

Tourism Council
Wednesday
February 26, 2024
2:00 PM
TEAMS

Present: Amanda Arling, Karen Bachofner, Jeff Brown, Elizabeth Craig, Gregg Dancho, Irene Dixon, Matt Fleury, Koray Gurz, Robert Kret, Paul Mayer, Larry McHugh and Robin Rifkin

Absent: Peter Armstrong, Rebekah Beaulieu, Charles Bunnell, Becky Critchley, Don Devivo, Scott Dolch, Jason Guyot, Jeff Hamilton, Ginny Kozlowski, Scott Laurence, Carol Lugar, Michael Price and Tony Sheridan and Dexter Singleton, Stephen Tagliatela

Staff: Anthony Anthony, Rob Damroth, Jennifer Haag, Rachel Lenda, DECD; Jeff Shaw, DEEP; Carlo Leone, DOT

Guest: Jill Adams & Felicia Lindau; Adams & Knight; Bob Murdock, Sue Henrique, Gisele Musumano from Connecticut Conventions & Sports Bureau

1. Call to Order – Anthony Anthony

Anthony called the meeting to order at 2:08 pm. A role call was made, and all guests announced.

II. Approval of December 11, 2024, Tourism Council Minutes – Anthony Anthony

On a motion by Greg Dancho and seconded by Irene Dixon, the Tourism Council approved the September 11, 2024, meeting minutes as circulated. (Y-12, N- 0).

III. Update from State- Anthony Anthony

- Lot of movement going on, in the throes of a budget for FY26/27
- DECD’s Commissioner O’Keefe continues to be an advocate for what we do and how we are the “tip of the spear” of the economic development strategy working on changing hearts and minds about Connecticut
- We have submitted testimony to appropriations on four different bills, one of which was about a study being done for arts, culture and tourism and the economic impact on Connecticut’s economy and growth

IV. Update from Carlo Leone DOT- Update

- Carlo is handling workforce development for DOT
- Working on filling many vacancies throughout the agency
- DOT is working on transit-oriented development issues with two major cities, New Haven and Stamford
- Working to improve the stations and make it easier for residents to move around the state
- Cross collaboration is very important to the administration with new signage designed by the STM & Tourism Office that has been put up across the state

A brief discussion followed.

V. Update DEEP – Jeff Shaw

- Jeff has just been hired as a new senior advisor for outdoor industry and experience
- Jeff will be working on private public partnerships in the State parks
- Some ideas, concession agreements, long term leases, DEEP received over 30 submissions to this new public private partnership

VI. Update STWM & Tourism Office – Anthony Anthony

- The spring summer marketing spend is 2 million
- Leaning heavily into the digital space
- Most of the clicks we get on CTVisit end up coming through promotional social
- Clicks to CTVisit are down by 30% we attribute to spending less this year than last year
- Earned media press impressions hit an all-time high of 15.4 billion, we are getting CT our into the national media
- Will be launching a public vote of CT residents’ favorite pizza spots, and in October we will launch a statewide pizza trail, and we will do a statewide pizza tour
- Exploring a Gilmore Girls event
- Working with Adams & Knight to create an online Rewards store that will be named “Made”
- We are supporting “America 250” initiatives
- Another initiative we started is paid sponsorships on CT visit

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the budget and what the Council can do to advocate for more STWM Tourism funds.

VII. Adjournment

A motion was made and so moved to adjourn the meeting. The next meeting of the Tourism Council is scheduled for Wednesday, February 26th, at 2pm, location TBD.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Haag
Connecticut Office of Tourism, DECD

