



## Tourism Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date: September 8th, 2024**

The September 8th, 2024 meeting of the Tourism Advisory Council of West Virginia was convened at 12:00 p.m. in Room 215 at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center.

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

Chair Jeffrey Lusk, Robert Peckenpauh, Kara Dense, Susan Riddle, Lisa Strader, Thomas Price, and Garner Marks

### **Advisory Council Members Present on Google Meet:**

Laurel Ziemianski and Audy Perry

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

Secretary of Tourism Chelsea Ruby

Staff: Ennis Smith, Brenna Dugan, Amanda Legg, Perri Bone, Paige McElroy and Lauren Hough

### **Others Present:**

Guest Speaker Sean Bayliss (representing International Tourism Resources Group)

WV Governor's School for Tourism Students: Evan Bass, Saelyr Wilson, Izzy Freeman, Cora Kozen, Harley Gibson, Bindi Lowe, Zane Cook, Benno Knobloch, Ava Brenneke and Hope-Lynn Ewing.

Student's Parents and Chaperones: Amber Bass, Siobhan Wilson, Jessica Freeman, Beth Watson, Drema Hargrove, Rachel Lanham, Rachel Cook, Koral Brenneke and Stephanie Fritzman.

### **Call to Order:**

Chair of the Tourism Advisory Council Jeffrey Lusk called the meeting to order at approximately 12:09 p.m.

### **Welcome:**

Chair Jeffrey Lusk welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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**Roll Call:**

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

**Review and Approval of Minutes:**

*Approval of the meeting minutes from the April 18th, 2024 Tourism Advisory Council meeting.*

Chair Lusk asked for approval of the previous meeting minutes. Robert Peckenpaugh motioned and Kara Dense seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**West Virginia Department of Tourism Report and Updates:**

First, Secretary Ruby introduced the West Virginia Governor's School for Tourism students and their families. Then she presented her tourism report from the second quarter of 2024.

The Department of Tourism recently received updated economic impact numbers for 2023 which show \$6.3 billion dollars in annual visitor spending. We have fully recovered from the pandemic, with visitor spending up 23% from pre-pandemic 2019 levels over the national US economy's 9% recovery for the same timeframe. However, the workforce has not fully recovered. The industry is serving more visitors with just 97% of the workforce that existed in 2019.

Secretary Ruby informed the Council of the Department's new marketing agency changes. Miles Partnership will focus on brand marketing, with the Zimmerman Group overseeing public relations. A third agency, Artisan Council will specialize in social media marketing.

There were no questions and Secretary Ruby wrapped up her presentation.

**International Tourism Presentation:**

Secretary Ruby introduced Sean Bayliss with the International Tourism Resources Group. Sean works with the WV Department of Tourism to develop and promote strategies for international marketing. His presentation highlighted key points such as connecting with international tour operators, growing overall product offering and selection, developing local partners to the international stage, road trip initiatives, trade shows and further education for our partners.

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Secretary Ruby thanked Sean for his presentation and noted the emphasis on international tourism growth in our state. She also mentioned that the Department will attend the Brand USA International Trade Show in London this October.

**Governor’s School on Tourism Recap:**

Secretary Ruby provided a brief overview of the Governor’s School for Tourism that took place in June. She introduced nine students, one from each region, who were present in the meeting. Each student shared which region they represent and their favorite part of their Governor’s School experience. Chair Lusk added that he enjoyed visiting with the students when they rode on the Hatfield-McCoy Trails.

**Workforce Initiative Recap:**

Secretary Ruby briefly updated the Council on the current workforce initiatives from the Department. Tourism is now being taught in all 55 counties, fulfilling a goal set from the beginning of the program. There will also be an addition of four new or enhanced College and Technical School programs focused on tourism related programming.

**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. Susan Riddle motioned, Robert Peckenpaugh seconded, and the Council voted unanimously to adjourn.