



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

**Thursday October 10, 2024, 9:00AM to 11:30AM**

**County Sportsman's Club**

**105 Sports Street, Murdo SD 57559**

### **Board Members**

Ann Lesch  
Carmen Schramm  
Kristi Wagner  
Frank Smith  
John Brockelsby  
Caleb Arceneaux  
Ivan Sorbel  
Gwyn Wathen

### **Tourism Staff**

Jim Hagen  
Wanda Goodman  
Kirk Hulstein  
Mike Gussiaas  
Bailey Tysdal  
Teresa Tople  
Hallie Willey  
Michele Ganschow  
Katlyn Svendsen  
Kyler Flock  
Angela Bartel

### **Marketing Agency Guests**

Kathy Hagan  
Makenzie O'Holloran  
Adelaide Simpson  
Laura Mitchell  
Emily Blachard  
Jenni Jones  
Kasi Haberman  
Michelle Thomson  
Ashley Geigle

President Ann Lesch called the meeting to order and thanked and everyone for coming to Murdo and Ashley Geigle for hosting the board meeting.

Secretary Hagen joined President Lesch in welcoming the board to the meeting. He expressed appreciation to Ashley Geigle and the City of Murdo for hosting the meeting. He also shared that the Tourism team has an exciting, concise updates to share at the meeting.

#### **Ashley Geigle-Murdo Area Economic Development Director**

- Ashley has been the Economic Development Director for 3 years
- Rally Rush was a success in the area
- Murdo was featured in the 605 magazine
- Looking forward to Rooster Rush

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

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

- Visitor numbers were down-possibly from the flooding in the eastern part of the state
- The visitor numbers recovered in August but not a record breaker. He relayed it was a normal, solid year, like 2019.

#### **Carmen Schramm – Yankton**

- Box Car ice cream shop is for sale, and she is no longer managing it
- After July 4<sup>th</sup> the visitor numbers were up but not the spending
- September was strong
- Lewis and Clark rebounded in August

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

- Sturgis rally had soft numbers
- June numbers were strong
- 5% increase for the quarter
- Deadwood was about the same as last year

#### **Kristi Wagner - Whitewood**

- It seems customer service is improving with the Forever 605 campaign
- Kudos to everyone working on the campaign and making it a success

#### **Frank Smith – Gettysburg**

- The Murdo hospitality started early with some of the board member going to the golf course, the employees were great
- Fish are still biting and catching large fish
- The campground is up 10.5%
- Hotel numbers were up also
- Pheasant hunting is looking good with many birds

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

- Camping started out slow
- Road construction is still ongoing
- Numbers overall were good
- Trouble filling the lower end cabins and RV sites
- The higher end cabins and RV sites filled quicker

### **Ivan Sorbel**

- The village had 780 walk-in visitors
- 1800 visitors on bus tours
- Collette Tours brought close to 20 tours
- There are three film companies wanting to film in the area
- The motel is open again, it had been closed since Covid

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

- The season has been up and down - flooding hurt the area in June
- July and August had good numbers
- September showed a lot of campers and traffic
- Laura Ingalls Wilder is open on Saturdays now
- Sales tax numbers are up
- Looking at having tour groups coming to the area

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

- Carmen introduced herself as the new Executive Director of the TCSD.
- You will see the collation becoming much, much more active.
- She discussed TCSD's opposition to IM-28.

### **Hallie Willey-Finance Officer and Administrative Director**

- For promotion tax, in July, which would have been May activity, we receipted in \$1,470,322 which was 11.74 higher than July of last year.
- In August, we receipted in \$2,546,199, which was another increase over last year of 2.43%.
- In September, we did have a decrease compared to last year, we receipted in \$2,822,141 which was a 4.13% decrease.
- Lastly, October we receipted in \$2,832,997 which was an increase over last year of 5.05%
- We are 2.56% ahead of FY23 for the same time period for promo tax collections.
- For gaming tax, In July, we receipted in \$409,634 which was an increase of 1.70% over last July.
- In August, we saw an increase of 3.90% and in September another increase of 7.33%.
- Finally, in October we did see a decrease of 3.94%.
- we are still up 2.04% compared to last year at this time for gaming tax collections

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

- With recent staffing changes, determined it was a good time to reevaluate team structure and roles
- Will continue having representative for each region but shifting focus to destination development and needed staff member solely focused on research and reporting for the dept.
- Provided updates for the destination development program with GWU
- Provided case study examples from other states development programs
- Visitation is currently down 5.4% while spending is slightly outpacing inflation for the year
- Hotel performance is relatively even with last year
- NPS visitation is down but this is primarily due to Mt Rushmore visitation being affected by road construction
- Consumer sentiment is trending down, and they are still concerned about travel prices and personal finances
- Inflation has fallen below 3% for first time since March 2021
- Forecast looks optimistic with 2025 hotel demand expected to increase 4.4%

