



## State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Joe Klimczak, Chair

**Wisconsin Department of Tourism  
Wisconsin Council on Tourism Minutes  
Tuesday, September 23, 2025  
Door County Maritime Museum, Sturgeon Bay, WI**

### **I. Roll Call**

PRESENT: Representative Jill Billings, Senator Julian Bradley, Deb Carey, Dr. Natalie Chin, Jill Diehl, Ray Hill, Representative Chanz Green, Cindy Hoehne, Senator Sarah Keyeski, Joe Klimczak, Sarah Pancheri, Secretary Anne Sayers, Jacqui Sharpe, Jesse Simpkins, Denise Stillman, George Tzougros, Ellie Westman Chin,

EXCUSED: Nathan Gordon, Nic Mink, Christian Overland, Aaron Sherer

### **II. Call Meeting to Order and Welcome**

Ellie Westman Chin called the meeting to order at 1:02p.m. The Council welcomed recently appointed Council members Jill Diehl, Ray Hill, Sarah Pancheri, Jacqui Sharpe and Jesse Simpkins.

### **III. Approval of April 28, 2025 Minutes**

Deb Carey made a motion to approve the April 28, 2025 minutes. Sarah Pancheri seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **IV. Committee Reports**

Committee chairs or staff leads representing each of the six Department of Tourism committees provided updates on the recent work of the committees. The Council heard from the following:

- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee report provided by Maria Van Hoorn.
- Marketing Committee report provided by Ellie Westman Chin.
- Office of Outdoor Recreation Committee update provided by Anne Sayers
- Group Travel Grants Committee report provided by Craig Trost
- Joint Effort Marketing, Tourist Information Center, Meetings Mean Business and Ready Set Go! Committee reports provided by Maria Van Hoorn.

### **V. Election of Marketing Committee Members**

Natalie Chin provided a review of the Marketing Committee as established by Council bylaws. Following the recent Council departures of Darren Bush and Krystal Westfahl, the Marketing Committee had two vacancies to be filled by a Council member, by vote of Council.

Council Chair Joe Klimczak submitted email nominations for Jesse Simpkins and Sarah Pancheri. The floor was open for additional nominations; there were no further nominations. Roll call votes were taken; Jesse Simpkins received 16 votes and was elected to the Marketing Committee. Sarah Pancheri received 15 votes and was elected to the Marketing Committee.



## State of Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Joe Klimczak, Chair

### VI. Update on Department Business

Secretary Anne Sayers shared the following department updates:

#### Travel Trends

Travel demand remains high both nationally and in state. Nationally, we see traveler trends pointing to less spending and a shift to luxury travel. In Wisconsin, we see this play to our benefit as we are often seen as an affordable travel destination. As other states focus on hosting fewer, higher-spending travelers, we are left with more travelers to attract. National travel trends also show a decrease in international travel. Wisconsin has never relied heavily on international travel, and data shows that countries that continue to plan travel to the US are interested in the Great Lakes region.

#### Top 20

Travel Wisconsin has set a goal to be a Top 20 Tourism economy state. Recently, Wisconsin has increased from 27<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>. Travel Wisconsin will continue to push domestic leisure, which accounts for around 90% of our economic impact, but we will also increase efforts in other profitable revenue streams. These include new efforts in meetings & conventions, sports, motorcoach, outdoor recreation, international and film.

### VII. Next Meeting Topics and Discussion

Ellie Westman Chin shared that the next Council meeting will be held in the spring after the Wisconsin Governors Conference on Tourism (WIGCOT).

WIGCOT 2026 will occur March 15-17 at the Baird Center in Milwaukee. The Council previewed this year's theme concept and logo. The Department is taking programming topic and speaker suggestions. Council members are encouraged to reach out to leadership with suggestions.

Council members were reminded to complete the annual trainings for public officials by November 14. Those with questions should contact Chelsey Bence.

### VIII. Adjournment

Denise Stillman made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Representative Jill Billings. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

*Respectfully Submitted by Natalie Chin, Secretary*

*Approved by Joe Klimczak, Chair*