

**Wind River Visitors Council (WRVC) Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, July 25, 2024**  
**Headwaters Arts and Conference Center, Dubois**

**PRESENT:** Helen Gordon – Hudson; Owen Sweeney – Lander; Hal Herron – Riverton; Bryce House – Riverton; Frank Welty – Dubois; Krista Lobera – Lander (Zoom)

**ABSENT:** Joel Highsmith – Shoshoni; Kip Post – County; Erika Yarber – County

**WRVC STAFF:** Helen Wilson, August Vanderford

**GUESTS:** Budd Betts, Board Member for the Wyoming Office of Tourism – Dubois; Anne Even – Lander; Dave Furman – Dubois; Alexandra Calloway-Nation, Consultant for Wind River Development Fund – Lander; Gary Weisz, Shoshoni Chamber of Commerce – Shoshoni; Beth Jones, Destination Dubois – Dubois

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

**REVIEW & APPROVE AGENDA:** Hal moved to approve the Agenda. Frank seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**SWEARING IN OF NEW BOARD MEMBER, BRYCE HOUSE (RIVERTON):** Bryce took the Oath of Office and was welcomed as a Wind River Visitors Council Board Member.

**APPROVAL OF MAY 23, 2024 MINUTES:** Hal moved to approve the Minutes. Helen Gordon seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** Helen Gordon and Helen Wilson presented the Treasurer’s Report.

- A. The Board asked a few questions about the Statement of Activities in the Financial Report, and Helen Wilson explained. Hal requested that Helen Wilson provide a brief description highlighting significant line items for future Board Meetings. Helen Wilson said that she would do this. Hal moved to approve the Financial Report. Frank seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- B. Helen Wilson reported that approval for the proposed fiscal year 2024 to 2025 budget by each Joint Powers Member is complete.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:** Helen Wilson presented the Executive Director’s Report, which included updates on lodging tax revenue, the new Program Assistant

position at the WRVC, the Destination Development Program, a video being produced about powwows on the Wind River Indian Reservation titled “Chasing the Drum,” the WRVC’s podcast, Helen’s recent Certified Destination Management Courses, Destination International’s Annual Convention, the Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations and recent Wind River Country media exposure.

Helen reported that lodging tax revenue reached over one million dollars in fiscal year 2023 to 2024, and therefore a CPA audit will be required. She also reported that Dubois Downtown, a TravelStorys audio tour, is near completion, as is the Wind River Indian Reservation-specific kiosk. The wayfinding signage project for Dubois, Lander and Riverton is close to reaching the fabrication stage.

Hal gave an update about the Art Banner expansion project in Hudson and Riverton. Helen Gordon relayed how popular the banners are in Hudson.

#### **TAD REPORTS (DUBOIS, HUDSON, LANDER):**

- A. Frank Welty presented the Dubois TAD Report. It was discussed that beginning on July 1 of this year, participating TAD communities were required to use the TAD application and reporting form that were provided by the Wind River Visitors Council. The Town of Dubois did not use the required documentation, and the Board of Directors was unable to verify spending in accordance with statute and the Wind River Visitors Council’s TAD program. Given this, the Board decided to withhold Dubois’ TAD funding until the necessary documentation is received and spending has been verified to be in accordance with state statute and the TAD program. Owen Sweeney will request a meeting with the Town of Dubois to discuss this matter.

The Board continued to discuss the importance of appropriate spending and reporting of TAD funds. They emphasized that the TAD program is voluntary, that no other county in the state has a similar program and that the WRVC is responsible for ensuring that the funds are spent correctly.

The Board also discussed bringing the TAD program in-house to avoid future problems and to ensure that the Wind River Visitors Council is administering the tax according to statute and is able to track spending accordingly.

- B. Helen Gordon presented the Hudson TAD Report. The funds were used for the annual Hudson Daze event, which Helen reported was very successful. She emphasized that Hudson has short-term rentals and that visitors were able to patronize the numerous vendors at the festival as well as the two restaurants in Hudson.

C. Owen Sweeney presented the Lander TAD report. Frank Welty asked if the Lander Chamber of Commerce uses TAD funds for salaries, and Owen Sweeney confirmed that the Lander Chamber of Commerce uses TAD funds for seasonal summer staff wages, as well as to pay wages for staff working events hosted by the Chamber. Statute permits salaries for “persons to answer tourist, convention and tour type inquiries,” so this expenditure is permissible.

**STRATEGIC PLAN PLANNING SESSION (2025 TO 2030)—OCTOBER:** Development of the 2025 to 2030 WRVC Strategic Plan will take place in October. Helen Wilson explained that one of the Destination Development Program requirements is that all projects are based on a strategic plan initiative, so a new plan is essential for continued participation in the Destination Development Program. The Wyoming Office of Tourism works closely with Berkeley Young and Darren Rudloff on WYBest and the Destination Development Program, so they will facilitate the strategic plan session. Hal Herron suggested bringing in others for the Board to gain different perspectives, and Helen Wilson suggested a future training with Bob Harris.

**BOARD LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM:** Helen Wilson provided an overview of the Board Leadership Symposium, which will be held in Orlando in January 2025. Registration is for three people, and it’s suggested that the Executive Director and President attend. Helen Wilson will secure registration, and it will be determined during the September Board Meeting which two Board Members will attend. Funding for this event will come from the Board Member Convention line item (5500), and will replace Board Member attendance at the Wyoming Governor’s Hospitality & Tourism Convention this fiscal year.

**REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RECORDS:** Helen Wilson presented the new WRVC Request for Public Records form. Public requests will now incur a fee of \$20 per hour and \$0.25 per copy.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Gary Weisz spoke on distributing TAD funds during his time on the WRVC Board of Directors. Alex Calloway-Nation, the new Economic Development Fellow for Wind River Development Fund, introduced herself.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business to come before the Board, Frank Welty moved to adjourn the meeting. Hal Herron seconded. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.