



State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Ben Popp, Chair

**Wisconsin Department of Tourism
Wisconsin Council on Tourism Minutes
Monday, April 28, 2025
Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Madison, WI**

I. Roll Call

PRESENT: Representative Jill Billings, Senator Julian Bradley, Deb Carey, Dr. Natalie Chin, Ellie Westman Chin, Genyne Edwards, A.J. Frels, Cindy Hoehne, Senator Sarah Keyeski, Joe Klimczak, Ben Popp, Secretary Anne Sayers, Aaron Sherer, Denise Stillman, George Tzougros, Krystal Westfahl,

EXCUSED: Darren Bush, Nathan Gordon, Representative Chanz Green, Nic Mink, Christian Overland

II. Call Meeting to Order and Welcome

Ben Popp called the meeting to order at 11:02a.m. The Council welcomed recently appointed legislative members Senator Bradley, Senator Keyeski, Representative Billings and Representative Green.

III. Approval of September 25, 2024 Minutes

Joe Klimczak made a motion to approve the September 25, 2024 minutes. A.J. Frels seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Committee Reports

Committee chairs or staff leads representing each of the six Department of Tourism committees provided updates on the recent work of the committees. The Council heard from the following:

- Group Travel Committee report provided by Craig Trost
- Joint Effort Marketing, Tourist Information Center, Meetings Mean Business and Ready Set Go! Committee reports provided by Maria Van Hoorn.
- Office of Outdoor Recreation Committee report provided by Ben Popp.
- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee report provided by Aaron Sherer.
- Marketing Committee report provided by Ellie Westman Chin.

V. Election of Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant Committee Members

Council members were presented with seven applicants recommended by Council Chair Ben Popp for election to the Joint Effort Marketing Grant Committee, with the recommendation to move all seven applicants forward for vote.

George Tzougros motioned to approve the slate of applicants to the Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant Committee. Denise Stillman seconded the motion. Roll call votes were taken for the slate of seven applicants. The seven applicants moved forward with 16 votes and were elected to the JEM Committee.



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VI. Update on Department Business

Secretary Anne Sayers shared the following department updates:

Department-wide updates

The Department is fully staffed.

In March the team wrapped up a successful Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism in La Crosse, followed by the Travel Wisconsin's Dream Draft Experience during the NFL draft in April that welcomed more than 600k visitors to Green Bay.

Travel Wisconsin's summer campaign is now live and will be visible in 14 Midwest media markets with the addition of Peoria. The Department is gearing up for a busy National Travel and Tourism Week taking place the week of May 5, and the upcoming Economic Impact release on June 10.

Recent numbers

Wisconsin currently ranks 23 in direct visitor spending, with a goal of ranking in the Top 20. Efforts focused on new revenue streams through the Office of Group Travel, Outdoor Recreation and possibly film can help push us towards achieving this goal.

The Department will continue to keep an eye on traveler sentiment in Canada, and how that impacts domestic competition in markets like Chicago. Chief Marketing Officer Shane Brossard shared that through our marketing efforts we will focus on family in our target audiences and emphasize efficiency in our media buys.

The state budget is key to our efforts in achieving Top 20.

VII. Election of Officers

Council Secretary Natalie Chin provided a review of the election process as established by Council bylaws. Nominations submitted ahead of time as allowed in Article IV, Section 5 of the bylaws were included in the vote. All members of the Council were able to make nominations. Voting was held by roll call voice vote.

Election of Chairperson:

Council Secretary Natalie Chin read the pre-submitted nomination of Joe Klimczak as nominated by Ben Popp. There were no further nominations from the floor. Joe Klimczak received 16 votes and was elected as Chairperson.

Election of Vice Chairperson:

Council Secretary Natalie Chin read the pre-submitted nomination of Ellie Westman Chin as nominated by A.J. Frels. There were no further nominations from the floor. Ellie Westman Chin received 16 votes and was elected as Vice Chairperson.

Election of Secretary:

Executive Staff Assistant Chelsey Bence read the pre-submitted nomination of Natalie Chin as nominated by Ben Popp. There were no further nominations from the floor. Natalie Chin received 16 votes and was elected as Secretary.



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VIII. **Next Meeting Topics**

Council members shared feedback on what they would like to hear about in the next meeting. Members expressed wanting to hear more from the Department on impactful Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grants, marketing data and analytics, and keeping a pulse on large events.

Ben Popp acknowledged outgoing Wisconsin Council on Tourism members who are nearing completion of their second term. The Council recognized and thanked Darren Bush, Genyne Edwards, A.J. Frels, Ben Popp and Krystal Westfahl for their contributions to the Council.

The Wisconsin Council on Tourism will follow the same meeting cadence set in 2024 with the next meeting to occur in fall 2025. A meeting location is being considered.

IX. **Adjournment**

Krystal Westfahl made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by A.J. Frels. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 12:29p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Natalie Chin, Secretary
Approved by Joe Klimczak, Chair