

Minutes
Moab Area Travel Council
Advisory Board Meeting
April 26, 2007
6:30 pm
Grand County Council Chambers

Members Present: Jim Lewis, Tony Lema Sr., Rachel Paxman, Colin Fryer, John Knowles, Jason Taylor, Bob Jones

Members Absent: Robbie Levin, Steve Wang

Staff: Marian DeLay, Tina Lopez

Guests: Senator Mike Dimitrich, Mike Johnson, Preston Paxton, Suzanne Martin, Audry Graham.

- 1. Meeting Called to Order:** 6:32 pm
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** Colin made a motion to approve the March minutes, Tony 2nd the motion.
- 3. Presentation on Legislative Session:** Senator Mike Dimitrich gave a report on the bills that were recently passed by the Utah Legislator. He stated that there was a surplus of over \$1 million dollars and the total budget was \$11.5 billion, with the majority coming from income tax and sales tax. Senator Dimitrich reported that the income tax had been changed to a flat 5% tax and that Utahns could now make up to \$24,000 without having to pay income tax compared to a previous \$7,000.

Appropriations made were as follows:

\$2 million for rangeland reclamation
\$2 million for water development (severance tax so is ongoing)
\$350,000 million for a rainy day fund (1/2 general fund and 1/2 school fund)
\$1 million to museums administrated through the Arts and Humanities, (including \$50,000 for the Moab Music Festival)
\$19.6 million for Tourism with an addition 2 million added each year.
\$17 million for fires throughout the state and a one time \$1 million for re-seeding of fire areas.
\$1 million for the Moab Hospital project

Senator Dimitrich reported that Education was a big winner with a \$2,400 increase in salary for each Utah teacher and an additional \$1,000 possible in bonus. He stated that the Legislature hope this would encourage young people, especially young men, to enter the education field. Year round kindergarten was

also funded with \$17 million for four years, with the results from Grand County's year round kindergarten program showing significant results.

Senator Dimitrich reported that the transportation fund received a \$1 billion bond allowance. He stated while most of this would be for the Wasatch Front, it would free up other monies and he said there would be some new projects for Highway 6 and Highway 191. Another \$600 million was put into transportation through severance and gas taxes, but is still underfunded.

Bills that were passed by the Legislature were:

Energy Solutions Bill regarding nuclear waste, which would take a vote by the legislature to approve new waste into Utah. This bill passed but was not signed by the Governor.

Gay Clubs in Schools Bill passed with heavy restrictions, as did the Ritalin Bill (teachers can not suggest to parents that their children see a doctor)

Voucher Bill passed the House by one vote and the Senate by a 19-10 vote. It is the most liberal voucher system in the country. At the 200% poverty level it will allow wealthy to get help in sending their children to private schools. This year the money comes out of the General Fund, but in future years will come out of the State School Fund. Since there are no private schools in the rural areas so it would hurt the rural areas.

State Parks and Recreation Bill to remove the cap on boat registration was passed. The parks also got \$850,000 one-time appropriation for OHV maintenance, and \$620,000 for renovation and repairs.

Bob Jones, speaking for the Hospital Board expressed their appreciation for the Hospital funding and said it would be a major corner stone to the next phase of the hospital project.

Senator stated that the Utah economy was strong and that has brought up the sales tax, while income tax is up due to higher paying jobs. He also reported that the Legislature decreased food tax by 1%.

Senator Dimitrich answered questions from the board and visitors.

Bob Jones raised the following three concerns in regards to small business, asking for the Senator's help in getting the problems addressed:

- 1) Insurance requirement of \$5 million by UDOT was adopted by the State. Bob stated that in Colorado they have a tier system based on size of buses. Said Utah needs to adopt something similar so they can compete with sister states.

This requirement is based on intra-state crossing state lines, which we don't. Colorado's is based on a private motor coach basis.

- 2) Unemployment – State now putting river guide status on all of his employees other than office workers, requiring him to pay the higher 12% rate even though these employees do not go near the water. These include land guides, yard guides, kitchen help and drivers.
- 3) Utah State Parks has been working for past 2 years to revise the boating regulations. They decided the Coast Guard would decide how the white water rafting would be regulated, even though they do not have any white water regulations of their own. They used one location on Lake Powell, that is not a white water operation, to develop their regulations. These new regulations require for example all rafts be made to a military spec milp1386g that not even the Coast Guard, who made the regulation, knows what it means. Also the aluminum frames must be salt-water proof which will increase the cost of a raft from \$300,00 to over one and a half million dollars. They are also close to passing a regulation on patching that will require all patching to be inspected before and after.

Senator Dimitrich asked Bob to email him the specifics on these problems and he would see what assistance he could provide.

4. **Presentation on Tamarisk:** Marian introduced Mike Johnson from the Utah State University Extension Office, explaining that she had invited him to speak as it was very important that businesses understand the tamarisk removal and be able to answer questions from visitors when they ask about all the brown along the river and be able to explain to them the long term benefits.

