



**Governor's Tourism Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday & Thursday, April 22-23, 2026
Wednesday – Mitchell tours: 12:45 to 4 PM CT
Thursday – Board meeting at The Depot, 210 S Main St, Mitchell SD
57301
8:30-1 PM (lunch served)**

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
Mike Gussiaas
Cole Irwin
Katlyn Svendsen
Ann DeVany
Teresa Tople
Calvin Bloemendaal
Hallie Willey
Alexa Dorn
Stephanie Spronk
Bailey Tysdal

Other

Doreen Nelson
Keelie Konfrst
Mike Lauristen

President Caleb Arceneaux called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting in Mitchell and the Mitchell CVB for the tours.

Deputy Secretary Goodman also welcomed the board, other attendees and thanked Mitchell CVB for the prior day's tours

CVB Executive Director Mike Lauristen welcomed the board members and the Travel South Dakota team. He shared a short video on the history of the Corn Palace.

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

Carmen Schramm – Yankton

- Nice weather in the area
- Reservations are up 118% from last year
- Lewis and Clark has added new cottages and camp sites
- Culture Cove is offering new retreats and wellness area

Ivan Sorbel – Pine Ridge

- Ivan is a new board member for the Pine Ridge Chamber of Commerce
- June 12th is the first Powwow in Kyle
- Turkey season has been good in Pine Ridge
- Red Cloud Heritage Center has a new Art Center

Frank Smith – Gettysburg

- Boat ramps are in
- Need some moisture to bring the water levels up
- Fishing for Northern has been good
- 12 new camping sites have been added
- Eight new boat sheds have been built
- Looking forward to a busy year-reservations are good

Kristi Wagner - Whitewood

- Wall had many out of state visitors, consisting of more than 10 different states
- Rural communities really appreciate tourism supporting them

Val Rausch – Big Stone City /Abbey of the Hills

- Abby of the Hills is busy as ever and is well staffed
- Will be attending the Lit Swap in Watertown
- Abby of the Hills is looking for a new director

Caleb Arceneaux – Black Hills / LIV Hospitality

- Lodging is down
- Gaming is up
- Gas prices need to stay down for travelers to come to South Dakota
- A lot of data center discussions

John Brockelsby – Rapid City/Reptile Gardens

- 90 tortoises and wrestling alligators were lost in the fire
- Breaking ground in May for the New tortoise enclosure
- Business has been up
- Hoping for a profitable year
- The national parks are facing many challenges with staff

Gwyn Wathen - Hill City

- Wax museum has been open for one month and revenue is down
- Rapid City KOA revenue is up 12% (open year-round now)
- Palmer Gulch lodging is up 50% with 100-125 family reunions booked
- Overall, down in reservations but up in revenue
- High Country has 15 cabins, but actively buying cabins
- Will be lucky to have H-2B workers here by July 1

Julie Ranum – Watertown

- On April 1st over 50 unfinished art pieces of Terry Redlin were at the Art Center
- The old city hall was demolished, and a new hotel will be built
- TCSD is promoting downtown Watertown

Ann Lesch – Ingalls Homestead, DeSmet

- Staffing is full capacity-with many applicants
- New arch over Main St was installed
- Laura Ingalls Wilder house is on 3rd St
- Little House on the Prairie is to be released on July 9th and renewed for Season 2

Carmen Schramm-Update on Tourism Coalition of South Dakota

- Good conversations with US Travel and congressional delegation at Destination Capitol Hill
- Good insights sent to Senator Thune
- Two-week media blitz coming up
- TCSD has three new rack cards coming out
- Implementing a member-to-member drive to build TCSD membership

Hallie Willey-Budget and Revenue updates

Promotion Tax:

- The last we reported was for December's receipts, so we have had 4 months of receipts since our last board meeting.
- In January (November Activity) we receipted in \$1,158,708 and this was 1.09% higher than January 2025
- February, we saw a decrease when looking at February 2025, a decrease of 7.08% and we receipted in \$1,103,323.
- In March (January activity), we received in \$805,899, which was a slight decrease when looking at last March of 1.16%.
- Lastly, in April (February Activity) we received in \$895,544 which we finally saw an increase in looking at last April, up 4.31%
- This means we are 2.30% ahead of FY25 for the same time period so still looking strong.

Gaming Tax

- For the gaming tax, we will also have 4 more months of receipts that we have not reported on.
- In January, we received \$340,614, which was a 12.3% increase over last January
- In February, we received \$364,260, which was another increase of 6.26% over last February.
- In March, it was \$339,312, another increase of 5.32% over last year.
- And lastly in April, we received \$365,101 and an even large increase of 14.54%.
- We are up 5.48% so far this year compared to last year at this time.