## **Kyler Flock-Global Travel and Trade Representative**

- IRU May 6-9, 2025, in Rapid City
- Taxi wraps in London again this year for Brand USA Travel Week
- Recent Familiarization tours – German, Dutch, Italian and Ireland
- Canada travel trade updates
- Trip report data breakdown
- Upcoming travel (Travel Week UK, French/UK Mission, Brand USA India Mission, and ABA)
- Motorcoach and receptive tour operator audit

## **Katlyn Svendsen-Global Public Relations and Content Services**

- The PR team did a media training in August to provide continued education to team members who are involved in media efforts and public speaking tips and techniques.
- Two highlights for media coverage in recent months include a Wall Street Journal piece on the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally (in print and online) and a feature story on Eater focused on Laura Ingalls Wilder and Good Earth Farm. Several international and domestic media, along with an influencer family, were hosted for a press trip during the Buffalo Roundup and the surrounding Black Hills area.
- Strategically improving our website content has been paying off in recent months with SEO optimizations bringing 37 new keywords into top 10 positions and 12 new keywords in the top 3. The team continues to develop the successful Apple Map Guides and will facilitate the Q4 content plan. A large amount of the research and backend work has been done on TravelSouthDakota.com to prepare for the upcoming relaunch of the site which is heavily focused on updating the backend of the site along with a refresh of the front end.
- The team is working on three print guides currently. Finalizing the 2025 Vacation Guide, finalizing the new Scenic Drives guide, and working through content updates and design for the new Inspiration Guide, which will be translated into our main foreign languages spoken in key markets.

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

- Gussiaas shared with the Advisory Board that since they last met in July:
  - At this year's U.S. Travel's ESTO Conference in August, the team was honored to win a Mercury Award for best state stewardship campaign.
  - Passport check-ins since the relaunch on April 1 surpassed 20,000. This represents a 259% increase in activity vs. last year.
  - The 2024 "Hunt the Greatest" campaign launched in August and has already booked an estimated 13.5k+ nights and generated more than \$1.8 million in hotel booking revenue.
- The department's paid marketing campaigns have generated more than an estimated \$66.7 million in hotel booking revenue. Gussiaas also shared that campaigns this year were driving nearly twice the number of searches around South Dakota hotels and flights, plus generating hotel and flight bookings at a rate 88% more than last year, so some of the various economic and consumer factors Hulstein shared might be the more significant impact on how the year is progressing for the state.
- Traffic to TravelSouthDakota.com is up 32%.
- Gussiaas also shared the department had two major video/photo shoots since the board last met. One focused on central and eastern parts of the state, and the other was at the recent Custer State Park Annual Buffalo Roundup.
- Adelaide Simpson from Love Communications presented an overview of the department's Community co-op efforts in 2024. So far, efforts have delivered 137+ million impressions (46% up over the prior year) and more than an estimated 150k in hotel bookings (a 42% increase over 2023).
- Makenzie O'Hollaren (Johnson) and Emily Blanchard from Karsh Hagan presented updates for the department's peak efforts. They shared:
  - Engagements around digital placements were up 34% over the prior year, and web activities regarding interest in South Dakota by ad viewers were up 36%.
  - Forever 605 campaign metrics were up across the board with that now being an always-on campaign. The new issue-based videos dominated engagement this summer.
  - The Arts & Culture campaign was still proving successful in year two, with more than 20.7k estimated hotel and flight bookings generated by the effort.
- O'Hollaren and Blanchard also reported on upcoming shoulder campaigns running this fall and winter. The department will further test evergreen and winter-specific creative against each other, look to test Florida and Arizona as warm-weather winter markets based on last year's campaign activity from each and some new partners/placements like an AI display unit, Peacock, YouTubeTV and the Minnesota Timberwolves.

## **Bailey Tysdal**

### Conference Registration Scholarship Recipients

- Travel South Dakota
  - Eric Fairchild, Prairie House Manor Bed & Breakfast, De Smet
  - Molly Nedved, Mazing Acres Pumpkin Patch, Yankton
  - Renee Marzahn, The Abbey of the Hills Inn & Retreat Center, Marvin
  - Tia Berens, Aspen Acres Specialty Resort, Spearfish
- South Dakota Arts Council
  - Madeleine Scott, South Dakota Ballet
  - Joanna Lawler, Catalyst Theater Company, Rapid City
  - Kristie Van Bogart & Jennifer Pitt, Hill City Arts Council
  - Rose Hauger, Yankton Area Arts

President Lesch asked if there were any other questions or comments and thanked everyone for coming and for the great hospitality Murdo offered to everyone.

Secretary Hagen thanked the board for their steadfast support and for the industry partners who attended the meeting. He reminded the board about the tour at Pioneer Auto and the December board meeting. He encouraged all to reach out to the Tourism team with any questions.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.