

Natrona County Travel & Tourism Council

Visit Casper

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2025 – 11:30 a.m. CASPER, WYOMING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Montgomery called the public meeting of the Natrona County Travel and Tourism Council to order on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 11:32 a.m. Roll call determined the presence of a quorum.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Ashley Aars, Town of Edgerton
Cole Montgomery, City of Casper
Dan Foote, Town of Bar Nunn
Mike Cevasco, Town of Midwest (arrived at 11:38 a.m.)
Pat Sweeney, City of Casper
Tassma Powers, Town of Evansville
Tiffany Gamble, Natrona County

Excused: Renee Penton-Jones, Natrona County

Also Present: Annette Pitts, CEO
Terri Weinhandl, Operations Manager
Liz Bowers, Community Engagement Manager
Wayne Stewart, Director of Marketing & Communications
Syd Wallace, Creative Manager
Shelby Kraus, Business Sales Manager
Cait O'Neal, Sales Project Manager

III. CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Montgomery asked for a motion to approve the May 27, 2025 consent agenda, and the April 30, 2025, meeting minutes.

Moved by Mr. Sweeney and seconded by Ms. Gamble, carried without dissent.
(Exhibit 1)

IV. CEO REPORT

Ms. Pitts discussed the following:

Scorecard

- Hotels/Motels
 - Hotel room inventory
 - Average daily rates
 - Occupancy rates
 - Revenue per available room

- Average trends, national trends, and how different markets have different implications.
- Sales
 - Sporting Events
 - Next year Visit Casper will have 6 months of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in place with leads data and will be able to see a year-over-year comparison.
- Marketing
 - Website
 - Website users declined this month which further supports the decision to update our website and improve the site SEO (search engine optimization).
 - Requests for Visitor Guides and Road to Yellowstone kits increased.
- Visit Casper Advocates (VCA) Program
 - The new program is doing well with classes scheduled through October 2025.

Organizational

- Visit Casper did not find the right candidate for the Content Manager position. Tia Troy with Lightning Bug Public Relations, and Chelsea Combe with Lady Folk will take a role in managing Visit Casper's social media.
- All staff submit time sheets for payroll.
- Staff performance evaluations will be in June and based on:
 - Shared values – how to work within the organization
 - Soft skills –business practices
 - Hard skills –specific job responsibilities
- Policy change requests
 - Employee handbook
 - Employee vacation, sick time and personal day is now in one annual PTO (personal time off) bank to standardize what is available for employees based on their length of employment with Visit Casper.
 - Standardized holidays with Visit Casper's joint powers boards (City of Casper and Natrona County).
 - Bereavement leave time was adjusted.
 - Jury duty, inclement weather, and dress code language were updated.
 - Financial policy
 - Section added for risk management to address separation of duties
 - Clarified language for ACH payments

- Digital POS systems and receipts
- Staff operational policies and processes
- Accurate travel and expense reporting
- The Visit Casper vehicle is for work use only.
- Current cell phone and mileage reimbursement policy will continue.
- Reminder that we can't use public funds for the purchase of alcohol

Mr. Montgomery asked for a motion to approve the amended employee handbook and financial policies as described.

Moved by Ms. Powers and seconded by Mr. Foote, carried without dissent.

Professional Development and Training

- Staff will attend the Tourism Academy in June in Minneapolis, MN on the new CRM, and will participate in supplemental training.
- Staff was trained in 1st aid and CPR.
 - There are plans to purchase an AED for office.

Lodging Tax

Ms. Pitts looked at expenditures from November 2022 through the end of 2025 as follow up to Mr. Sweeney's question about how much Visit Casper has paid in community grants/sponsorships and businesses since the last lodging tax vote. Visit Casper has paid out \$400,000+ in grants/sponsorships to Natrona County organizations and spent \$1.3M with local businesses. She will continue to monitor through the end of FY25.

Community Education Program

The community education program is in draft form but will include educating the public about the lodging tax at the state level and local level. The community education program will include reaching out to local businesses who benefited from visitor lodging tax dollars and asking for their support on the renewal of the lodging tax that helped support your business.

Resident Sentiment Survey

A resident sentiment survey was mailed out to 10,000 residential addresses within Natrona County. Some of the survey questions include:

- Their views/attitudes of Natrona County as a destination
- What they like to do in Natrona County
- What they feel is missing in Natrona County
- What they know about opportunities on the horizon
- The challenges for the current leadership
- Their views on lodging tax

- Their understanding of lodging tax and that the lodging tax is paid by overnight visitors to Natrona County
- Their understanding that visitors to Natrona County generate both lodging tax and sales tax
- Their age range.

The survey will run through the end of June. The target age for the survey was 65-80, which is the largest voting demographic in Natrona County. The survey was paid for with Wyoming Office of Tourism Destination Development Grant funds..

Tourism Master Plan

The original Tourism Master plan was created in 2021 and was updated in 2023.. Darren Rudloff, who worked on the original 2021 plan has been contacted and is putting together a proposal for another update.

Also discussed were the status of major projects:

- Destination Development Grant funds
- David Street Station – ice chiller
- Hell's Half Acre project
- City of Casper wayfinding signage
- Indian Relay Races

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed FY25 Budget Amendment

Ms. Pitts reviewed the proposed FY25 budget amendment.

Mr. Montgomery asked for a motion to approve the FY25 Budget Amendment.

Moved by Ms. Gamble and seconded by Ms. Powers, carried without dissent, to approve the FY25 Budget Amendment as presented. (Exhibit 2)

B. Proposed FY26 Budget

Ms. Pitts presented the proposed FY26 budget with a projected 4% increase in lodging tax. Ms. Pitts moved/changed budgets to provide a more accurate picture of budget activity starting in FY26.

Mr. Montgomery asked for a motion to approve the FY26 Budget.

Moved by Ms. Gamble and seconded by Ms. Powers, carried without dissent, to approve the FY26 Budget as presented. (Exhibit 3)

VI. **STAFF REPORTS – SALES & MARKETING**

Sales and Marketing staff gave highlights from the April 2025 scorecard.
(Exhibit 4)

VII. **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Ms. Aars shared that Edgerton's 100th Anniversary celebration will take place in August this summer.

VIII. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

IX. **NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

X. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

XI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Montgomery asked for a motion to adjourn.

Moved by Ms. Powers, seconded by Mr. Foote, carried without dissent to adjourn at 1:10 p.m.



Cole Montgomery, Chair



Renee Penton Jones, Secretary