

## MINUTES

Western Nebraska Tourism Coalition (WNTC) Meeting

January 4, 2024 – Sidney

In attendance: Kendra Mitchell (Cheyenne County Tourism), Toshia Jones (Cheyenne County Chamber of Commerce), Marva Ellwanger (Cheyenne County Tourism Committee), Jack Berg (Morrill County Tourism), Brenda Leisy (Scotts Bluff Area Visitors Bureau), Jenna Bartja (Nebraska Tourism), Kerri Rempp (Discover NW Nebraska), Kirsten Parker (Golden Spike Tower), Hal Enevoldsen (Point of Rocks Campground & Motel), Natash Knaub (Kimball County Visitors Committee/Center), and Karla Niedan-Streeks (Gering Visitors Bureau).

Chairman Kerri Rempp called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. Attending members and guests made self-introductions and gave community updates.

**Consent Agenda:** It was M/Kendra Mitchell, 2/Hal Enevoldsen to approve the January consent agenda as presented. Motion carried.

**Education:** Jenna Bartja from Nebraska Tourism Commission announced that Karen Kollars will be retiring on January 5<sup>th</sup>; Karen will be missed but all wished her well on her new endeavors. Jenna is headed to the Stock Show from this meeting and will be coordinating all arrangements, staffing, volunteers, etc. for the 2024 show. Upcoming events: **Market Tech Adventure Travel Workshop (February 28-29, 2024)** will be a collaboration again this year with tourism; moved around the state and the event combines the Agri-Tourism Conference. Focus on tourism events; collaboration has built out audiences with business and tourism/recreation partners. There will be a single track this year; talking all things tourism resources and website (how to use the NTC website and put that site to work for all Nebraska's individual areas, communities and events. **Nebraska Tourism Summit dates will be February 7, 2024 at the Graduate Hotel in Lincoln.** A single day focusing on tourism spotlight with education, information and engagement with our legislative bodies. The State will be collaborating with South Dakota this year for the first of a bi-state event; bus tours that Nebraska will fill a bus as will South Dakota. Watch the website for more information; there will be a capped registration. National Western Stock Show 2024 has the best volunteers signed up to work the booth in history; Jenna thanked all WNTC members for stepping up to help. The NTC renewed a new contract for sponsorship at National Western Stock Show. For more information on all upcoming conferences; visit the Nebraska Tourism Commission website; under Industry/conferences and workshops.

**Legislative Update:** The 2024 Nebraska Tourism Unity Summit in Lincoln (February 7) will be the opportunity for the tourism industry to interact with legislators; all who can attend were encouraged to do so for the one-day event. Nebraska Travel Association's lobbyist (Andy Pollock) meets with members/industry partners each week during the session; at 2:00 pm MST via Zoom. For information and a tourism industry voice; all WNTC members were encouraged to participate. Kerri Rempp informed the group that the Dawes County Travel Board invited the Game and Parks Commission to attend their meeting this month; no county has ever invited the commissioner before and members were encouraged to engage their Game and Parks commissioners and to initiate relationship building opportunities and invite them to be part of your tourism efforts.

### **Marketing Committee:**

- Website: Kendra reported there are many WNTC member listings that are out of date; members need to go to the website and get their information updated with fresh photos and content. Members need to be engaged in their own listings on [www.westnebraska.com](http://www.westnebraska.com) to reap the most benefits from their membership and WNTC's regional collaboration marketing efforts.
- Facebook: Kirsten reported posts are doing well; latest post for Grain Bin Antique Town did very well. Kirsten reported a Facebook report (attached to these minutes); members who have information to share/post should send their information directly to support services at: [www.info@westnebraska.com](mailto:www.info@westnebraska.com) In the last 30 days, we had 1,800 visitors to the site and currently 6,200 followers.

- Destination Western Nebraska 2024: Karla reported all 2024 Destination guides are out and stored at the key distribution locations in North Platte, Sidney, Scottsbluff and Kimball. Members are encouraged to get the new guides circulated in their communities; make contact with local advertisers to make sure they have supplies to distribute. Brenda Leisy shared she sends a letter with a new Destination magazine to all her partners to see what WNTC is doing; this can also serve as a good tool to initiate discussions with our local partners for consideration of membership in WNTC. At future WNTC meetings; all members will be asked to report how many guides they have in their supply to keep WNTC apprised of supply numbers of the 2024 publications. Karla asked all members to review their information on their listings and their regional content ASAP; the best time to submit changes/corrections is at the initial review of the publication. Email any corrections, changes, etc. to Karla at [karla@visitgering.com](mailto:karla@visitgering.com)
- Chairman Lisa Burke joined the meeting via phone to share additional information on this year's coop marketing opportunity. WNTC is working with Maly marketing to initiate a 2024 social media campaign; members can participate in a "pay to play" with the coop opportunity. Last year; one member (Trailside Museum) booked a coop in June; a paid \$500.00 social media blast for them resulted in 90,000 impressions. The coop marketing campaign is open to all WNTC members and will run May 1 thru the end of October. Detailed information on the 2024 coop social media campaign will be sent out to all WNTC members in the new few weeks. Questions; contact Lisa at [lburke@visitnorthplatte.com](mailto:lburke@visitnorthplatte.com)

**Membership Committee:** Hal is serving as Chairman of the WNTC Membership and will be meeting with other members to outline the 2024 membership recruitment and retention campaign. Since invoices went out late for the 2023-2024 membership cycle; renewals have been slow to come in. Karla distributes a membership renewal list to date; county contacts and board members were asked to contact their local partners who haven't renewed their dues to ask them to continue their partnership with WNTC. Membership recruitment and retention is a personal thing; if new and existing members hear from current members on the importance of membership, they will be more likely to be part of WNTC. Current members should be asked to renew their dues by the end of January 2024; after which unpaid members will be written off and no longer receive the WNTC membership benefits. Discussion on how we can get more diversity of tourism segments as members; specifically, restaurants and those businesses that are in direct service to visitors to Western Nebraska. Ideas, comments and volunteers willing to serve on the committee and assist with membership efforts are asked to contact Hal directly at: [Hal@potterstatebank.com](mailto:Hal@potterstatebank.com)

**Nebraska Tourism Commissioner Update:** Star Lehl was not in attendance. Jenna reported that one of Karen Kollars last projects was a collaboration with the Center for Rural Affairs that allows for grant application and awards for veterans in agriculture. For more information on the program; email Jenna at [jenna.bartja@nebraska.gov](mailto:jenna.bartja@nebraska.gov)

**Upcoming WNTC Meetings:**

- The March 21, 2024 WNTC Meeting will be a Zoom meeting; members are encouraged to ask their partners in their communities and county to join the March meeting via Zoom to learn more about what WNTC is doing to market our region.
- The May 14, 2024 meeting will be held in conjunction with the 2024 Brochure Swap; the meeting will be in North Platte and the 2024 Brochure Swap will be in Grand Island.

There being no further business, the January WNTC meeting adjourned at 12:24 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
 Karla Niedan-Streeks, WNTC Secretary  
 January 4, 2024