



## Tourism Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date: January 22nd, 2024**

The January 22, 2024 meeting of the Tourism Advisory Council of West Virginia was convened at 1:00 p.m. at 1900 Kanawha Blvd East, Charleston, WV 25305 in Building 3.

### **Advisory Council Members Present:**

Kara Dense, Thomas Price, Jeffrey Lusk, Lisa Strader, Dominique Ranieri, Robert Peckenpaugh, Audy Perry, Garner Marks (representing Secretary of Economic Development Mitch Carmichael), Randy Dameron, Brian Helmick, Laurel Ziemianski (joining virtually), Brad Reed (joining virtually and representing Secretary of Commerce James Bailey)

### **Advisory Council Members NOT Present:**

John Klemish, Sydney Weber, and Susan Riddle

### **West Virginia Department of Tourism Representatives Present:**

Secretary of Tourism Chelsea Ruby

Staff: Krysten Wolfe, Sarah Smithson, Corey Pierce, Christina Fowler, Lauren Hough, Lindsey Funk, Ennis Smith, Amanda Legg, Brenna Dugan, Jill Howard, Destiny Workman, Ralph May, Kaycee Lantz, Sarah Harmon, Kristian Davis, Alex Conn, and Paige McElroy

### **Call to Order:**

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

### **Welcome:**

Chair Jeffrey Lusk welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Roll Call:**

Chair Lusk presented the roll call with each member, noting if they were present.

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### **Approval of Minutes:**

*Approval of the meeting minutes from the November 28, 2023 Tourism Advisory Council meeting, as well as committee meeting minutes from December 15, 2023 and January 16, 2024:*

Chair Lusk requested review and approval of the meeting minutes from the previous meeting on November 28th, 2023. Kara Dense moved to approve, and Brian Helmick seconded the motion. All members approved unanimously.

### **West Virginia Department of Tourism Report:**

Secretary of Tourism Chelsea Ruby provided a report to the Council, including public relations efforts, new market expansion efforts by adding one or two additional markets, and a cooperative advertising overview.

Secretary Ruby also gave an overview of the proposed budget for the upcoming year.

The Train Your Team Program was also discussed. There are still workforce dollars to be spent. The program provides \$2,000 per employee annually for tourism organization's training needs.

### **New Business:**

Chair Lusk thanked Secretary Ruby and noted that new business was next on the agenda, including two committee reports.

Economic Development Committee Chair Robert Peckenpaugh shared that the first Economic Development Committee meeting was convened virtually on December 15, 2023. He thanked Ennis Smith and Meghan Smith for their presentations, detailing the Tourism Development Act Tax Credit and the BuildWV Tax Credit Program.

Committee Chair Peckenpaugh noted that after the presentations, members of the committee asked questions and shared feedback on the program and other similar funding options including: Partner Community Capital, Amler Grants, Industrial Road Access Grants, Earmark Matching Grants and Economic Enhancement Funds.

Tourism Workforce Committee Chair Audy Perry reported that the first meeting of the Tourism Workforce Committee took place virtually on January 16, 2024. He reviewed the Department of Education initiative, funded through West Virginia Department of Tourism's federal EDA grant, that allows schools across the state to apply for field trip funding. The program is a pilot program that was launched during the current school year.

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It provides \$1,600 to approved applicants to fund field trips for teachers and students, providing opportunities to tour the state. The application for this funding period is due by February 1, 2024. The goal is to have the ability to offer the program again in the upcoming years. Committee members requested a link to the application to share this opportunity with schools in their local areas.

Committee Chair Perry also reported on the Tourism Works online training modules that Blue Ridge Community and Technical College is developing in partnership with the West Virginia Department of Tourism. The program will provide tourism-related educational opportunities via an online platform that will be free for students across the state. Chair Perry encouraged Advisory Council members to keep lines of communication open with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools in their areas and to talk with those schools not offering a tourism program of study at the high school level to add it to their curriculum.

Committee Chair Audy Perry also discussed the Train Your Team program. He encouraged members to send information about the program and a link to access inquiry forms to business partners in the industry.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Tourism Advisory Council is scheduled as a virtual meeting on **April 18, 2024 at 2 pm.**

**Public Comments:**

Chair Lusk asked if there were any comments from the public. There were no comments.

**Adjournment:**

Chair Lusk asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Brian Helmick motioned, Audy Perry seconded, and the Council voted unanimously to adjourn.

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