

Wind River Visitors Council (WRVC) Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2023

Dubois Library, Dubois

PRESENT: Helen Gordon – Hudson; Owen Sweeney – Lander; Frank Welty – Dubois; Hal Herron – Riverton; Ben Barto – Dubois; Joel Highsmith – Shoshoni; Krista Lobera – Lander; Julie Buller – Riverton; Kip Post – County; Erika Yarber (Zoom, arrived at 10:10 a.m.) – County

WRVC STAFF: Helen Wilson, Jenni Brennan

GUESTS: Gary Weisz – Shoshoni; Mayor Patricia Neveaux – Dubois; Sarah Elmquist – Riverton Ranger; Randy Lahr – Dubois

CALL TO ORDER: President Owen Sweeney called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments.

REVIEW & APPROVE AGENDA: Owen Sweeney moved that the Director’s Report be moved after the Executive Session. Krista Lobera seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2023 MINUTES: After the September meeting, it was discovered that two Board Members’ votes had been misrecorded in regards to the Wind River Visitors Council’s Board Meeting schedule. Owen Sweeney moved to amend the Minutes to reflect the correct votes and approve the amended Minutes. Helen Gordon seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried. 10:24 a.m.

The discussion of monthly Board Meetings continued. Frank Welty commented on scheduling conflicts that would arise with the addition of monthly Board Meetings. Helen Wilson pointed out that the Board voted on this subject in the summer of 2022 and it did not pass. Owen Sweeney stated that Helen Wilson sends each municipality updates and project developments, further stating that the Wind River Visitors Council has had two perfect audits in a row and has brought in more lodging tax revenue than ever before, proving that the Wind River Visitors Council is a fully functioning entity and further oversight isn’t needed. Frank Welty moved for bi-monthly meetings and an annual two day retreat for the Wind River Visitors Council Board and staff. Helen Gordon seconded the motion. The vote was called at 10:34 a.m., with Ben, Frank, Krista, Owen, Helen and Erika voting in favor of retaining an every other month meeting schedule, and Hal, Julie, Joel and Kip opposed. Motion carried.

Hal Herron asked if proxy votes were permitted. Kip answered that Board Members cannot currently give proxy. Hal asked if the by-laws could be changed to include proxy votes. Helen Wilson will look into this.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Helen Gordon and Helen Wilson presented the Treasurer’s Report. Hal Herron had some questions about the Financial Report, and Helen Wilson answered them.

- A. Hal Herron requested that the Destination Development Program funds be further broken down on the financial statements. Helen Gordon stated that there’s already a breakdown. She will work with Hal to understand his request and see if it can be accommodated.

Helen Gordon moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Julie Buller seconded the motion. Motion carried. Treasurer's Report adopted at 11 a.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Owen Sweeney moved to go into Executive Session. Frank Welty seconded. Motion carried. Start Time - 11 a.m. End Time - 11:39 a.m.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT: Helen Wilson presented the Director’s Report, which included 2023 Fall Hospitality and Tourism Summit updates. Helen will be applying for an at-large position on the Board of Directors for the Wyoming Office of Tourism. She also talked about WYBest, which is a program that the Wind River Visitors Council participates in and a requirement for Destination Development Program funding. The Wind River Visitors Council should receive \$300,000 on July 1, 2024. This will be an ongoing program, with funds received every two years.

Helen provided an American Rescue Plan Act Update: 117 applications were submitted in the first round, four were accepted, two of which were for projects in Wind River Country. The application period is now open for a second round of funding. First priority will be given to “disproportionately impacted communities,” which includes the Wind River Indian Reservation and Riverton. Second priority will be given to “impacted communities,” which includes the rest of Fremont County.

Helen expressed concerns that there are misunderstandings about what Tourism Asset Development (TAD) funds can be used for, and will be reworking the TAD documentation to tighten up the program and better clarify what lodging tax funds can be used for. Concerns have come from state-level employees, and Helen will be seeking feedback from Darren Rudloff and Chris Brown on the rewrite. She will provide the Board with a draft update prior to the January 2024 Board Meeting. She also suggested that the Wind River Visitors Council create the application that will be used by participating communities, as some of the problems seem to be coming from the applications, which in some cases are misleading.

SECOND AMENDMENT TO THE JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT—DISCUSSION: Helen Wilson and Owen Sweeney presented the Wind River Visitors Council’s draft Second

Amendment to the Joint Powers Agreement at the Fremont County Association of Governments (FCAG) meeting. FCAG's biggest concern in the first draft was the final paragraph. Based on feedback from FCAG, the draft language for the final paragraph will be changed to: *"If budget amendments during the fiscal year due to unexpected expenditures or due to unexpected receipts of revenue are needed, then the Wind River Visitors Council will submit the budget amendment to the Fremont County Association of Governments (FCAG). FCAG will be given a two week period to approve the amended budget. If two weeks pass without communication from FCAG, then the Wind River Visitors Council may move forward with the budget amendment without additional approval."* Helen will submit the Draft amendment back to FCAG.

CWC TOURISM FEASIBILITY STUDY—DISCUSSION:

Julie Buller requested that the Wind River Visitors Council form a committee to review the CWC tourism feasibility study. Hal Herron agreed with Julie about forming a committee, which will consist of Julie Buller, Helen Gordon and Hal Herron.

Owen Sweeney moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Julie Buller seconded. The motion carried at 12:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jenni Brennan.