

MINUTES

Western Nebraska Tourism Coalition Meeting (via Zoom)

Thursday, March 21, 2024

In attendance: Kerri Rempp (Discover NW Nebraska), Kirsten Parker (Golden Spike Tower), Dave Wolf (Legacy of the Plains Museum), Natasha (Golden Spike Tower), Natasha McFaul (Kimball County Visitors Committee), Bev Wellnitz (Sheridan County Tourism), Kendra Mitchell (Sidney/Cheyenne County Tourism), Karla Niedan-Streeks (Gering Visitors Bureau), Jean Norman (Our Heritage Guest Ranch), Heather Wolhart (High Plains Homestead), Brenda Leisy (Scotts Bluff Area Visitors Bureau), Hal Enevoldsen (Point of Rocks Campground & Motel), Steve Maly (Maly Marketing), Lisa Burke (Visit North Platte), Ben Bennett (Pine Ranger District), and Kaytlin Norris (City of Alliance/Box Butte County Tourism).

Chairman Kerri Rempp called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. (MST). Self-introductions and community updates.

Consent Agenda: Chairman Rempp informed an additional item to be added; 2024 Marketing Plan with Maly Marketing. It was M/Jean Norman, 2/Hal Enevoldsen to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried.

Education: Steve Maly of Maly Marketing shared with WNTC Members an informative program on "Website Tips". A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Legislative Update: Kerri Rempp, Karla Niedan-Streeks and Steve Maly shared information on the Legislative issues occurring in the last two weeks. LB1067 introduced would have allowed Counties to utilize county lodging fund collections for other county expenses other than tourism; NETA's lobbyist and industry partners were successful in getting an amendment AM2562 passed that would have allowed counties to use the funds for non-tourism activities. The budget bill that came out of committee included a sweep of tourism funds in the amount of \$5M; lobbying and with assistance of AM introduced by Senator Jacobson the sweep of tourism funds was removed from the budget bill. It's been a challenging and difficult session for the tourism industry this session; we were able to hold off the charge and raid on tourism funds; but NETA and our industry partners have a great deal of work to do with elected officials and the governor moving forward in education-understanding of the benefits of tourism and of having the Tourism Commission remain a stand-alone entity.

Marketing Committee: Lisa asked Steve Maly to present the proposed 2024 WNTC Media Plan; core messaging of "Find Your Next Adventure" and focuses on outdoor enthusiasts with target markets of the Front Range and Nebraska. A copy of the 2024 Media Plan is attached to these minutes. Total 2024 media plan expenditures of \$23,750 are proposed; due to budget constraints, the billboard advertising was eliminated for 2024. Following discussion, it was M/Karla Niedan-Streeks, 2/Kendra Mitchell to adopt the 2024 Media Plan as presented. Motion carried.

Kendra updated the group on website; website hits are up 25% over last year. Kendra has done as much updating to the site as she can; its up to members to review their information, page listings and get updates to the website committee to update the site. Website revisions and changes should be emailed to Kendra at: Sidney/Cheyenne County Tourism director@visitsidneyne.com

Kirsten Parker reported from the Facebook committee; to date WNTC has 7,172 followers. Top website hits are coming from Lincoln, Omaha and North Platte. Posts originate each Monday; featuring our members and things of interest-new-happening in WNTC. If you have things from your area to post of Facebook; contact Kirsten at: kparker@goldenspiketower.com

Discussion on WNTC red bags left over from 2024 Stock Show; recommended to keep them stored and reuse for 2025. Kendra will store the bags in Sidney; additional bags will need to be produced for the 2025 National Western Stock Show; work with sponsors for the bags who pay to include their logos/websites will begin soon.

Destination Magazine Supplies: Updates given on Destination boxes on hand are : Chadron-116 boxes, Sidney-90 boxes, Scottsbluff/Gering-39 boxes.

Membership Committee: Chairman Hal Enevoldsen stated WNTC sinks or swims on membership; WNTC needs to work hard in the coming year on renewals and new memberships. Hal stated we need “testimonials” from both county representatives and individual members on the proven “membership benefits” to them locally and to use the testimonials to document the value of the regional based marketing collaboration. Relating the local stories of how WNTC has benefited each area will go a long way with county commissions and governing bodies when its time to renew their WNTC membership investments.

Discussion on WNTC members who haven't paid their 2023-2024 membership dues; it was M/Kirsten Parker, 2/Hal Enevoldsen to “de-active” the following members due to unpaid dues and to have all membership benefits cease as of today's meeting: Americ Inn by Wyndham, City of Kimball Economic Development, Double L Country Store, Grain Bin Antique Town, Horizons Without Bounds, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Platte Valley Attractions, Quality Inn-Scottsbluff and Riverside Discovery Center. Motion carried. Chairman Rempp will draft a letter to be sent to all the former members informing them of their deactivation:

Further discussion on membership retention; Kirsten Parker offered to assist the Membership Committee in designing a “fun” membership recruitment campaign. Dave Wolf from Legacy commented he plans to participate in these meetings more actively; Legacy sees the direct benefits of the regional marketing efforts and stresses the collaboration and cross-promotion is an invaluable benefit of WNTC. Karla reminded members that Dave is our nominee to the Governor for appointment to the Western Region representative on the Tourism Commission; she encouraged everyone that has contact with the Governor to recommend Dave's appointment to the Commission as our representative.

Nebraska Tourism Commission Update: No report from Starr or the Tourism Commission.

2023-2024 Meeting Locations:

May 14, 2024 meeting will be in North Platte in conjunction with Brochure Swap. Date/Time/Location in North Platte to be announced.

September 19, 2024 meeting; Dave Wolf volunteered to host at Legacy of the Plains Museum. Hal Enevoldsen invited everyone to Potter as well. City to be determined in May for the September meeting location; Legacy is offering a “Harvest Fest” of activities and Potter tempted members with at Tin Roof Sundae!

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karla Niedan-Streeks, Secretary
March 21, 2024