



## **Governor's Tourism Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday & Thursday, April 16-17, 2025**

**Wednesday – Belle Fourche tours: 2 PM MT to 4:30 PM**

**Thursday – Board meeting at Branding Iron Steakhouse & Social Club: 9:00 AM  
MT to 12:30 PM (lunch served)  
19079 US-85, Belle Fourche, SD 57717**

### **Board Members**

Ann Lesch  
Julie Ranum  
Carmen Schramm  
Kristie Wagner  
Frank Smith  
John Brockelsby  
Caleb Arceneaux  
Val Rauch  
Gwyn Wathen  
Ivan Sorbel

### **Tourism Staff**

Wanda Goodman  
Kirk Hulstein  
Ciara Forest  
Mike Gussiaas  
Calvin Bloemendaal  
Teresa Tople  
Kortney Fethkenher  
Erin Weinzettel  
Alexa Dorn  
Ashley Worth  
Ann DeVany  
Cole Irwin

President Ann Lesch called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting in Belle Fourche and thanked Belle Fourche Chamber director for the tours.

Deputy Secretary Goodman also welcomed the board, other attendees and thanked Belle Fourche Chamber director for the prior day's tours.

Michaela Horn the director of the Belle Fourche Chamber is working to get people to get off the interstate and come to Belle Fourche. Belle Fourche is hopping with activities during the week and the weekends.

President Lesch asked each board member to give a brief report from their area.

### **Carmen Schramm – Yankton**

- Camping is picking up and campers are starting to come in
- American Foods Group closed, and the area lost 250 jobs
- A new little restaurant opened down by the river

### **Ivan Sorbel – Pine Ridge**

- The motel and restaurant reopened in March; they have been closed since COVID
- Living History Village is getting ready to open
- Oglala Tribe hosted 38 tribes
- POW WOWs are starting

### **Frank Smith – Gettysburg**

- Ice fishing ended early with the ice melting in early March
- Fishing for Northern was good
- The Walley fishing is starting early due to low water
- Campgrounds look good and are filling up
- The pheasant population is coming back and seeing more of them

### **Kristi Wagner - Whitewood**

- Shout out to Carmen on the great job with TCSD
- Rural communities really appreciate tourism supporting them
- Communities want to add a tourism block through Economic Development

### **Val Rausch – Big Stone City /Abbey of the Hills**

- Abby of the Hills retreat center has 52 events scheduled, most of these are on weekends
- Working and marketing to get more business retreats to schedule during the week
- Abby of the Hills has 65 rental rooms

### **Caleb Arceneaux – Black Hills / LIV Hospitality**

- The new mayor in Deadwood will be a positive for the area and do good things
- Deadwood had a good first quarter
- First quarter was up a solid 3%
- The booking window seems to be 14 days
- 180 guest workers this year
- The Clubhouse opened
- There is now a drive-up Starbucks by Watiki
- Three hotel renovations are happening-700 rooms will be renovated

### **John Brockelsby – Rapid City/Reptile Gardens**

- Reptile Gardens opened March 1<sup>st</sup>
- March and April were both up
- There is uncertainty with travel as that is an easy budget that can be cut
- The National Parks are facing many challenges with staff

### **Gwyn Wathen - Hill City**

- There has been a mass of cancellations for Canada
- The Dude Ranch outside of Hill City is open
- Reservations are down about 8.5%
- The booking window for camping and lodging is wide open

### **Julie Ranum – Watertown**

- Soft start to the year
- The Watertown Ramkota was sold
- The city is looking for new management
- There is a 42,000 square foot fun center
- Thunder Road has been renamed Legends
- The Shamrocks are the new mascot of the new ice rink
- More Terry Redlin originals will be added to the center
- They are losing bus tours-all tours that were booked have cancelled

### **Ann Lesch – Ingalls Homestead, DeSmet**

- The Dairy Queen in DeSmet closed
- Camping reservations are coming in mostly on the weekends
- Many spring break requests to come to the Homestead
- 1-2 years of construction happening on Main Street
- There was an easement from GFP to make the Hwy 14 trail project longer
- The DeSmet website is getting revised
- The attendance from SD at Pheasant fest was amazing

