

**NEVADA COMMISSION ON TOURISM | RECOVERY COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021**  
**MINUTES**

The Nevada Commission on Tourism held a Recovery Committee meeting at 3:00 p.m. on March 18, 2021 via Zoom.

**Call to Order, Roll Call and Determination of Quorum**

Chair Pam Robinson called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**Committee Members Present**

Christian Passink  
Julie Pazina  
Kristin Windbigler  
Pam Robinson, Chair  
Patty Herzog  
Tim Haughinberry  
Tracie Barnthouse

**Staff Present**

Brenda Scolari  
Jessica Grundy

**Guests Present**

Caleb Cage  
Carolina McIntosh  
David Peterson  
Kate Wilson  
Lieutenant Governor Kate Marshall  
Madeline Burak  
Meagan Ranson  
Mike Larragueta  
Steve Hill  
Yolanda King

**Notes**

Due to technical difficulty Agenda Items A - E were not captured via recording but are noted here. There was no public comment. The September 29, 2020 and December 1, 2020 Minutes were approved. There was a welcome and introduction by Chair Pam Robinson as well as Welcome Remarks from Lieutenant Governor Kate Marshall.

**Meeting**

BURAK: I'm very happy to be speaking with this particular committee today and, first, to commend you all for all the work you are doing to keep our tourism industry afloat and pressing forward during these extremely tough times we have been experiencing and that the last year has brought. I've been asked to share an uplifting message from the Governor's office, and I am so thrilled to say that there are great days on the horizon and before we get there, though, I do want to just take a look back. I am sure everyone in this meeting can vividly remember, as I do, that a year ago yesterday, with COVID cases on the rise and hospitalizations on the rise, the Governor had to make a very tough decision to shut down our hospitality industry and all non-essential businesses were also ordered to close, in an effort to slow the spread and flatten the curve, which I haven't said those words in a very long time. Nevadans were confined to their homes and many, as we were just discussing, lost work and there is now significant unemployment. I think we became very familiar with the reality that this virus was not only extremely contagious, but that it was going to be with us for a lot longer than anyone could have anticipated; and now, here we are a year later. This decision, I know the Governor only made it with the safety and health of Nevadans in mind and it was not made lightly. True to the Battle Born

spirit of all Nevadans, nonetheless, we all pulled through this really difficult time and through this last year and supported each other. And what I can say is I believe, and I know the Governor believes, that the worst is behind us and that we are beginning to see the light at the end of this -- seemingly endless tunnel and set our eyes on the future and it is because of partners like you all and others in this state that we are going to be ending this pandemic. As we take a look forward, you all may have seen that just last week the Governor made an announcement that in partnership with the Southern Nevada Health District and others, that we were able to expand vaccination eligibility to all frontline workers in the commerce and service industries under the COVID-19 vaccine playbook; which meant that we were able to extend eligibility to all restaurant, cafeteria, hospitality and casino employees in Clark County, in particular, which was a major step forward as far as getting our tourism industry back to work and getting folks back visiting Nevada. Then, additionally, last night, the Governor made another major announcement about two significant milestones in our vaccination efforts statewide. In case you all did not see the press conference last night, starting on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, vaccination opportunities are going to be open to Nevadans 16 and older with underlying conditions. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, all Nevadans age 16 and over will be able to get a vaccine and will be eligible. I know that the Governor is extremely committed to making Nevada be known as the safest destination where tourists and locals alike feel safe and protected so we can get folks back to work and safely welcome back tourists to our amazing state. I know that folks are, as you said, are very anxious to get out of the house and get back to life again. We want more than anything for the tourism industry to come back even stronger than ever and we know that we are absolutely headed in that direction. With that, that is a bit of great news I think, I'm happy to answer any questions or speak further on anything if I missed anything; and I hope I did not cross over into Caleb and Meagan's remarks also.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Madeline. That's great. I know I saw the press release last night. I just went -- this is phenomenal and so for those people who don't, aren't on the list or didn't see it, this is a great piece of information. Do the committee members have any questions or comments for Madeline? Looks like you're off the hook.

