

NEVADA COMMISSION ON TOURISM
Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Title: NCOT March Commission Meeting-20260304_125755-Meeting Recording

Location: Northern Nevada: Nevada State Capitol, Old Assembly Chamber
101 North Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701

Southern Nevada: Travel Nevada Office Board Room
4000, S. Eastern Ave, Las Vegas, Nevada 89119

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Proper Posting

At 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, Lieutenant Governor Stavros Anthony, Chair, called the meeting of the Nevada Commission on Tourism to order.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony requested confirmation that the meeting had been properly noticed and posted.

Kelly Benoit, for the record, confirmed that the meeting had been properly noticed and posted in accordance with Nevada's open meeting law.

2. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Roll call was conducted by Kelly Benoit, for the record.

Present:

- Lieutenant Governor Stavros Anthony, Chair
- Commissioner Shelly Capurro
- Commissioner Annette Kerr (virtual)
- Commissioner Jill Lagan
- Commissioner Mike Larragueta
- Commissioner Jane Moon
- Commissioner Judith Perez Siegel (virtual)

- Commissioner Herb Santos Jr..

Absent, excused:

- Commissioner Rick Murdock, Vice Chair
- Commissioner Fletch Brunelle
- Commissioner Mendy Elliott

Kelly Benoit confirmed that a quorum was present. Lieutenant Governor Anthony acknowledged the quorum and proceeded with the agenda.

3. Public Comment (on Items on the Agenda)

Lieutenant Governor Anthony opened the first period of public comment for items on the agenda and noted that speakers would have three minutes.

Kelly Benoit, stated there was no public comment at that time.

Public comment was closed.

4. Approval of Minutes (Action Item)

Lieutenant Governor Anthony introduced approval of the December 9, 2025 Commission meeting minutes and asked for questions or comments.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. stated that he had reviewed the minutes and found numerous typographical and syntax errors, likely the result of transcription. He requested that the Commission table approval of the minutes to the next meeting so that:

- Commissioners could submit written corrections, and
- Staff could return with a cleaned-up version for consideration.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony agreed and stated that the December 9, 2025 minutes would be held over to the next meeting. He noted that a vote was not required to hold the item over.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony directed Rafael Villanueva to review the minutes “with a fine-tooth comb,” correct errors, and redistribute them in advance of the next meeting for approval.

Action:

December 9, 2025 minutes tabled/held over to the next meeting for correction and approval; staff directed to correct and reissue.

5. Chair's Welcome Remarks and Commissioner Updates

Lieutenant Governor Anthony thanked all Commissioners for volunteering their time and emphasized the importance of the Commission in promoting tourism across Nevada. He stated that their input and presence are "absolutely valuable."

Lieutenant Governor Anthony reported on his activities since the last meeting, including:

- Speaking at the OD District in Sparks, a growing arts marketplace and emerging tourist destination.
- Attending events during the CES convention in Las Vegas.
- Spending three days at Cowboy Poetry in Elko and visiting the small community of Jiggs.
- Welcoming the National Automobile Dealers Association to Las Vegas.
- Touring Fallon with Commissioner Jane Moon, noting positive developments downtown and on Main Street.
- Visiting Fernley with Commissioner Mendy Elliott and the Mayor to discuss tourism and growth.
- Visiting Virginia City with Grady Armstrong, Nevada's Christmas Tree Ambassador, and his family.
- Visiting Lattin Farms in Fallon to discuss agricultural tourism.
- Touring Lahontan State Recreation Area and commending Nevada State Parks staff.
- Visiting Minden Mill Distillery and Great Basin Brewing, and promoting participation in the Nevada Craft Beer Passport.
- Meeting with a delegation of Japanese regulatory commissioners in Las Vegas to discuss regulatory issues as Japan prepares to open its first casino.
- Traveling to Mesquite to attend a community input meeting for Travel Nevada's 3D destination development project, noting over 250 residents attended.

- Visiting Camel Safari near Mesquite.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony invited commissioners to share updates.

Commissioner Jane Moon reported that she attended the Atlanta media mission, Travel Nevada's first such mission in Atlanta, building on the New York mission and using the "Wild West of All" theme. She stated that the mission was well received by journalists and influencers and thanked the Travel Nevada team for their work despite travel challenges.

No other commissioners provided travel reports at that time.

6. Travel Nevada Quarterly Report (Discussion Only)

Presenters:

- Rafael Villanueva, Chief Executive Officer, Travel Nevada
- Tracie Barnthouse, Chief Communications Officer
- Nicole Orsua, Chief Industry Development Officer
- Keelie Cox, Marketing Manager

Overview

Rafael Villanueva stated that the agenda was lighter than some past meetings but contained several substantial presentations.