### **Michelle Thomson-Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association**

- Up 2.4% in 2024
- Average days spent in the hills in 2024 was down. Average days spent was 3.2
- In 2025 there will be a theme for each month on the website
- Lit Swap is May 6<sup>th</sup>
- Opening and closing dates are on the calendar
- The tear off travel and motorcycle maps are available
- The association was honored to win the first Rumbling Rally award

### **Carmen Schramm-Update on Tourism Coalition of South Dakota**

- The Tourism Coalition of South Dakota monitored 39 legislative bills
- Six outfitters came out and helped with the bills that were not members of the coalition(that was great to see)
- Pheasant fest was a good opportunity to meet with outfitters and get contact information back in SD. Outfitters from Chamberlain, Winner, Mobridge and more.
- The Box is a great place to host events

### **Wanda Goodman-Budget and Revenue updates**

- Provided most recent revenue updates, including the revenues from the Tourism Promotion Tax and the Gaming Handle

#### **Promotion Tax:**

- The last we reported was for November's receipts, so we have had 5 months of receipts since our last board meeting.
- In December (October Activity), we receipted in \$1,584,176 in promotion tax, which you can see is slightly above last December by 0.41%
- In January (November Activity) we were up 4.78% compared to January 2024 and receipted in \$1,146,203
- February was another good month, which would be December activity, we were up 5.71% compared to last February and received in \$1,187,390.
- In March (January activity), we received in \$815,392, which was 6.18% higher than last March.
- In April (February Activity) we receipted in \$858,553 which was another increase of 1.75% over last April.
- So, this means we are 2.73% ahead of FY24 for the same time period so still looking really strong.

#### **Gaming Tax**

- For the gaming tax, we will also have 5 more months of receipts that we have not reported on.
- In December, we receipted in \$407,933
- In January, we receipted in \$303,305
- In February, we receipted in \$342,792
- In March, it was \$322,179
- In April, we received \$318,743

### **Wanda Goodman-Destination Capitol Hill**

- Participated in an "education day" to hear about the US Travel Association's main priorities
- Attended meetings with Senate Majority Leader Thune, Senator Rounds, and Congressman Johnson
- Attended the Organization of American States' Inter-American Congress where Sec. Hagen presented on our work to develop tribal tourism in South Dakota

## **Kortney Fethkenher and Ann DeVany - Global Public Relations and Content Services**

### **Kortney Fethkenher**

PR – Lou Hammond Group:

- 4.48B Total Media Impressions Fiscal Year-to-Date
- \$3.3B Total Media Value Fiscal Year-to-Date
- 430 Total Earned Media Pieces
- GoPro + TSD Winter Campaign – Potential campaign inclusion for Winter 2025-2026
- Western Adventure Press Trip June 2025
- Pitching baby bison at Custer State Park to media outlets
- Ashlea Halpern – *Conde Nast Traveler* + partnering with Motorcycle Industry Council
- Buffalo Roundup 2025 possible satellite media broadcast and Atlas Obscura TV show work
- Women's Only Hunt October 2025 at Scattergun Lodge
- Broadcast Tour – Broadcast in priority markets focused on events
- Maximizing trends in media – Noctourism, family travel, power of play

Social Media:

- Q1 Influencers:
  - Aki and Koichi (Black Hills)
  - GoPro x Brooke Murray & Fam: Winter Campaign (Black Hills)
  - GoPro x Adrenaline Rush Crew: Winter Campaign (Black Hills)
- Upcoming Influencers:
  - Fishing influencer in the Glacial Lakes region April 2025
  - The Wander Diary in the Southeast June 2025
- 2024 EOY Organic Social Stats:
  - Users Reached: 78.3M
  - New Followers: 35.9K
  - Engagements: Estimated 500K
- Travel South Dakota leads competitors in follower growth percentage for Q1 across Meta platforms.

### **Ann DeVany**

- Susan Richardson and Susan Scholdt from Miles Partnership presented on the status of the redesign of TravelSouthDakota.com.
- They shared what has been done so far and the timeline for the relaunch of the website, which is planned for the week of July 7, 2025.