BURAK: Thanks everyone for having me and really appreciate it. And Pam, you are welcome to share my contact info with your committee if you ever need it.

ROBINSON: Great. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Okay. So, next on our agenda is Caleb Cage and Meagan Ranson. And I thank both of them for participating. I know they have been on the frontline of this, and they have done yeoman's work. Caleb is the Director of the Governor's recovery task force and has been in the trenches since day one. He and I have had the pleasure of knowing each other and working with each other for many years in different capacities and he is always willing to step up when asked and do the hard things. And Meagan is on the frontline in the Governor's office. She is a policy analyst that is on the "tip of the sword" on this issue, day in and day out with Caleb, so we welcome both of them. And Caleb, I will let you and Meagan determine how and which order you will go in. Thank you.

CAGE: Thank you very much and make sure you can hear me good. And so, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. And Madeline, I think, appreciate your comments as well. I think it set the stage perfectly for this. But I know that this committee has a lot of work to do, and so we'd like to keep our comments relatively brief and make sure there is plenty of time to answer questions and those sorts of things. So, Meagan is going to, in a moment, basically give you an overview of where we stand today with COVID-19, in the state, and then I'll talk a little bit about the process going forward. And again, these are all things that are probably well known by all of you so hopefully it just gives us an opportunity to have a great conversation. So, as Madeline pointed out, we are moving quickly towards our vaccination goals here in this state but that is only one tool. It is our best tool, but it is only one tool, for the reopening process that is underway right now. The other comes in the form of mitigation and enforcement of mitigation measures. And so, as you all know from your experience here in the state and from various industries here, the Governor has taken multiple approaches from a full stay-at-home order to working with counties through the taskforce that Meagan and I are on, and others are on too, going for a statewide pause in order to ensure that we are minimizing the spread. As Meagan will go into here in a minute, we're at a point right now where we're seeing success that we have not seen in quite some time. In fact, some metrics that are better than we have seen since the beginning of the pandemic and that gives us a lot of hope. And so, with that, I will turn it over to my colleague, Meagan, who can give you an update on where we are, and then I'll follow up with a little bit with the way ahead, a little bit. Meagan.

RANSON: Thanks, Director. So, I'll just provide a brief update. As of today, Nevada has logged 300,415 cases of COVID-19 in the state, with a 14-day moving average, daily average, of cases being 213. Nevada has now completed a total of 2,000,863,567

molecular tests since the beginning of COVID-19 in our state. The test positivity rate over the last 14 days is at 5.2%. Just for comparison, as of February 8<sup>th</sup>, our test positivity rate was at 15.5%. The Nevada Hospital Association reports that Nevada is seeing a decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations. This decline has been continuing for the 14<sup>th</sup> straight week. Total COVID patients dropped another 50, week over week, with our current hospitalizations at 331. The Nevada Hospital Association also reports that emergency department visits for COVID-19 related symptoms remained between 8% and 9% for all visits. While these numbers are great and we haven't seen this data in a long time, now is not the time to take our foot off the gas -- the break. We need to continue with our mitigation efforts, and I know that message is not lost with all of you. In terms of COVID-19 vaccine efforts, as of today, Nevada has reached a tremendous milestone with 1 million COVID-19 vaccines having been administered. That equates to 367,732 Nevadans being fully vaccinated with the two required shots or through the one dose of Janssen. Again, these are great trends, and we are now moving in the right direction. I'll now turn it over to Director Cage for further information.