He reported that the Quarterly Report covered Q2 of the fiscal year (September-December) and that staff would also highlight activities from January and February.

Q2 Highlights – Marketing & Communications

Get a Little Out There Month (October)

Keelie Cox reported that Travel Nevada worked with the Governor's Office to proclaim October as "Get a Little Out There Month." During that month:

- A user-generated content social contest invited participants to share their favorite Nevada places.
- Travel Nevada launched a new online store featuring "Deso" gear and Nevada Magazine products (calendar and ghost town book).
- A new ambassador program began, partnering with three Nevada-based influencers for year-round promotion of in-state travel.

Travel Nevada also:

- Re-introduced its “Space to Be” activation in Reno during the Off Beat Music Festival block party.
- Participated in the Nevada Day Parade and staffed a booth.
- Hosted a table at the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas for Nevada Day festivities.

PR Initiatives and Paranormal Passport 2.0

Tracie Barnthouse reported that the PR team aligned the Reno media mission with Get a Little Out There Month, holding the event at the Fleischmann Planetarium and focusing on dark skies. The mission:

- Featured an interactive dark-sky map.
- Brought together northern Nevada media and statewide partners.
- Was considered very successful.

Keelie Cox added that, following the success of the original Paranormal Passport, Travel Nevada launched Paranormal Passport 2.0 in October for Halloween season.

Carson City Adventure Center Groundbreaking PR

Tracie Barnthouse reported that Travel Nevada:

- Organized extensive media outreach around the Carson City Adventure Center groundbreaking.
- Secured coverage on all major Reno TV stations, Telemundo, and other outlets, with interviews by Rafael Villanueva.

Destination Development (3D) and International Trade

3D Project – Cohort 4

Nicole Orsua reported that October marked the start of Cohort 4 of the 3D Destination Development Program. In these communities:

- Consultants and staff conducted site visits.
- Held steering committee meetings.
- Facilitated first community meetings, including:
 - In Mesquite, where more than 200 residents attended, the highest turnout for a 3D community meeting to date.
 - In Goldfield, where about 50 residents participated, which is significant given the town’s size.

Keelie Cox emphasized that destination development is community-driven and that engagement levels indicate the program is progressing well.

International Trade Activities

Nicole Orsua stated that Q2 was primarily used to ramp up international campaigns for the fall and winter seasons in coordination with field agencies in Mexico and Europe, and that specific performance metrics would be reported in Q3.

Early Q3 Highlights

Light Painting Exhibit – Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas

Keelie Cox reported that Travel Nevada commissioned light painter @DariusTwin to create Nevada-themed works and then developed a photography-focused exhibit at the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas. A January media event invited partners and media statewide. The exhibit runs through April 6, with evaluation results to follow.

Seasonal Gift Guides and Atlanta Media Mission

Tracie Barnhouse reported that Travel Nevada expanded its Shop Local gift guide concept from the holidays to other occasions, including Valentine's Day, with future guides planned for Mother's Day, Father's Day, and graduations. The Valentine's guide received strong PR coverage.

She also reported that the Atlanta media mission:

- Was Travel Nevada's first in that market.
- Involved 10 Nevada partners and 18 media attendees.
- Generated strong interest and early indications of story placements.

TravelZoo "Dual Days" Showcase

Keelie Cox reported that Travel Nevada launched a Travel Zoo showcase promoting "dual days" (e.g., skiing in the morning and golfing in the afternoon). The associated broadcast event with Travel Zoo Senior Editor Gabe Saglie was planned at Mt. Rose Ski Resort, but due to snowstorms was relocated to the Renaissance Reno. Results will be reported in Q3.

Australia Sales Mission and Qantas Service

Nicole Orsua and International Market Manager Elsa Gomez reported that:

- Elsa Gomez led a sales mission in Australia, delivering in-person trainings and meetings with tour operators and travel advisors in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney, and participating in the Brand USA business-to-business event in Sydney.

- While she was in market, Qantas announced direct Sydney–Las Vegas flights:
 - Service begins December 29 and runs through March 12.
 - Flights operate three times a week (Tuesdays, Thursdays, Sundays).
 - Arrival in Las Vegas is around 3:00 p.m., with departure around 8:30 p.m., allowing visitors to enjoy a full day before returning.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. asked about Travel Nevada’s plan to:

- Support the new Qantas flights.
- Encourage extension of service beyond March and possible increases in frequencies.
- Ensure Nevada is well positioned relative to other U.S. destinations.

He also asked about Australian trip planning lead times.

