

Economic Development Council

Tourism Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 15, 2021 • 10:00 AM
Zoom Meeting

Attendees	Present/Absent	Number of Absences for 2021
Tony Alba, Chairman	Present	0
Becki Christensen, Vice Chairman	Present	1
Michelle Conway	Present	0
Judy Franz	Present	0
Tricia Lewis	Present	0
Lori Pappas	Absent	1
Ann Steward	Present	0

Staff: Julia Sawyer, Executive Assistant

- I. **Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions**
 Chairman Tony Alba called the meeting to order at 10:03. A quorum was present.

- II. **Approval of Minutes – May 20, 2021**
 Chairman Alba called for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 20, 2021 Tourism Committee meeting; so moved by Becki Christensen and seconded by Judy Franz. The motion carried unanimously.

- IV. **Scope of Work Planning Discussion**
 Chairman Alba began the Scope of Work planning discussion by noting everyone received the draft for review ahead of the meeting. The draft presented for consideration is as follows:

***CEDS Goal:** Improve the quality of Life and Unique natural/cultural amenities as well as outdoor recreational opportunities that make Northern Arizona a great place to live and visit.*

Target Opportunity: Tourism Recovery

Objective #1: Support regional economic development by supporting local businesses in their recovery efforts.

Goals:

- Provide Lunch & Learn opportunities for regional tourism practitioners and local tourism-based businesses to learn and discuss relevant topics, including tourism best practices and recovery resources.
- Promote funding opportunities targeted toward economic recovery for the tourism industry and consider a regional grant application.
- Encourage a technical support session with State and Federal funders and other funding partners to local businesses seeking assistance with grant applications.

Objective #2: Support tourism workforce development through partnerships with the state-wide ARIZONA@WORK Local Workforce Development Areas for new strategies for labor attraction to the local tourism industry.

Goals:

- Promote tourism engagement in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as a means to rebuild local staff resources.
- Encourage participation on the Local Workforce Development Boards and the Governor's Return to Work Campaign.

Objective #3: Promote local and regional affordable housing initiatives for business and workforce attraction and retention.

Goals:

- Identify key priorities for workforce housing that supports sustainable jobs.

Chairman Alba led with the recent announcement of the new Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) grant opportunities. There was some discussion about the possibility of applying for a regional grant and most of the members were in favor of considering possibilities for directing the funding for a regional benefit. Michelle Conway noted the marketing funding opportunities, while Tricia Lewis mentioned workforce housing as an avenue for consideration. Discussion followed regarding the difficulties people are having with finding available and affordable housing when they move to the area to take a job. Judy Franz mentioned the challenges with Vacation Rentals by Owner (Vrbo) being prevalent in the City of Page, and the workforce housing shortage, creating a workforce shortage in Page.

Chairman Alba posed a question – should the Tourism Committee actually go after grant funding or should they offer technical assistance to stakeholders to apply? Ann Steward commented that the processes tied to applying is still unknown. She suggested that the Tourism Committee's job down the road may be to educate stakeholders about the resources available, or maybe apply for funding. Tricia Lewis remarked that it's still too early, and the Committee should wait until after the Governor's Conference on Tourism (GCOT) when we will know more. All agreed that when the information is available we should put it out.

Chairman Alba suggested the Committee consider a time to delve into the Scope of Work during GCOT when most of the Committee would be present in person. Executive Assistant Julia Sawyer asked Chairman Alba to clarify the statement regarding the Scope of Work discussion, noting that the draft presented today was prepared to be a broad brush for the 2021-22 activities. Vice Chairman Christensen commented that the Scope of Work discussion should be an in-person meeting, as has been done in previous years. Ms. Sawyer noted that if the Tourism Committee convenes a meeting it would need to be made open to the public per Open Meeting Law. Chairman Alba suggested having an informal discussion at GCOT and asked Ms. Sawyer to clarify the possibility with Regional Director Teri Drew, who was unable to be in attendance today.

Chairman Alba asked if anyone had any input on the draft Scope of Work, and if anyone wanted to make a motion with regard to approving the draft. Some discussion followed regarding approving the draft but having the opportunity to revise it following GCOT if something came up while there. Ms. Conway asked if a motion to approve the draft was appropriate. Chairman Alba suggested making the motion with the caveat to make revisions after GCOT. Michelle Conway made the **motion to approve the Tourism Committee Scope of Work for 2021-2022 draft with the flexibility to adjust the content if needed. Ann Steward seconded the motion.** With no further discussion, **the motion carried unanimously.**

V. Lunch & Learn Planning Updates

Chairman Alba noted that AOT Director of Industry Affairs Kiva Couchon is still on board to be the speaker for the next Lunch and Learn. He noted that the date has been pushed to the September 16, 2021 Tourism Committee meeting date. Chairman Alba will work with Annie DeRosier, Tourism Marketing Coordinator at Pinetop-Lakeside, to prepare a Save the Date flyer.

VI. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Chairman Alba noted that the next meeting is the Lunch & Learn, so there would not be any additional agenda items.

VII. Member Comments

Chairman Alba called for Member Comments. Ms. Conway began by reporting that the City of Sedona has decided to not do any destination marketing this year, however there is some money still left in the budget from last year. Hotels have been down in occupancy by 25%, likely due to local wildfires (broken audio).

Ms. Franz reported that the Slot Canyons in Page have reopened as of July 12. She reported 50% occupancy in Page, noting that recreational vehicles are all over town. She closed by reporting that Page has turned the corner in recovery.

Ms. Christensen reported that Springerville made it through the 4th of July, and the area is now in Stage 3 fire restrictions. The Town is open and they are planning different events. She noted that the housing market is challenging, with no rentals available. However, there are lots of tourists in the area.

Ms. Lewis reported that Cottonwood is doing well. The Thunder Valley Rally is being planned for mid-September. She noted there is a new owner at Blazin' M Ranch, and it is open. Ms. Lewis commented that the AOT grant information is exciting. She noted a new shuttle service between Cottonwood and Sedona, and it has been busy. The City of Cottonwood has posted a new position for a Housing Manager to assist with the housing issue.

Ms. Steward reported that the City of Prescott's 4th of July celebration was great. She spoke of the pending annexation of Arizona Eco Development (AED) and the City of Prescott to extend the City limits into private land in the Granite Dells – the letter of intent has been accepted. She noted the bittersweet agreement, with resort planning as a consideration. Ms. Steward also noted that City Hall will be moving 4 or 5 blocks over the next several months.

Chairman Alba reported that Pinetop-Lakeside has been very busy, with occupation and tax revenue way up. The Town Council will approve the budget tonight. The Balloon Festival saw 10,000 visitors over two days. Chairman Alba reported that the balloons were restricted from launching due to extreme fire conditions, however this gave the

public more of an opportunity to participate in more activities. He commented that this time the Town didn't get criticized on social media. Chairman Alba noted that AOT is asking for formal action to designate Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO), and he will be asking to designate the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside as a DMO. Some discussion followed about DMOs.

VIII. Public Comments

Chairman Alba called for comments from the public, but no public was present.

IX. Adjournment

Chairman Alba adjourned the meeting at 11:02 AM.

EDC Tourism Committee Minutes: July 15, 2021

Approved:

DRAFT