CAGE: Thanks Meagan. I appreciate that. And I think those numbers are extremely important, for people like us who live in these numbers every day. I think these things are sort of natural for us, but to hear 14 weeks of declining positivity rates for hospitalization and otherwise. That's significant. That's a really big deal for where we are at right now. And we can go into a lot of interesting trends that we are seeing such as we're falling more quickly than we've decreased before, which means -- which indicates, and that doesn't necessarily mean, but indicates that perhaps the vaccine is having an effect and may continue to benefit us and keep us open as we move forward here. So, there are a lot of members or a lot of people here on this -- on your committee, and I see Mr. Hill is here from LVCVA, and others. A lot of folks who have been key advocates and partners throughout this entire process and have understood that we are not in a place, or we have not been in a place where we can go back to conventions; but we may be moving closer to that now and being great partners in terms of moving -- bringing together various industry representatives to determine what the best next steps are for implementing mitigation measures and so on. And so, because of those partnerships, because of the advocacy, because of the great work that is being done, at the industry level, as well as the great numbers that we are experiencing here in the state, we've gotten to a place where the Governor, as you all know, on February 15<sup>th</sup>, lifted the pause, which kept us at 25% capacity, went from 25% to 35%. And then earlier this week -- I believe, earlier this week, went from 35% to 50% across the board and then the next step is going to be transitioning to local authority, which is going to occur on March -- or excuse me, May 1<sup>st</sup>. Meagan and I, and our task force members, have been meeting with our colleagues -- our fellow members for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of this week -- to meet with counties, to make sure that everybody is on the same page and understands what the next steps are going to be. But with the mask mandate in place, some social distancing requirements in place, and the gaming control board regulations in place, we should be able to move, pretty quickly back and hopefully safely and responsibly, back to getting, the tourism economy in Nevada back to where we all want it to be. And I know I have seen some of the postings and some of the announcements about some of the events that are coming up and I know we're excited at the state to see some of these, especially large conventions, coming back with mitigation measures in place. And we are, as everybody else is, hoping that the mitigation measures, the vaccination efforts and all of the things that are within our control, or more in our control, will allow us to keep this critical part of our economy and people's livelihoods and Nevada open. So, with that, Chair Robinson, I'd love to see if you or your members have any questions, and we'll conclude our remarks there.

ROBINSON: Do any of our committee members have a question? And I will also say I saw that Herb Santos and Jane Moon have joined us. They are on the Commission on Tourism, so we thank them for also participating. And if they have questions, please indicate to Jessica. Anybody?

PAZINA: Hello. This is Julie Pazina for the record. Thank you so much for all the hard work you have been doing to get our tourism industry back up and running. I was excited to see last week that hospitality was included to have access to the vaccinations. And I was curious. I saw that was true in Clark County. Was that statewide that our hospitality workers can get vaccinated?

CAGE: Thank you, Julie. Sorry. This is Caleb for the record. So, couple of things there. One is we're really proud of the fact that we prioritize hospitality industry and hospitality workers for vaccination here. In fact, we have, I believe since January, that's been our plan. The Biden administration, around the same time of our announcement, came out and recognized hospitality workers as key parts of the national economy that should be vaccinated as well. We're, I think, grateful for that because it did validate, at least, our position. But we would have done it anyway, because it was the right thing to do not just for Nevada, but for those essential workers here. So, the way this works, and I want to answer your question fully, and Meagan may be able to provide me

some more input. We have been in meetings all day and I have not seen the latest, but Meagan, if you could check to see if Washoe County has expanded to hospitality workers that would be great. With the way it works, from the state perspective is, we set the -- we provide the playbook, which is basically the policy guide that says this is -- these are the groups that need to go first. And then once the allocation allows the individual counties to be able to move into those groups more quickly, then they are able to move into the next group. And so, Clark County, for a number of reasons, was in a better position last week to move into the resort hospitality sector employees for vaccination and the others requested not to because they still had needs or priority groups that they needed to hit before they moved to the next group. So, it really is a local decision. And Meagan is here unmuted. Do you have anything on Washoe County?

RANSON: Washoe County announced today that they were moving to vaccinate hospitality workers.

CAGE: Thank you. That was in the back of my mind, but I -- Meagan knows much more about this stuff than I do. So, it is wise to defer.

ROBINSON: Tim or Kristin? Patty? So, Caleb, I have a question for you. We hear a lot about herd immunity and that we have to get to a certain percentage of people vaccinated is my understanding. What does that look like for Nevada and do you have any numbers that can help us? You know, I think a million vaccinations is pretty phenomenal, but just your comments or your thoughts on the herd immunity component.