Nicole Orsua stated that:

- Travel Nevada will host a multi-market fam trip in June for Australian travel agents and tour operators.
- Ongoing marketing campaigns in Australia will be evaluated and reported in Q3.
- Programs such as the Nevada Trailblazers trade certification and other B2B efforts help train agents to extend stays beyond Las Vegas.

Rafael Villanueva added that:

- Beginning July 1, Travel Nevada intends to reallocate international budgets to give greater emphasis to Australia, subject to final budget levels.
- Australia is a priority market because long-haul visitors typically stay longer and visit multiple destinations, and Travel Nevada wants those additional destinations to be in Nevada.
- Australian visitors commonly plan trips three to five months in advance, making the timing of the Qantas announcement beneficial.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony stated that when Australians come to Las Vegas, they may also consider visiting Arizona, California, and Utah, and that Travel Nevada must work to keep them in Nevada, particularly by encouraging travel north within the state.

Rafael Villanueva agreed and indicated that Travel Nevada would:

- Leverage LVCVA efforts in Australia.
- Position Las Vegas as a gateway to the rest of Nevada.
- Encourage drives of four to six hours from Las Vegas, increasing the likelihood of overnight stays in rural communities.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony suggested exploring placement of Nevada Magazine in Qantas seat pockets, stating that travelers on a long flight might read about Nevada and that Travel Nevada could provide the magazines at no cost. Rafael Villanueva agreed to explore the opportunity through Commissioner Fletch Brunelle and Travel Nevada's Australian agency.

Executive Updates – Magazine and RFPs

Rafael Villanueva reported:

- The upcoming Nevada Magazine issue is being printed for the first time by a state printer not previously used, so quality is still unknown.
- Travel Nevada is in an RFP process to select a new long-term printer to ensure quality and consistency.
- Travel Nevada is in RFP for agencies of record in advertising, digital, and PR, with the goal of presenting contracts to the Board of Examiners in June and having agencies under contract by July 1.
- RFPs for international representation offices in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia are underway, and Travel Nevada expects to finalize those contracts by the end of the fiscal year.

No action was taken; the item was for discussion only.

7. Finance Report (Discussion Only)

Presenter:

Stewart Terry, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

Stewart Terry, for the record, presented the current budget update and noted:

- Category 27 (EDA Adventure Center Construction Grant) was missing a figure in the budget column of the printed materials. The correct budgeted amount is \$3,712,000, consistent with the Receipts and Funding section.

- This correction will increase the total expenditures and overall budget totals by that amount and will adjust the “difference” column accordingly.

He stated that:

- The current biennium is a non-cost-of-living adjustment biennium, so any vacancy savings or staff hired below budgeted pay result in real savings that flow into reserves.
- With roughly two-thirds of the fiscal year complete, expenditures in major budget categories were about 50% of budgeted amounts, which is consistent with historical spending patterns given late-year invoices.
- Travel Nevada is projecting near-full utilization of Category 31 – Promotion and Advertising by fiscal year end.
- The unassigned amount of approximately \$254,327 represents projected savings due to some planned expenditures coming in under budget or being shifted to next fiscal year; this figure will continue to be refined.

Stewart Terry further explained that a work program (budget amendment) is pending with the Governor’s Finance Office to adjust Category 28, which represents the state lodging tax match on the EDA-funded Adventure Centers. Because this is a balance adjustment with no change in purpose, IFC approval is not required.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. asked Stewart Terry to confirm:

- The correct amount to list for Category 27 (\$3,712,000).
- That this correction would increase total expenditures and budget by the same amount and adjust the difference line.
- The source and disposition of the \$254,327 unassigned funds.

Stewart Terry confirmed the \$3,712,000 figure and stated that:

- Yes, that correction changes the totals accordingly.
- The unassigned funds result from planned expenditures coming in below their original budget. At year-end, such savings revert to the Department’s lodging tax reserves, not to the State General Fund.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. asked whether this level of unassigned funds is typical. Stewart Terry stated that:

- The reporting approach is somewhat new, but last fiscal year there were approximately \$1.2 million in savings, meaning Travel Nevada is closer to full utilization this year than last.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. asked whether the remaining funds appear in line item 4663. Stewart Terry explained that:

- Line item 4663 is the revenue ledger for the transfer of lodging tax from the departmental account to the Travel Nevada budget.
- Any year-end reversions flow back into the departmental lodging tax reserves, not directly to line 4663.

Commissioner Mike Larragueta asked approximately what percentage of the Travel Nevada budget is funded by lodging tax. Stewart Terry responded that:

- The overwhelming majority of the budget comes from lodging tax, particularly line 4663 (approximately \$26.4 million out of roughly \$31.8 million in overall budget), with additional significant funding from federal EDA grants.