## **Kirk Hulstein-Industry Outreach and Development Team**

### **Tourism Conference Recap**

- Really strong attendance at this year's conference
  - 600+ attendees
  - 189 first timers
  - 17 mentors and mentees
- Tourism Day at the Capitol was a success and thanks to TCSD for sponsoring that

- Mentorship program continues to expand, and the participants liked the improvements made for this year
- All but 3 evaluations rated the sessions and speakers either “good” or “great”
- Venue and meals were also ranked high. Several mentions of improved service, meals and venue upgrades this year

### **Spring Customer Service Seminars**

- Will be offering training at 7 locations this year
- Rebecca Heiss will be sharing insights into how to use stress/fear as a competitive advantage
- Being held May 12-15, 2025

### **Ciara Forest**

- We are working on our comprehensive framework with GWU and will be sharing more on that during the July webinar.

### **Calvin Bloemendaal**

#### **Research projects:**

Traditional:

- Longwoods ROI + Image and Perception
- Future partners visitor profile

New:

- Datafy
- Keydata hotel data
- Future Partners SATS+

#### **According to recent survey results:**

- 87% of Americans are excited for leisure travel.
- 57% are prioritizing leisure travel as a budget priority in the next three months.
- 83.7% expect to travel the same or more in the next

### **Mike Gussiaas, Chief Marketing and Creative Officer, Global Marketing and Brand Strategy**

- Gussiaas shared the upcoming media cadence for the department’s peak efforts with the board. He said many campaigns started coming online in March and hit full stride in April. In total, all efforts will produce more than 525 million impressions.
- Gussiaas highlighted the upcoming Travel South Dakota, Jeep and Matador Network partnership as one that will not be live this spring but gave an update on shooting scheduled for mid-May with an early July launch. Gussiaas said they have locked in local talent, and he is inspired by their stories and optimistic about the effort that will reach more than 52 million impressions. The board members asked if a vehicle giveaway was decided upon and Gussiaas shared that ultimately, the department was

happy with the planned promotions and decided against adding that. Gussiaas also said it could be a follow-up to keep excitement and awareness up.

- Last, Gussiaas shared creative with the board on a new direction for the private/public Sturgis co-op effort, which the team and partners were excited about.

### **Alexa Dorn**

- Brand USA is featuring South Dakota in peak video and digital marketing efforts in their 30 second video featuring Mount Rushmore, Badlands, and Bison on Prairie. This campaign is launched in 12 markets. We also now have access to a Brand USA Research hub- it is built to help stay ahead of fast- moving factors- currency shifts, and traveler sentiment swings.
- Buffalo Roundup will be featured in Small Town Big Story by host Dylan Thomas on Go USA TV. This is a complimentary opportunity with the production team being atlas obscura.
- We are running full funnel Opti Campaigns in Canada, UK, India, Germany, France. UK and Canada. Estimated impressions of over 9.3M in the newer markets we are working with in India, France, and Germany. This is our first time running an Opti in India after visiting the market.
- Social Video Strategy- We worked to create social video assets that will live on Brand USA channels, in paid campaigns, and in web galleries for partners to share. There will be a campaign boosting these videos in Canada, UK and India with an estimated reach of 17 million impressions.

### **Erin Weinzettel**

- Forever 605 Campaign launched mid-March with video, display, social and print generating over 9.6 million estimated impressions
- Efforts to date for the campaign has resulted in over 9,000 pledges signed of individuals pledging to be stewards of our state
- Additional partnership efforts have launched with Game, Fish & Parks through park signage, posters and collateral, as well as social and email messaging through Game, Fish & Parks owned channels
- Travel South Dakota's Forever 605 owned efforts have also launched with email marketing to the industry and consumers as well as upcoming efforts in the works for Forever 605 Day

### **Wanda Goodman, America 250 South Dakota Commission and planned activities**

- Provided brief updates/reminders regarding the America 250 Commission

President Lesch asked if there were any other questions or comments and mentioned the upcoming meeting in Brookings July 16-17.

Meeting adjourned around 12:00 PM