Katlyn Svendsen-PR and Content Services

Final Rose Parade media metrics:

- 422 total placements from October 2025-January 2026
- Estimated total audience reach was more than **248 million** and garnered **4.1 billion impressions**.
- We conducted a winter shoot this spring, and we were able to obtain both some winter shots and a lot of great spring/evergreen shots.
- Good Morning America is airing their South Dakota piece of 50 States in 50 Weeks.
- International journalist will be coming to De Smet for a Laura Ingalls Wilder story.
- Digital accessibility continues to be a priority for Travel South Dakota, and they recommend the same for partners. Federal compliance date has been pushed back by a year or two, depending on the size of the entity. Both SDVisit.com and TravelSouthDakota.com are in a good place, but the team will continue to focus on this as a best practice.

Cole Irwin-Global Travel and Trade

- Shared an overview of international travel to the USA forecasted by US Travel and Brand USA.
- Provided insights from tour companies and their predictions for 2026, while USA is tracking behind, our region is flat or even up in some intense.
- Covered our past and upcoming tradeshow events (ABA, IRU, IPW and Go West)
- Talked about upcoming motorcoach efforts and doing a presentation for Premier World Discovery at their SD symposium in May
- Covered which destination immersion tours we were doing this spring/summer and where they are heading.

Wanda Goodman- 2026 Mount Rushmore Fireworks

- Provided updates on number of tickets requested and number of tickets awarded
- Talked about progress with the Run of Show programming
- Updated the Board on the hiring of Pyro Spectaculars as the fireworks contractor, who also held the contract in 2020

Kirk Hulstein-Industry Outreach and Development Team

- Destination development program:
 - 2025 we had a successful pilot year. Planning to continue the program and implement learnings.
 - Year two applications open May 20 through June 30, 2026.
- Welcome center staff familiarization tour:
 - 3 days in the northeast part of South Dakota.
 - Saw as many communities and destinations as possible.
- FY27 TAP Grants:
 - 87 Applications Received
 - 40 Events Awarded
 - \$200k Distributed

Bailey Tysdal

- Received feedback from the Board on the Great Face Program, Great Place Program and Online Hospitality Training that will be taken into consideration as a part of our annual review of these programs.
- Gave the board information on two opportunities happening in the first week of May:
 - National Travel & Tourism Week
 - Spring Customer Service Seminar
 - James Robilotta is the speaker
 - Hosting the seminars in Rapid City, Hill City, Chamberlain, Aberdeen and Sioux Falls
 - Free, no registration required
 - Partnering with the South Dakota Retailers Association.

Calvin Bloemendaal

- Continuing with creative focus group schedule. Added another quantitative survey
- Received ROI and Brand health studies, positive results
- Received resident sentiment study, also with positive results

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

- Gussiaas shared that the 2026 Peak campaign efforts are in full swing, having launched in March and showcasing “Free to Roam” campaign elements such as the 30-second general-audience brand spot, the 15-second family-audience video spot, and KC out-of-home, which is running in market during the World Cup.
- He reported a strategic shift this year in the allocation of media investment across awareness, consideration, and conversion-focused efforts. This year, the department shifted 11% of its investment from awareness tactics to increased consideration and conversion tactics. Gussiaas also shared how the Community Co-op program, with 15

partners this peak season, plays an important role in helping boost both consideration and conversion tactics.

- Outside of the co-op, Gussiaas also showed how the “Free to Roam” campaign influences other campaigns like the 2026 Fishing campaign that’s currently running, playing the 30-second fishing video done in conjunction with Game, Fish and Parks. The spot is part of a large digital campaign that targets 10% In-state and surrounding drive market starts, plus Dallas and Arizona.
- The department also shared a new initiative and efforts with Brand USA and their “America the Beautiful” campaign, targeting Australia, the UK, and Ireland. South Dakota is one of only five partners to co-op with BUSA in the campaign.
- Gussiaas and Alexa Dorn shared the 30-second video developed as part of the campaign. Early performance reports are strong, with the campaign performing 90% above view-thru-completion rate benchmarks and 60% above cost-per-completed-view rates.
- Lastly, Gussiaas shared recent marketing awards and accolades from the department and its agency partners.

Wanda Goodman- RFP Recap

- Provided insight into the RFP process, from evaluation of the written submissions to the process of oral presentations and evaluations.
- Asked board members who attended the oral presentations to weigh in on their impressions
- Asked the Tourism Team to share their thoughts on the process

Wanda Goodman, America 250 South Dakota Commission and planned activities

- Provided brief updates/reminders regarding the America 250 Commission

Wanda Goodman

- Shared the 2025 Annual Highlights sheets with the board
- Discussed future board meeting sites and asked the board for their ideas

President Arceneaux asked if there were any other questions or comments and is looking forward to the meeting in July at Box Elder.

Meeting adjourned around 1:00 PM