Commissioner Mike Larragueta then noted that Southern Nevada, which generates most lodging tax, is reportedly 7–8% down year-to-date, and asked how this affects the Travel Nevada budget and whether expenditures will be adjusted for the remaining four months of the fiscal year.

Stewart Terry stated that:

- Travel Nevada is closely monitoring lodging tax receipts in consultation with the Department of Taxation and the internal research team led by Kyle Schultz.
- It is likely that reduced lodging tax revenue will require lower actual expenditures than authorized by the legislature, particularly affecting FY 27.
- As lodging tax recovers, additional spending authority may again need to be work-programmed into the budget, as was done following the COVID-related downturn.
- Kyle Schultz is in regular contact with LVCVA and RSCVA regarding projections and room tax trends.

No action was taken; the item was for discussion only.

8. Agricultural Tourism Update (Discussion Only)

Presenter:

Nicole Orsua, Chief Industry Development Officer, Travel Nevada

Nicole Orsua, for the record, provided an update on the Agricultural Tourism Study being conducted by Whereabout LLC (Destination Development Consultant Matthew Landkamer).

Nicole Orsua summarized that, following Commission approval at the December meeting:

- Desk research (data and literature review) has been completed.
- 15 of 20 planned interviews have been conducted; final interviews are in process. Interviewees include farmers, ranchers, county commissioners, agricultural event managers, and other stakeholders, with additional names recommended by participants.
- Emerging themes from the interview data include:
 - Concerns about liability, affordability, and access to insurance.
 - Need for greater regulatory clarity for agritourism.
 - Opportunities for technical assistance and capacity building, including centralized support for business planning and visitor experience design.
 - Gaps in marketing, storytelling, and consumer awareness, and a need for improved knowledge on how to market experiences.
 - Challenges around finance and access to capital, with agritourism often seen as supplemental income but with high startup barriers.
 - Potential for networking and cluster development among farms and ranches to cross-promote and develop recognizable agritourism destinations.

Nicole Orsua stated that next steps include:

- Aggregating and analyzing all survey and interview data, literature review findings, asset inventory, and competitor benchmarking.
- Refining the agritourism framework and themes.
- Developing recommendations for how the Commission and Travel Nevada can support agritourism.

She noted that these findings will also inform an agricultural tourism session at Rural Roundup and that a full framework and recommendations will be presented at the June Commission meeting.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony asked whether a strategic plan or framework for Commission support of agritourism would be presented at the next meeting. Nicole Orsua confirmed that it would.

No action was taken.

9. GovCon Recap and Rural Roundup Update (Discussion Only)

Presenters:

Tracie Barnthouse, Chief Communications Officer

Nicole Orsua, Chief Industry Development Officer

Governor's Conference on Tourism (GovCon) Recap

Tracie Barnthouse, for the record, reported that:

- The most recent Governor's Conference on Tourism (GovCon) was held December 9–10, 2025 at the Grand Sierra Resort (GSR) in Reno.
- Travel Nevada received significant planning and hosting support from Visit Reno Tahoe, including the opening reception.
- 236 attendees participated, similar to the previous year.
- Program highlights included:
 - Opening keynote by New York Times best-selling author Jenny Wood.
 - Sessions on tourism data and economics, youth sports, and a CEO panel, among others.
 - Presentation of the Battle Born Legacy Award to Steven Ascuaga at an evening event.

Survey results indicated:

- Overall event rating: 4.65 / 5.
- Likelihood of attending in 2026: 4.59 / 5.
- Value of sessions: 3.96 / 5.
- Value of networking: 4.35 / 5.

Tracie Barnthouse stated that these results are comparable to the prior year, with general session value identified as the main area for improvement. Feedback suggested:

- Increasing interactive elements, such as workshops and table-based exercises.
- Bringing in more elected officials to discuss collaboration with tourism partners.
- Continuing to provide robust data and trend analysis.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. stated that he thought GovCon was excellent and that staff did an outstanding job. He expressed a strong desire to bring back the “marketplace” component, akin to earlier conferences:

- A format where Nevada partners meet directly with tour operators (e.g., “speed dating” style appointments) to present their products.
- He suggested that such a marketplace could also be used strategically to highlight Nevada to Australian tour operators, particularly in light of the new Qantas flights.

Rafael Villanueva acknowledged the value of the marketplace concept and noted that:

- A successful marketplace requires a critical mass of qualified buyers; it is also resource-intensive.
- Travel Nevada continues to work year-round with tour operators through missions and trade shows.
- GovCon has now been re-established first in Las Vegas (with heavy southern emphasis) and then in Reno (with heavy northern emphasis), and future conferences will aim for a better statewide balance.
- Rebuilding GovCon to host an effective marketplace is likely a two- to three-year process.