CAGE: Yeah. Thank you. I'd love to kick this one to Meagan, as well, but neither one of us are public health scientists. So, I can tell you that the numbers that we are hearing. We had a meeting and Clark County was on our meeting earlier today and their number for Clark County is 60%, which is about 1.2 million of their population there. And that reminds me, I believe that is 1.2 million of their -- yeah, that would be their overall population, I believe. There are a number of different factors and one is the vaccines that are available for distribution are not yet tested and cleared for use on people 16 and under, or I think under 16, rather. And so, we're already using a reduced portion of our population. The 60% - 70% numbers are the ones that I have heard from our public health professionals here in the state, as far as herd immunity is concerned. I know that's a goal. We are going to keep moving forward as quickly as we can. As you know, the Biden administration has said they will have enough vaccine for everybody in the country who wants it by May 1<sup>st</sup>. That's wonderful. It's important for us to manage those expectations and say vaccine availability is not the same as vaccine distributed. So, it's still going to take a little while for us to get all of that distributed. But our greatest limiting factor to date with the vaccination effort has been the federal allocation so that should allow us to move towards something like herd immunity much more quickly.

ROBINSON: Thank you very much. Appreciate that, Caleb. Committee members, any other comments or questions for Mr. Cage? Or Meagan? All right. With that, we will thank you again for participating and for all you are doing, and we will continue to keep our eye on messages coming out of your task force.

CAGE: Thank you so much. Appreciate all you are doing as well.

ROBINSON: You bet. And we are going to make one quick little change, unfortunately. Ms. Yolanda King, who's the County Manager for Clark County. She, because of things that we are talking about right now, has got a conflict at about 3:45 p.m. So, with everybody's indulgence, especially you, Steve, we are going to ask Ms. King to do her presentation at this point.

KING: Thank you, Chair Robinson. I appreciate the accommodations.

ROBINSON: Wait, we can't hear you. We can't hear you. Okay. Try it again.

KING: I am unmuted. So, let me -- Oh, is that better? Okay, perfect. All right. Perfect.

ROBINSON: Thank you.

KING: Thank you. I appreciate the accommodations. I will be very quick because I believe a lot of really what I would like to cover, as far as it relates to your committee Mr. Hill, will be able to give you that overview. But I wanted to piggyback off of the vaccination conversation. We are hot and heavy into vaccinations and, as Caleb mentioned, we are moving fast and forward and trying to get that herd immunity here in Clark County, because that is very important to bringing back the tourism industry. As most, in particular, the conventions and making those folks feel that it is safe to come to Southern Nevada for tourism and conventions. So, it is correct that we are aiming towards about 1.2 million of our population of about 2.3 million; we are trying to get vaccinated. It did help with opening up the hospitality industry, with getting those folks vaccinated because that is the number one industry here in Southern Nevada -- gaming and hospitality. I also want to mention that opening up the frontline workers with vaccinations is also important to our airport operations because of tourism and bringing in those folks. And so, that was very helpful in trying to get many of our airport operators vaccinated as well. We have about 20,000 employees at the airport. And so, obviously that is important to make sure that those frontline employees are getting vaccinated as well. I think another issue that is probably going to be important, and I don't know if Mr. Hill is going to speak to this, but also what's important to, I'll say for Clark County, as it relates to tourism, you know, our room tax dollars are down quite a bit is the international travel that is also important to the tourism. I think the numbers were about maybe 20%, 25% of our tourists pre-pandemic, or it was related to international travel. And so, you know, obviously with that population, our tourism population not coming back that, you know, obviously will continue to impact us here as it relates to tourism. Clark County, we are -- you know -- our recovery is slow, but it is positive. We have been working here on a local level to push out a lot of the federal money that we've received as it relates to rental assistance, utility assistance; also as it relates to providing business grants to many of our businesses here. So, we've received a lot of money from federal government. The first tranche of money we were able to push out literally tens of millions of dollars to our constituents.

