



Tourism Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: September 12th, 2023

The September 12th, 2023 meeting of the Tourism Advisory Council of West Virginia was convened at 1:00 p.m. at Canaan Valley Resort and Conference Center (230 Main Lodge Road, Davis, WV 26260) in Tucker County and via web conference call.

Advisory Council Members Present:

Kara Dense, Thomas Price, Jeffrey Lusk, Susan M. Riddle, Lisa Strader, Laurel Ziemianski, John Klemish, Brian Helmick, Dominique Ranieri, Garner Marks (representing Secretary of Economic Development Mitch Carmichael), and Brett McMillion (representing Secretary of Commerce James Bailey).

Advisory Council Members Joining via Web Conference Call:

Audy Perry, Robert Peckenpaugh and Sydney Weber

West Virginia Department of Tourism Representatives Present:

Secretary of Tourism Chelsea Ruby

Staff: Krysten Wolfe, Jill Howard, Sarah Harmon, Lauren Hough, Ennis Smith, Perri Bone, Brenna Dugan, Sarah Smithson, Alex Conn, Kaycee Lantz, Kara Gillenwater, Kristian Davis, Paige McElroy and Ralph May.

Call to Order:

Chair of the Tourism Advisory Council Jeffrey Lusk called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Welcome:

Council Chair, Jeffrey Lusk welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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Introductions:

Chair Lusk introduced himself and invited the others present around the room – including Council members and West Virginia Department of Tourism staff. The Council Members joining via web conference call also introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes:

Approval of the Meeting Minutes from 6/7/23:

Chair Lusk asked for approval of the meeting minutes from the previous meeting on June 7th, 2023. John Klemish moved to approve and Lisa Strader seconded the motion. All members approved.

Tourism Exchange USA Presentation:

Presentation of Tourism Exchange USA Program:

Liz Bittner, President and CEO of Travel South USA, along with her colleague Nate Huff, SVP of Tourism Exchange USA provided a short presentation of the Tourism Exchange Program offered by Travel South. Nate explained how the program works as a one-stop exchange for suppliers (accommodations, tours, attractions and outfitters) to manage live availability, pricing and booking across multiple distribution channels, including international. They encouraged council members to contact them directly if they have questions or would like more information about the program.

West Virginia Department of Tourism Report:

Secretary of Tourism Chelsea Ruby provided a report to the Council, including economic impact, visitation, advertising performance, public relations, brand partnerships, new initiatives and tourism tax credit updates.

New Business:

Chair Lusk thanked Secretary Ruby for her report and noted that new business was next on the agenda.

Establishment of Committees:

Chair Lusk shared the following committee assignments with the Council:

Workforce Development Committee:

Chair - Audy Perry
Kara Dense
Thomas Price
Susan Riddle
Sydney Weber
Bradley Reed

Tourism Development Committee:

Chair - Robert Peckenpaugh
Jeffrey Lusk
Lisa Strader
Laurel Ziemianski
Randy Damron
John Klemish
Brian Helmick
Garner Marks
Dominique Ranieri

Chair Lusk confirmed Audy Perry and Robert Peckenpaugh agree to be chairs for their respective committees. A motion to accept was made by Garner Marks and seconded by Lisa Strader. All members approved.

Travel Region Discussion:

Chair Lusk introduced changes to the structure of certain counties currently defined under the Department of Tourism travel regions. Secretary Ruby added more information about the formation of these travel regions several years ago and how the current shifting of tourism assets and traveler preferences have signaled a change to a couple of these regions. The proposed change includes moving McDowell, Mercer and Wyoming counties from the New River/Greenbrier Valley to the Hatfield-McCoy Mountains. Chair Lusk explained the Hatfield-McCoy Mountain region was originally formed from counties of other regions. Lisa Strader noted this change will not affect Visit Southern WV CVB as they also cover Nicholas County, which is part of the Mountain Lakes Region. Greenbrier County was briefly mentioned in regards to which region they would fit best. It was decided that no other changes would be made at this time, but will be discussed at the next meeting. Kara Dense made a motion to approve moving the three counties (McDowell, Mercer and Wyoming counties from the New River/Greenbrier to the Hatfield-McCoy Mountains Region), and John Klemish seconded. All members approved.

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Next Meeting:

Chair Lusk recommended the next meeting be held at a TBD date in late November or early December. It will be virtual. The next in-person meeting will be held on Tourism Day at the State Capitol on January 22nd, 2024.

Adjournment:

Chair Lusk asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dominique Ranieri motioned, Lisa Strader seconded, and the Council voted unanimously to adjourn.

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