Commissioner Jane Moon supported Commissioner Herb Santos Jr.’ vision but emphasized that many rural tourism representatives are volunteers and need training and support before they can fully benefit from and participate in a marketplace. She cited the importance of programs like Rural Roundup for building capacity.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony thanked the Travel Nevada team for successfully re-establishing GovCon after a multi-year hiatus and stated that both of the recent conferences were very successful.

No action was taken.

Rural Roundup Update

Nicole Orsua reported that:

- The upcoming Rural Roundup conference will be hosted by Elko and the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority from April 21-23, 2026.
- The format has been expanded from two half-days plus one full day to one half-day plus two full days to allow more time for education, networking, and destination experiences.
- Anticipated attendance is approximately 250 participants; as of late February, 167 registrations (excluding staff and speakers) had been received.

She described the Rural Roundup fam tour, which will:

- Depart Reno on the Monday before the conference.
- Stop in Carson City, Fallon, and Winnemucca for pickups, lunch, and local exploration.
- Continue on to Elko.
- Return on Friday with drop-offs in reverse order.

Nicole Orsua invited commissioners to join the fam tour and stated that detailed information and registration links would be sent.

She reported that:

- 15 sponsors had been secured as of the prior week.
- The conference will celebrate the 90th anniversary of Nevada Magazine & Visitor Guide, with a Nevada Magazine booth selling merchandise and related products.
- Territory and partner awards have been expanded, including a new "Rising Star" award to recognize emerging tourism professionals, while the Larry J. Friedman Award will continue.

Nicole Orsua also described the Rural Pitch Day Contest, now in its third year:

- Conducted in partnership with the Small Business Development Center and Travel Nevada's destination development staff.
- Prospective entrepreneurs attend a weekend workshop, then submit pitch packets.
- Top-scoring applicants present before judges and attendees at Rural Roundup.
- The winner receives seed funding as a grant from Travel Nevada, along with ongoing support during their first year.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony suggested adding a stop in Lovelock on the fam tour to show the “Love Locks” attraction. Nicole Orsua agreed to bring this suggestion to the planning team.

Commissioner Annette Kerr, speaking as Executive Director of the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority, stated that:

- Elko is excited to host Rural Roundup after an estimated ten-year gap.
- The host community has prepared experiences including Pony Express riders, mine tours, and other unique activities highlighting Northeastern Nevada.
- She invited all Commissioners to attend.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony suggested the inclusion of Cowboy Poetry performers at Rural Roundup to offer entertainment and further promote Elko’s signature National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Commissioner Annette Kerr indicated they are working on such arrangements.

No action was taken.

10. Adventure Centers Update (Discussion Only)

Presenter:

Carrie Roussel, Facilities Coordinator, Travel Nevada Adventure Centers

Carrie Roussel, for the record, provided an update on the Nevada Adventure Centers in Carson City and Boulder City.

She explained that:

- The centers will be clusters of small buildings that offer:
 - Visitor information on outdoor recreation in surrounding areas.
 - Education on sustainability and stewardship.
 - Tenant suites leased to tour operators, providing direct access to bookable experiences.
- In total, there are 25 suites between the two locations.
- There are currently 26–28 tour operators who have expressed interest.

Construction Status – Carson City

Carrie Roussel reported that:

- The Carson City Adventure Center is approximately 62% complete.
- Framing of the last building is nearing completion; electricians are performing rough-in work; exterior siding and roofing are underway; drywall is expected to begin within two weeks.
- The project is on schedule for substantial completion by the end of May, meaning the contractor's construction work will be finished and the site will be ready for inspections and approvals.

Construction Status – Boulder City

She stated that:

- The Boulder City Adventure Center is approximately 50% complete, expected to reach 60% within 7-10 days.
- Walls are up; electrical rough-in is in progress; roofing and door frames are being installed; HVAC systems are onsite.
- This project is also on target for substantial completion by the end of May.

She noted that:

- After substantial completion, there will be a 90-day punch list period for final checks, inspections, and approvals.
- Travel Nevada plans soft openings with initial tenants in late summer or early fall and formal grand opening ceremonies in the fall.

Commissioner Questions – Tenant Interest and Contingencies

Commissioner Mike Larragueta asked why Carson City's project appeared more complete than Boulder City's when construction in Boulder City started first. Carrie Roussel explained that:

- Boulder City required more extensive initial site work, including concrete removal, leveling, and trenching, which impacted visible progress percentages.

Commissioner Mike Larragueta asked how many of the 25 suites had been formally leased. Carrie Roussel replied that:

- No leases have been signed yet, as lease documents are still being finalized.
- Approximately 26-28 operators across both locations have expressed serious interest.