ROBINSON: Can I remind people to please mute? Thank you.

KING: Thank you. But I think also what's important is the business recovery side. And, so we're able to, and have been able to push out dollars as it relates to business recovery. That's pretty much what I wanted to update you on, as it relates to our recovery and what we're doing here in Clark County, and really what our focus has been just basically vaccinating, business recovery, tourism recovery, and trying to get those federal dollars out to the folks that absolutely need it in order to be able to successfully recover. So, thank you. And I'm open to any questions that you may have.

ROBINSON: Great. Committee members, do you have any questions for Ms. King? So, I guess I'm a little interested in how the May 1<sup>st</sup>, transition what, what that might look like. And I know you're still working on plans and might not be able to be definitive on that, but does that give Clark County the flexibility to start back with some of the smaller events and smaller conventions or doing things in more of your rural communities? Does that give you more flexibility to open up?

KING: Yes, Chair Robinson. It absolutely would allow for more events to come back. Absolutely. And so, we are in the process of, of putting together a local plan. We have to submit that and, obviously, receive feedback and endorsements from the local community here. And we will provide that to the Governor I believe sometime in April. So, absolutely, that is going to be critical to getting back and opening up and allowing events to come into the community more than what they have, obviously, since the pandemic.

ROBINSON: That is fabulous. So, if there's anything I'm going to volunteer the link on Travel Nevada for your plan, if you would like to post that, to make it more available for other people to know and different constituencies on what's going on, we'd be happy to do that.

KING: Okay. No, thank you. I appreciate that because I know we're putting it together.

ROBINSON: Anything else? Thank you very much. I know your afternoon got away from you. So, we're appreciative, appreciative that you were able to stick with us this long.

KING: Thank you. I appreciate it. Bye-bye.

ROBINSON: Bye-bye. So next we will go to Steve Hill, who is the President of the Las Vegas Convention Visitors Authority, and I've known Steve and had the pleasure to work with him on a number of different issues. And I know that the LVCVA is in great hands. So, take it away Steve.

