverage has included regional and national media placements highlighting the park-and-ride.

DIXIE CENTER PRESENTATION

Jared Stephenson, Dixie Center Director, presented a report on the Dixie Convention Center (DCC) performance and milestones. The DCC delivered one of its strongest years on record (2025), with the facility in use 80% of the days and event space occupancy ranging from 50–80%, well above typical industry benchmarks. While total attendance held steady at well over 130,000, the DCC continued its strategic shift toward higher-value, non-local conferences and conventions that drive more overnight stays and visitor spending. Thanks to this focus, along with tighter cost controls, smarter staffing, aggressive utility management, and bringing key services like AV support in-house, the DCC achieved a historic milestone in 2025: it operated in a revenue-positive manner for the first time in its history.

CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING REQUESTS

Meeting & Convention Marketing Sponsorship

Joy Schroeder presented a request for up to \$7,000 to help cover one breakfast for The National Association of Publicly Funded Truck Driving Schools Conference at Black Desert Resort on March 12-15, 2026.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve up to \$7,000 in TRT funds for one breakfast for the National Association of Publicly Funded Truck Driving Schools Conference.
Motion seconded by Shayne Wittwer and carried by unanimous vote.

Trail Maintenance Funding Request

Leslie Fonger presented a request to approve the use of \$50,000 of destination development funds to improve trails in Washington County. The funds will target higher-complexity fixes, such as restoring single tread where parallel “braided” lines have formed, rehabbing eroded or rock-strewn sections, and correcting drainage and channelization problems that are turning trails into trenches.

MOTION: Motion by Shayne Wittwer to approve up to \$50,000 in TRCCA funding for trail maintenance.
Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by unanimous vote.

Film Funding Request

Joyce Kelly presented a request to approve \$100,000 in film incentive funding to support a Food Network barbecue challenge production based at Homestead Ranch.

MOTION: Motion by Shayne Wittwer to fund up to \$100,000 in TRT funding for the Food Network BBQ Challenge.
Motion seconded by Nate Wells and carried by unanimous vote.

Sports & Events Requests

Chad McWilliams, Greater Zion Sports and Adventure Manager, presented requests for TRT funds for the following organizations:

The United States Practical Shooting Association is seeking \$70,000 to market and promote its USPSA 2026 Factory Gun Nationals. The recommendation is up to \$70,000

Trail Hero is seeking \$150,000 to promote and market the 2026 Trail Hero & Music Festival. The recommendation is up to \$100,000.

St. George City is seeking funds to market and promote three events spanning 2026-28: \$25,000 for the 2026-2028 St. George Art Festival, \$10,000 for the 2026-2028 Snow Canyon Half Marathon, and \$35,000 for the 2027 & 2028 St. George Marathon. The recommendation is up to \$20,000 for the 2026-2028 St. George Art Festival, up to \$5,000 for the 2026-2028 Snow Canyon Half Marathon, and up to \$30,000 for the 2027 & 2028 St. George Marathon.

Great Western Classic is seeking \$15,000 for event funding for the Great Western Summer Classic. The recommendation is up to \$5,000, plus an additional \$350 per non-local team, for a maximum award of up to \$15,000.

The American Fastpitch Association is seeking \$67,500 in event funding to offset field rental costs. The recommendation is up to \$25,000.

Utah Summer Games is seeking \$10,000 in TRT funding for its 2026 event held in Washington County. The recommendation is up to \$10,000.

The American Cancer Society is seeking event funding for its Southern Utah Golf Classic. The recommendation is an auction item valued at \$800.

St. George Climbing Festival is seeking \$25,000 in event funding for its 2026 St. George Climbing Festival. The recommendation is up to \$2,500 in TRT funding plus up to \$1,200 in social media advertising from the Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve TRT funding as recommended, with the recommendation of up to \$25,000 for the St George Art Festival each year and up to \$35,000 each year for the St. George Marathon. Motion seconded by Shane Wittwer and carried by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Victor Iverson exited the meeting.

Event & Marketing Requests

Jamie Allen presented TRT funding requests on behalf of the following organizations:

Arts to Zion is seeking \$15,800 to fund a centralized cultural calendar and the distribution of its Arts to Zion Gallery Maps. The funding recommendation is up to \$15,800.

Dinosaur AH!torium/ Dinosaur Discovery Site at Johnson Farm is seeking \$47,000 to market and promote its museum. The recommendation is up to \$5,000.

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

Silver Reef Foundation is seeking \$10,170 to print and distribute Museum Rack Cards and its 2026 marketing plan. The funding recommendation is up to \$6,590.

FMASU is seeking \$3,000 to market and promote its 2026 Horrorfest International Film Festival. The funding recommendation is \$2,500.

St. George Dance Company is seeking \$2,950 to market and promote its 2026 Red Rock Dance Festival. The recommendation is up to \$2,950.

St. George Area Chamber of Commerce is seeking \$30,000 to print its 2027 St. George Area Chamber Guide, including the Greater Zion destination pages. The recommendation is up to \$30,000.

FMASU is seeking 3,000 to market and promote its 2027 DesertScape International Film Festival. The recommendation is up to \$2,000.

Kayenta Arts Foundation is seeking \$6,000 for its 2026 Art in Kayenta Festival. The recommendation is up to \$4,500.

Zion Forever Project is seeking \$10,000 for its 2026 Zion Park Invitational. The recommendation is up to \$4,000.

MOTION: Motion by Nate Wells to approve TRT funding as presented, with the exceptions of the Red Rock Music Festival request, which is denied because the 2026 event is canceled, and a recommendation of up to \$5,000 for the 2026 Art in Kayenta Festival.
Motion seconded by Shayne Wittwer and carried by unanimous vote.

America 250 Projects Request

Matthew Watson presented a request for up to \$100,000 in TRCCA funding to create a countywide America 250 grant pool for America 250-themed projects and events created by cities within Washington County, Utah. The funds will be used to design and host patriotic, visitor-friendly projects or events tied to the 250th anniversary of the United States, aligning with increased visitor interest in America 250 experiences.

MOTION: Motion by Kevin Smith to approve up to \$100,000.
Motion seconded by Zac Nixon and carried by unanimous vote.

The next meeting will be held on April 30, 2026.

MOTION: Motion by Zac Nixon to adjourn.
Motion seconded by Kevin Smith and carried by unanimous vote.

Minutes prepared by Linné Marsh,
Washington County Deputy Clerk
Adjourned at 11:44 AM