Commissioner Mike Larragueta asked about the distribution of interest between northern and southern Nevada and referenced earlier concerns about filling suites in Carson City. Carrie Roussel responded that:

- There are 13 suites in Carson City and 12 suites in Boulder City, with one suite in each location potentially reserved for administrative use.
- Interest is currently somewhat stronger in Boulder City, where the concept was developed with Commissioner Jill Lagan and the local community over time.
- At the Carson City groundbreaking, about nine companies attended and expressed interest, and outreach continues to Tahoe and Reno operators.

Rafael Villanueva added that:

- If all suites are not leased to individual operators, some larger companies may lease multiple suites and use extra space for storage and equipment.
- Additional uses under consideration include artist retreats, workshops, and temporary retail during Nevada State Railroad Museum events.

Marketing and Promotion

Lieutenant Governor Anthony stressed that strong marketing will be needed to draw both residents and visitors to the Adventure Centers and support the tour operators who locate there.

Carrie Roussel noted that:

- A consumer email communication plan is launching to keep the public informed about construction progress and opening timelines.
- Commissioners were invited to a post-meeting tour of the Carson City site; hard hats and safety vests were available.

Commissioner Judith Perez Siegel suggested regularly posting construction progress on Travel Nevada's social media to build public excitement and interest.

Rafael Villanueva confirmed that Travel Nevada is developing a dedicated marketing budget and campaign for the Adventure Centers and is in discussions with potential sponsors and partners. He expects to provide an update within approximately 30 days.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony indicated that once the centers open, he would like to place a future agenda item focused on Adventure Centers marketing so the Commission can provide input and ensure a coordinated statewide approach.

No action was taken.

11. Get a Little Out There with Alex Honnold (Discussion Only)

Presenters:

B.C. LeDoux, Managing Partner/COO, Noble Studios

Heather Shepard, Senior Vice President, Fahlgren Mortine

Introduced by Rafael Villanueva, Chief Executive Officer

Rafael Villanueva introduced BC LeDoux and Heather Shepard and reported that:

- The “Get a Little Out There with Alex Honnold” series is a key initiative to position Nevada as “the Adventure State.”
- Alex Honnold, star of the Academy Award-winning documentary “Free Solo”, is a long-time Las Vegas resident and an enthusiastic advocate for Nevada’s outdoor recreation assets.

Production and Content

B.C. LeDoux reported that:

- The team spent two weeks filming with Outside Network’s crew, Travel Nevada staff, and agency partners.
- The series follows Alex Honnold and guests through locations including:
 - Las Vegas, Red Rock, Black Canyon, Boulder City.
 - The “wild granites” near Tonopah.
 - Mount Jefferson and turquoise mining operations.
 - Ely and Great Basin National Park (with climbing and mountain biking).
 - Elko and the Ruby Mountains, highlighting both culture and outdoor recreation.
- Episodes feature family-oriented visits, technical climbs, local crafts, and night skies.

Distribution and Rights

Heather Shepard reported that:

- Outside Network is the primary distribution partner via its streaming platform and app, as well as through its outdoor media brands.

- Travel Nevada has a dedicated series hub on travelnevada.com, and Outside hosts the full episodes and related content.

She explained that:

- Travel Nevada owns the series “Get a Little Out There with Alex Honnold.”
- Travel Nevada has:
 - Perpetual rights to the series.
 - A one-year right (from premiere) to use Alex Honnold’s likeness in marketing.
- Outside Network has approximately six months of exclusivity, after which Travel Nevada may:
 - Continue the relationship with Outside, and/or
 - Pursue distribution deals with other platforms (e.g., streaming services), while also hosting episodes on its own channels.

Performance and PR

B.C. LeDoux and Heather Shepard reported that:

- Within the first six days of Episode 1:
 - Approximately 7,000 views occurred on the Outside app, roughly ten times higher than a typical new show launch on the platform.
 - Total views including broadcast partners are expected to reach 70,000–80,000 for the first week.
- Within the first four days, the Travel Nevada series hub saw approximately 16,000 page views, or about 33% of the six-month goal.

They explained that the series launch has been coordinated with Alex Honnold’s high-profile “Skyscraper Live” event on Netflix, and that his PR team has ensured frequent mentions of the Nevada series:

- Major media appearances and interviews have included discussion of “what’s next” for Alex Honnold and references to the Nevada travel series.
- Travel Nevada organized a virtual press tour for the series, yielding coverage in outlets such as:
 - New York Times Travel (including a “5 Places to Visit in Nevada” feature).
 - Forbes, Newsweek, TV Insider, IMDB, and others.

They reported that pre-launch and early campaign efforts generated approximately 1.6 billion earned impressions.