HILL: Thanks, Madam Chair. I will tell you that I am always willing to yield the floor to Ms. King, so you can do that anytime you want. The other thing I'll say before I start as you know this well, and I do at some level, being a part of the Governor's staff is kind of a neat job, but it's pretty much a thankless job when times are good. When times are not good, it is really tough. It is 18 hours a day, seven days a week, of really thankless. And I just want to take the opportunity to, you know, thank you everybody who either is, or was on the call and their work through this has gotten us to this point and will move us forward and I think I speak for all of us and a lot of people thanking them. They probably don't hear that enough. And certainly, just over the past couple of weeks and kind of culminated yesterday with the approval of World of Concrete, we've worked with the Governor's staff and local governments. Caleb and his folks really helped coordinate the health care professional input into that decision and the protocols that need to be in place in order to move forward. That was a really important step, that we took yesterday, and we're excited about what it means. For those who have not seen it, World of Concrete is the first city-wide show in Vegas that has been approved to move forward. There is still a substantial set of kind of standard protocols that they've agreed to do, but with the recognition that, that the show does not start until June 8<sup>th</sup>. So, between now and June 8<sup>th</sup>, the environment frankly, ought to get better. So, they'll do what they have committed to do now. Hopefully, they don't have to do all of that by the time they get to June 8<sup>th</sup>, but the entire industry was watching to see if World of Concrete would happen and the fact that it did. We've had three shows approved in the last 24 hours following that. And that's not only here, that's across the country. This will be the first major show to take place across the United States. Even though other states have been open to doing it, those shows have not been able to move forward because of the health situation. And getting the exhibitors to commit to come and attendees to attend, regardless of what the state's protocols were or rules were in other states, those major shows have not happened. And so, we made some news yesterday in the industry that'll be very beneficial for Las Vegas and for Nevada as a whole. As we look at our recovery, we look at it in kind of three slices. There's a leisure piece; there's a meetings and convention piece, which I basically just talked about and is now moving forward; and there is the live event space that includes sporting events and concerts and shows and properties and is also needed. Some of those bring visitors directly for the events and some of those are just amenities, but you need those amenities in order to attract a full group back to Las Vegas. We think the leisure segment, which is a big segment of the total number, there's a lot of pent-up demand there. We have the luxury of being able to do research every week and that the trends on the luxury side have just followed the health numbers almost exactly. So, as things have gotten better, the interest in travel, the intent to book that bookings that we are seeing, both now and in the future, are really good and showing a lot of improvement. So, we think that will happen pretty naturally. And I'll talk about what we're doing in marketing in just a minute, as it relates to all of this. Meetings and conventions are really important for mid-week business and businesses travelers spend more than leisure travelers do. Their companies are typically paying for their flight, their hotel rooms, and they have kind of the same budget, but they share -- all of that budget can go toward their entertainment, their meals, things like that. So, the spend there is higher, and you can see it in our occupancy rates right now. Occupancy on weekends are between 20% and 30% higher than they are mid-week. And that's certainly not in weekend occupancy that's healthy and is not enough to bring Las Vegas back into a healthy situation. Live entertainment takes really, in most cases, a full audience; particularly larger show like the Cirque shows, a concert with a headline entertainer. Those things take the ability to get to a hundred percent attendance in order for them to move forward. The Governor has gone -- restrictions have gone from 35% to 50% and what that step did is really take the percentage out of the conversation and what is capping the attendance now is the requirement for social distancing. You cannot socially distance, either anything or much of anything, at 50% attendance because it's 50% of the fire code. Fire code typically is one person for every 15 square feet. So, if you're sitting in your 10 x 15-foot bedroom, fire code would say you can have 10 people in your bedroom. 50% of that would be five people in your bedroom. That's still pretty crowded. You can't get everybody six feet apart from everybody else in that environment. In a venue with fixed seating that caps out at 28% or 30% attendance. And so, raising it past 50% is not the functional issue at this point. It is the elimination or, somehow if it makes any sense, the reduction of social distancing requirements in order to take the next step. In order to get the live entertainment at scale, we're going to need to have social distancing lifted. Caleb and his folks talked about where we are on vaccines right now and understand the reluctance to necessarily predict the future and where we will be in two months or so. But as we look at what we are going to do, both from a re-opening standpoint -- from the marketing standpoint, we do that. And we really feel like by the time we get to Memorial Day, 70% or so of the adult population, and Caleb mentioned that different distinction in these numbers. Approximately 19% of Nevada is under the age of 17. So, you can pretty much take the statistics. We're at 22% of the people who've been vaccinated right now. Multiply it by about 1.2 and get to the number of adults who have been vaccinated in