Mike, through a power point presentation he put together with Tim Higgs, regarding tamarisk removal by way of beetles. He started with a background on how and when the tamarisk arrived stating it was first introduced in the united states in 1823 but didn't start its rapid spreading until the 1920's and was first seen in Moab in the 1950's. He explains that Tamarisk produces flowers throughout the entire growing season and this contributes to its fast spreading. It is considered one of the most invasive and destructive plants because it chokes out native vegetation and increases soil salinity that many native plants cannot survive in.

Mike reminded the board how in the 1950's the river corridor use to be very open and you could see the river. He outlined the problems associated with tamarisk aka salt cedar and efforts to control and remove them by chainsaws, herbicides and fire. All were very labor and cost intensive and not very successful.

After 20 years of study, the salt cedar leaf beetles were finally released at test sites on State and private lands in recent years. At these sites, it was demonstrated that

the beetle could be imported safely into the US, will feed only on salt cedar, and can potentially kill salt cedar and reduce its spread.

The beetle does this by continually defoliating the tamarisk, if new growth starts; they go back and feed on it. This weakens the plant and eventually kills it. The test site at Potash has seen beetles leave and return three times.

The transition period from tamarisk to open river corridor will take many years, with the negatives being, loss of campsites and the visual impacts of browning. Explaining the negatives of the tamarisk to visitors and helping them envision the open corridor is important. Tamarisk is a noxious weed that must be controlled, while the water use is about the same as willows, the sheer mass of the tamarisk takes up a lot of water. The benefit to the tourist will be to see the river again.

Mike explained that discussions are underway as to the best way to remove the dead tamarisk and the possible need to re-vegetate the areas with native plants.

The test sites have shown success and it is expected that most of the tamarisk along the river will be brown by September. Mike said that the beetles could die off, but it is doubtful and they will just keep migrating to tamarisk for food.

Mike answered questions from the board and visitors.

5. Chairman's Report: none

6. Director's Report:

- a. Marian reported that herself, as well as Rachel, Bob, and Jason had just returned from Pow Wow in Anaheim, CA , prior to tonight's meeting. She stated that Moab had the biggest State representation of any community from Utah, with several Moab businesses in attendance. Marian reported she had exceptional appointments that resulted in approximately 34 contacts. Marian reported her Pow Wow reports would be out to local businesses in a couple of weeks. Bob added that he received 5 unsolicited comments of the desire for flights from Moab to Vegas.
- b. The final report for the Western Stars Cowboy Poetry event was handed out and Marian reported that the event was a huge success, that the Michael Martin Murphey concert was standing room only. Marian reported that the event reported a loss of \$1,300.00 and was requesting the last half of her grant. The board had no objections to sending Janet a check. Colin said that Janet deserved a big thank you and great job as she put in a lot of hard work. Marian noted that the shoulder season events such as Western Stars were very important. Colin stated that Murphey wanted to come again and bring others with him.

7. Committee reports:

- a. Marketing Report** – Colin reported that the committee had finalized buys for the Colorado Springs/Denver spots and that we would be spending our co-op monies on the hills of the Utah ads to hopefully increase the summer traffic. He reported that the ads would emphasize the river activities and Moab's closeness to the front-range. Colin stated that the marketing committee would be meeting again and that copy for the ads was currently being worked on. He also reported that the States summer ads began on 3/12/2007 on National cable TV and that they feature Moab prominently. He said that requests at the state level were up dramatically due to these ads, giving an example of 1,000 calls vs. 1 call a year ago on April 8th on the Utah.travel site. The Madden circular should be out this weekend in 10 major newspapers. Colin said the State is now deciding what to do next year. Marian stated that the co-op application is due 6/29/2007. She also said we are getting a great response from our Outside Magazine.

Colin reminded the board of the Utah Travel Symposium in Price and the Utah Office of Tourism meeting the 1st part of June that will be held at the Red Cliff's Lodge and encouraged all the board members to attend, stating that at a meeting held in Kanab, the whole town came out and it really helps to get funding if the community shows their support of tourism. Rachel suggested contacting the Chamber to get the work out. Colin said there would be the meeting as well as dinners, float trips, bike trips, etc. and that he will get an itinerary to Marian.

- b. Locator Board Report:** Marian reported that she met with Donna Metzler & Brent Williams at the City and gave them a list of where we would like to see the locator boards. She stated the City agreed to maintain the boards once we get them installed. The City would like to see one in the new city parking area and on Center Street by the Courthouse. They did say we needed to work with them on ways to do the boards without putting the business names on the boards, that for hotel we use "H", restaurant "R", etc. If they have business names they then have to conform to commercial signage regulations. Bob asked if the City put their request in writing and Marian said they would. As soon as the city gets back the information on how they can be bolted down, the committee can meet again and the "no business name" can be discussed. Marian said the city is excited to work on the project.

- 8. Other:** There was a brief discussion on the airport and Jim reported that they were in discussions. Bob thanked Jim for including the Travel Council in the process.
- 9. Adjourn:** Rachel made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 pm, John 2nd the motion.