Planned and ongoing efforts include:

- Rotating episode-specific ad creative through Outside’s inventory.
- Social media promotion by Alex Honnold, co-participants, and Travel Nevada.
- A “Honnold Out There Hot Tips” micro-content series focused on responsible recreation and Nevada-specific insights.
- An Outside Network podcast episode where Alex Honnold discusses both his skyscraper climb and the Nevada series.

Future Seasons and Streaming Opportunities

B.C. LeDoux and Heather Shepard stated that:

- Alex Honnold and his team are highly interested in producing a second season, and Travel Nevada would continue to receive a favorable “hometown” rate.
- Travel Nevada has not yet formally approached Netflix or other platforms regarding additional distribution but intends to:
 - First maximize and assess performance with Outside.
 - Build a strong set of data on view-through rates, engagement, and audience response.
 - Then evaluate potential distribution opportunities, which may include streaming platforms or extended partnerships with Outside.

Commissioner Annette Kerr stated that she watched Episode 1 and was very impressed. She acknowledged initial skepticism about the cost but now fully supports the project and plans to watch the remaining episodes.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. asked:

- Who owns the series and who must be involved in negotiating any future streaming deals.
- Whether Alex Honnold’s team must be involved and whether they would be entitled to additional compensation.
- What viewership or performance metrics platforms like Netflix would expect.

- Whether Travel Nevada should move quickly while interest is high following Skyscraper Live.
- Whether the one-year marketing rights period for Alex Honnold's likeness runs from the start of filming or from premiere.

BC LeDoux and Heather Shepard responded that:

- Travel Nevada owns the series and may negotiate distribution deals.
- Alex Honnold's team is not contractually required to be part of those negotiations, but they are natural partners and allies.
- Streaming platforms will largely evaluate view-through rates, engagement, and audience size.
- The one-year likeness usage term runs from the premiere date, not from filming.
- Travel Nevada and its agencies are focused on building a strong performance record with Outside before engaging additional platforms.

Commissioner Judith Perez Siegel suggested ensuring that Alex Honnold's official social media accounts follow and tag Travel Nevada consistently, given the value of his global follower base. Heather Shepard stated that Alex Honnold's social media is run by a management team but that Travel Nevada already appears in collaborative posts and tags; she committed to working with his team to ensure Travel Nevada is followed and tagged where appropriate.

Commissioner Jill Lagan praised the project and its impact, particularly in and around Boulder City, and asked about:

- Possible co-op marketing opportunities with Outside Network for communities statewide.
- Inviting Alex Honnold and his wife Sanni to attend Adventure Center grand openings.

Rafael Villanueva responded that:

- Travel Nevada is in ongoing discussions with Outside and will also be participating in Outside Days, where Nevada will have a strong presence and may involve DMO partners.
- As to appearances, Travel Nevada must carefully prioritize Alex Honnold's limited availability but will consider potential appearances at either the Adventure Center grand openings or a future GovCon, whichever offers the greatest statewide impact.

Commissioner Shelly Capurro stated that she watched the premiere via the Outside app and, as a Nevada native, was “blown away” by the portrayal of the state.

Commissioner Jane Moon thanked the teams for securing the partnership with Alex Honnold before his visibility increased further after Skyscraper Live and commended the campaign’s ability to amplify Nevada’s brand.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. requested that:

- A future agenda to include an item formally considering inviting Alex Honnold as a GovCon speaker, so that he may move on this recommendation at a later meeting.

Rafael Villanueva agreed to include such an item on a future agenda.

No action was taken.

12. Pony Express Territory (Discussion Only)

Presenter:

Commissioner Kyle Horvath, Chair, Pony Express Territory; Director of Tourism, Ely & White Pine County

Commissioner Kyle Horvath, for the record, provided an overview of the Pony Express Territory, which follows Nevada’s segment of the historic Pony Express route along Highway 50 and includes:

- Dayton
- Fernley
- Silver Springs
- Fallon
- Austin
- Eureka
- Ely
- Baker

He noted that the territory includes:

- Great Basin National Park, four state parks, a National Historic Landmark, a Nevada State Museum, and more than 300 annual events, as well as numerous historic sites and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Commissioner Kyle Horvath explained that the territory functions as a regional DMO, particularly valuable for communities relying heavily on volunteers. It supports regional economic development by:

- Coordinating marketing.
- Providing education and support to members.
- Targeting markets including:
 - Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Northern California's Gold Country, the Reno-Tahoe region, and the Wasatch Front.

He stated that the territory's visitor base includes history enthusiasts, outdoor adventurers, nature lovers, curious explorers, and small-town supporters.

