



Governor's Tourism Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday December 4, 2025

Dolly Reed Plaza
711 E Wells Ave, Pierre SD 57501
11:00AM-2PM

Board Members

Ann Lesch
Carmen Schramm
Kristie Wagner
Frank Smith
John Brockelsby
Ivan Sorbel
Val Rauch
Gwyn Wathen
Caleb Arceneaux
Kristi Wagner
Tom Biegler

Tourism Staff

James Hagen
Wanda Goodman
Hallie Willie
Katlyn Svendsen
Mike Gussiaas
Calvin Bloemendaal
Terea Tople
Cole Irwin
Bailey Tysdal
Thad Friedeman
Angie Bartel
Ann DeVany
Michele Ganschow
Ashley Worth
Calley Geigle
Kyler Flock
Shawntae Moran

President Ann Lesch called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting Pierre.

Secretary Hagen welcomed the board to Pierre, went over a few of the agenda items that would be covered, and made a special note to call out board member Johnny Brockelsby and tell him that he and the entire team at Reptile Gardens have been in our thoughts and prayers these past two weeks.

Deputy Secretary Goodman conducted the annual review of the AG's explanation of SB 74, which describes the State's open meeting laws. President Lesch called for a motion that all board members had reviewed and understood the explanation. Krisit Wagner made a motion, seconded by Caleb Arceneaux

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

Carmen Schramm – Yankton

- Hwy 81 is now open
- Almost all the storefronts are open at the mall
- Archery tournament coming next year to Yankton
- Lake use was up and down this year

Tom Biegler – Sioux Falls

- Downtown Sioux Falls is vibrant with a very walkable area
- Downtown is busy even when it is slow with all that is going on in the area
- Ups and downs over the year but overall, we seem to be in a good spot
- Media and social media has been great in promoting South Dakota

Frank Smith – Gettysburg

- The last year has been good
- Pulled the docks out of the water at the end of November
- More boat sheds and camping sites are being added
- Pheasant hunting has been good
- Hunters are loving the weather in South Dakota

Kristi Wagner - Whitewood

- So much construction is ending which is great to see
- Smaller communities are doing more festivals and realizing they are a great way to promote themselves

Val Rausch – Big Stone City /Abbey of the Hills

- Ice is starting to form on the lakes
- Hotels are near record for being full in Aberdeen
- Looking for a new director for Abbey of the Hills
- Glacial Lakes and Prairies voted Val in as President

Caleb Arceneaux – Black Hills / LIV Hospitality

- Booking window is short (very last minute)
- Tax increment Finance districts are what is going on in West River / Rapid City
- Overall, 2025 should be up

John Brockelsby – Rapid City/Reptile Gardens

- Tourism advertising has helped promote South Dakota
- Hwy 16 may not be under construction in 2026 with the 250th celebration and the Mount Rushmore fireworks, maybe after the Sturgis Rally

Gwyn Wathen - Hill City

- 2025 has been an up and down year
- The Wax Museum and mini-golf in Keystone was way up this year
- Palmer Gulch made the top 15 campground list in Forbes Magazine
- There is year-round camping in Rapid City now
- Palmer Gulch sold out in 6 hours after the announcement of the 2026 fireworks

Julie Ranum – Watertown

- The revenues have been up and down for the year
- The museum had the Christmas Market on December 4th
- Downtown is thriving-14 store fronts had living windows (live models in the windows)
- Three more Terry Redlin original paintings made it back to the center
- 173 of the 214 paintings are at the center
- Summer of 2026 will have a Summer Art Program
 - Open to all ages
 - Students will be finishing 50 Terry Redlin paintings that have not been completed

Ann Lesch – Ingalls Homestead, DeSmet

- Construction is all finished in DeSmet area
- There is a new Economic Development Director
- Booking window is crazy
- Pageant numbers were flat this year

Ivan Sorbel-Martin

- Heavy road construction in the area, this encourages people to take the Badlands route
- Pine Ridge is also dealing with road construction
- LNI in Rapid City is coming up in a few weeks
- Hunting has been good with out of state hunters

Hallie Willey-Budget and Revenue updates

Promotion Tax:

- We received in \$2,087,826 in November which would be October activity. This was up 4.88% compared to last November. This brings us to our total receipts so far this fiscal year to \$13,687,001, and we are up 3.33% compared to FY25 over the same timeframe.

Gaming Tax:

- We receipted in \$465,275 in November which was up by 1.72% compared to last November of \$457,400. This brings our total for this year to \$2,675,104, which is up 2.03% compared to FY25 over the same timeframe

Katlyn Svendsen-Senior Director, Global Public Relations and Content Services

- Rose Parade planning is going well.
- The float is looking great in the final stages of the build.
- We are going to be doing an activation outside of the float decorating warehouse and will be working with Gaylen's Popcorn on the activation and provide bison hats to key consumers and media throughout the event.
- A few media opportunities have been locked in for Sec. Hagen as well.

Bailey Tysdal- Industry Training & Legislative Relations Manager

- Discussed board member roles/responsibilities during the 2026 Governor's Conference on Tourism, along with changes to the agenda and floor layout this year.

Deputy Secretary Wanda Goodman – Deputy Secretary Goodman provided updates regarding the 2026 America 250 fireworks celebration at Mt. Rushmore.

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

- Gussiaas updated the board on the department's total winter campaigns, including spends, reach, markets, paid media flighting and various TV and video spots from the winter regional and local Forever 605 stewardship campaigns. He also highlighted the various sports partnerships and sports programming buys the department has currently underway.
- Gussiaas also shared with the board that the department recently received six HSMAI Adrian Awards. The awards are for campaigns, the department's social media influencer efforts, and their Apple Map Guide program.

Calvin Bloemendaal-Research Update

Research Projects:

- Continuing with our plan to conduct focus groups in FY26.
- Phase 1 has been completed.
- Phase 2 is beginning this week.
- Using learnings from each phase to inform the strategy of the next phase.

Tourism Conference Awards voting

- Secretary Hagen and the team through the list of Tourism Conference Annual Awards nominees and helped oversee the voting for each category.

President Lesch asked if there were any other questions or comments. She thanked everyone for coming, wished everyone a Merry Christmas and is looking forward to seeing everyone at the Conference in January.

Secretary Hagen thanked the board for a great meeting, asked them to reach out if they had any questions about the Tourism Conference in January, and wished them all a Merry Christmas.

Meeting adjourned around 2:00 PM