Nevada. The rest of those folks are not yet eligible and won't be for some time. Kids. We think that we'll be at about 70% by the time we get to Memorial Day. And, we also think that by the time we get into mid to maybe late May, there are going to be vaccine appointments available that people aren't filling, which means you've gotten to the point where people are -- most, everybody has had the opportunity to make a choice. They will choose to have gotten the vaccine and had that opportunity, or they will have chosen not to. And, at that point, the folks who, and you probably all know people who have been through the vaccination process, they all feel safe. Virtually everyone I know who has been fully vaccinated and waited the two weeks feels safe. And then folks who have chosen not to be vaccinated probably do too. A lot of our visitors are going to come to visit us around Memorial Day on a plane that is full sitting shoulder to shoulder with a person they don't know, and they have chosen to do that and feel comfortable doing it. And so, we're hopeful that once everybody has had that choice and they can also then have the choice to sit shoulder to shoulder with someone they don't know because they feel safe doing that, or if they don't, they don't have to come to that event. But we think as we head into summer, the opportunity to open up attendance to 100%, should be there with the caveats that we want to make sure that we don't have some completely left turn with a variant. And, obviously, in order for that to take place, the vaccine rollout needs to continue, at least at the pace that we are on now. Provided those things happen, and that's kind of our projection, and hope at this point, our marketing is evolving pretty quickly. Right now, our customers are in a full set of conditions. Some are still very concerned about health and safety. Some have not been through this entire process and still aren't. And we're adding to the group every day who are not really concerned about health and safety because they've gotten vaccinated. And so that is shifting pretty significantly and pretty quickly. We have, running right now, most of what we're doing from a messaging standpoint is allowing others to give that message on our behalf. I mean, there was an article recently about our use of influencers, which we have done before, but we're doing a little more significantly now; basically, testimonials about coming to Vegas and that it's still fun and it's safe and it's healthy. And it's a great thing to do. We will evolve to telling our own message again. And I think the Governor's decision to open up vaccinations to everyone on April 5<sup>th</sup> is also a signal for us to speed up what we had intended to do toward the end of April probably to the middle of April. And our messaging, at this point, is largely to the leisure group. And we think leisure will kind of pop naturally on its own. Our messaging is to drive intent to travel after that pop. So, as we get into the summer help keep that level high and continue to grow. So, we'll have a major campaign out that will start sometime in April and run through May and into June. And we hope at the end of that period of time, we will be able to announce the return of live entertainment at scale, the way that we have been able to just now announced the return of meetings and conventions. And so, we'll kind of culminate the effort that we're in right now with a big build toward, the announcement of live entertainment as we get into the summer. So, I am sure I have overstayed my welcome so I will stop and happy to answer any questions anyone has.

ROBINSON: Never, never, never. Committee members. Do you have any questions for Mr. Hill?

PAZINA: Well, first of all, thank you so much for joining the call and for the wonderful update. I guess my biggest question is have show managers -- have people really shown an eagerness to come back as we get into the Fall and into 2022? What have you seen?

HILL: Yeah, Steve Hill. It's a really good question. And it depends on the type of show and the purpose of the show and the industry of the show. So, the big city-wide events we have are trade shows; almost all of them. Those trade shows are either owned by an association; and, for example, CBS is owned by the Consumer Technology Association and the Broadcaster Show is owned by the National Association of Broadcasters. And those shows pay for those associations and they need to bring them back in order to continue to exist as an organization. I mean, they are largely the funding source for those associations. And then there are professional trader organizers. Informa, for example, is the largest in the world, big publicly traded company. They own World of concrete and that is their business. And so, they need to get back to their business of putting on chips. Then you have corporate shows or meetings, and some of them are huge. I mean, Amazon comes every year here and brings 50,000 or 60,000 people. And then some of them are obviously much smaller than that. Some of those are profit drivers, in and of themselves. They bring customers here. They bring vendors to those shows. Others are just meetings. And so, depending on the industry and depending on the purpose, some of those shows are very anxious to come back and some of them are taking their time. The really big shows are all planning to come back. We are more booked between July 1<sup>st</sup> and June, fiscal year 2022; for us, everybody understands that here than any other year in our history and we feel very confident that that schedule is going to happen in full. The only real question is, is the footprint of the show going to be as large -- and it's probably not quite -- and is the attendance going to be as big? And that's almost certainly not going to reach back to 100% attendance, in that first or at least early in that first cycle back, as we get into 2022. It'll be, I think, interesting to see, because that's really the meat of the big show schedule from January to May. As Ms. King

mentioned, international is a big part of that. Almost 30% of CES are international visitors, so that one will recover the slowest and we're going to have to work with countries as well as airlines in order to facilitate that. So that will take more time. But, on the other hand, domestic customers are not going to be going overseas as much for those types of events so it may balance it somehow. And then I'm sure -- I do have one thing that at the commission meeting the other day -- there was a conversation around messaging and not only what our research is showing, but I've seen research from airlines, properties, folks outside of Las Vegas. The health and safety message still resonates right now. And it's part of what we're doing and part of what everybody's doing, but that is pretty rapidly a diminishing priority for travelers. Our view is, I don't know, three to six weeks from now. That will not really be a driving influence in folks who are thinking about booking a trip a month or two from now because most people are going to start feeling like either got the vaccine or they're going to be able to get it the next four to six weeks, and they're going to travel after they get it and they feel safe once they've gotten it. And that is what all of our research is showing. So rural Nevada, in particular, is very well set up for all of that messaging because it's easy to distance and do what you normally do in a lot of cases, throughout rural Nevada. Vegas needs crowds. We can't recover without crowds. So, we have our advantages. We're the place that people think about first to escape; to do what they want, to not be bound by rules. So, we have advantages there but Nevada across the state has a lot of advantages in what we have to offer as we come out of this.