He described the territory's marketing efforts:

- Multiple social media accounts, a monthly newsletter, a refreshed website (loneliestroad.us), and participation in podcasts, influencer marketing, radio, and print.
- Plans for future fam tours.

Commissioner Kyle Horvath praised Travel Nevada's support, including:

- Development of the territory strategic plan and membership plan, facilitated by rural representatives Courtney Bloomer and Abigail Burnaby, which clarified the territory's strategy and audiences.
- Inclusion of Ely/White Pine County and the Sutro Tunnel in the 3D program.
- Over \$1 million in grants to territory partners since 2015.

He explained that approximately 98% of the territory's budget goes to marketing and promotion, and 2% to administration, and highlighted the value of Travel Nevada's Territory Retreats for high-level planning and cross-territory collaboration.

Key initiatives include:

- Reframing "The Loneliest Road in America" from a statement into a question, inviting travelers to decide for themselves and showcasing the attractions and communities along the route.
- Launching a new website with updated content and integrating:
 - SocialView, enabling travelers to submit videos and offering a \$1,000 prize for the best territory video.

- Visit Widget, an interactive map supporting trip planning and powering a gamified Pony Express Passport, which awards points and badges based on visits to attractions and experiences.

He also described America 250 initiatives, including:

- A Pony Express Re-Ride Celebration that brings riders into communities for education and engagement.
- Participation in a coast-to-coast American Discovery Trail relay, coordinating Nevada participants to move the baton from the California border to the Utah border.

Commissioner Kyle Horvath concluded and invited questions; none were raised.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony thanked him for the presentation.

No action was taken.

13. Las Vegas Territory (Discussion Only)

Presenter:

B'Anka Neder, Vice-Chair, Las Vegas Territory

B'Anka Neder presented on the Las Vegas Territory, which focuses on highlighting experiences "beyond the neon" and encouraging visitors to travel from Neon to Nature, exploring rural and extended destinations around Las Vegas.

She explained that:

- Many partners are small businesses or local operators with limited marketing resources and no in-house international sales capacity.
- Travel Nevada grants enable the territory to give them access to domestic and international markets through:
 - Sales missions.
 - Trade shows.
 - Media engagements.
 - Digital storytelling.

B'Anka Neder described:

- Participation in sales missions where Las Vegas Territory represents rural Southern Nevada in discussions with tour operators, wholesalers, and receptive operators building Nevada itineraries.
- Joint appearances at trade shows under the Nevada banner, allowing rural partners to participate cost-effectively.
- Active involvement in Travel Nevada’s media missions, including recent missions to New York City and Atlanta, where she promoted rural destinations and off-Strip experiences.
- Ongoing expansion of the territory’s website and social media presence, which together provide a centralized hub for rural Southern Nevada storytelling, partner listings, and events.

She noted that:

- The territory hosts “Territory Talks”—educational sessions focused on business and marketing skills, stress management, and industry best practices—and networking mixers in various communities.
- Recently, Las Vegas Territory hosted a pre-fam tour for ABA highlighting Boulder City, Laughlin, Mesquite, and Moapa/Overton, and is organizing a pre-fam tour for Go West, with a route covering:
 - Downtown Las Vegas and Springs Preserve.
 - Moapa/Overton and Mesquite.
 - Red Rock, Blue Diamond, Jean, and Goodsprings.

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr. asked about the status and performance metrics of Universal’s “Horror Unleashed” at Area15. B’Anka Neder confirmed that:

- Universal Unleashed is a new partner in the territory.
- The territory frequently partners with Area15 and other attractions.
- She will obtain performance figures and report back with metrics when available.

No action was taken.

14. Final Public Comment

Lieutenant Governor Anthony opened the final period of public comment.

Kelly Benoit, for the record, stated that Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Church had indicated a desire to make public comment but did not respond when called and appeared to have left the meeting. She reported that there were no additional public comments.

Lieutenant Governor Anthony invited any in-person public comments; none were offered. Public comment was closed.

15. Staff Comment – Annual Report

Rafael Villanueva, for the record, addressed the Commission and noted that:

- Commissioners had received the latest Travel Nevada Annual Report, summarizing work over the past year.
- He encouraged them to review the report.
- He stated that the next Annual Report, which will align with the legislative session, will be more data-rich and robust and that staff may seek commissioner support during legislative discussions.

No action was taken.

16. Adjournment (Action Item)

Motion:

Commissioner Jane Moon, for the record, moved to adjourn the meeting.

Second:

Commissioner Herb Santos Jr., for the record, seconded the motion.

Vote:

Lieutenant Governor Anthony called for a vote. All commissioners present voted “aye.” No commissioners voted in opposition.

Result:

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:31 p.m.