ROBINSON: So, just one quick question then Steve. Do you see that there will be possibly different standards or requirements for domestic participants versus international?

HILL: Steve Hill. No, we don't. There's been a lot of conversation around like mass testing or health passes. From a flight standpoint, I think there's a real possibility that the health passports are necessary because in order to allow the flight to happen, a country that we're flying to and from may want it. And so those conversations are happening, and I think are likely. Once they get to the destination, our viewpoint is at this point, masking and social distancing are really the key aspects of health and safety. Mass testing at scale is really not possible. I mean, we're the largest vaccination center in the state. Here at the convention center, we're doing about 6,000 people a day and our parking lots are full and there's lines out in front of the building. And so, if you try and do mass testing at 25,000 people, for example, at World of Concrete, it's going to be a week-long event just to get them all tested. So that really does not work and soon everyone is going to have the opportunity to either get the vaccine or decide that they aren't going to do that. And so those types of efforts we don't think are going to be necessary and are not part of the required protocol, for example, in World of Concrete.

ROBINSON: Thank you and thank you for joining us. We appreciate your time very much. And the message.

HILL: Happy to do it. Thank you.

ROBINSON: So next our agenda is Mike Larragueta, and he's the Vice President of Sales for the Reno Sparks Convention Visitors Authority. We appreciate him for stepping in at the last minute. Charles Harris, who's the President of the RSCVA is sick today. So, Mr. Larragueta, take it away.

LARRAGUETA: Thank you, Pam. I appreciate it. It's great to be here. Good afternoon. It's nice to see so many names and faces attending today. I had this long presentation with all of these notes and after hearing Mr. Hill speak, I would like to just change my presentation to say what Steve said. Does that work? No. And in all seriousness, thank you, Steve. That was a great update. I appreciate it. To echo his comments in regards to what the state, county level, city levels have been through this pandemic -- also want to thank them for their hard work -- but, in addition to that, I think it's important to also recognize our friends in the South, in the hotels, the LVCVA, the amount of collaboration. I've had numerous calls with my counterparts down South, both on the hotel and the LVCVA side. And, in fact, I spoke to John Schriver today and everybody's been extremely supportive and knowledgeable and willing to share what they're hearing, what they're seeing, which has made us all better. And it hasn't been about what's important in just bringing business back to Las Vegas or bringing business back to Reno and Sparks and Lake Tahoe. But it's been about what's important to bring business back to the entire State of Nevada. So, thank you for that. Thank you to your staff, Steve. They've been wonderful. We appreciate it. It's my pleasure to be here and represent Charles and he wanted me to send his regrets. So, he's not feeling well, as Pam mentioned, but hopefully he's on the mend and we'll be back tomorrow. I want to approach this a little bit, and yes, I'm going to talk about what's going on in our market as it relates to meetings and conventions, marketing tourism, special events, et cetera, because they're also vitally important to us. But I also want to approach a little bit from what Northern Nevada



and Washoe County went through as we entered this pandemic. When things started to go in dire straits in February and March, there was also this massive unknown about what that was going to represent. Right? With the hotels closing and what that was going to do to not only the hospitality industry, but the overall economy for the State of Nevada. And what we've experienced in Washoe County is that we went into the budgets with a worst-case scenario. As a lot of people in the hospitality industry experienced, there were furloughs. Budgets that were decimated. Eventually staff eliminated which was extremely unfortunate on so many fronts. But, in Northern Nevada, we were very fortunate just to be completely transparent. We went into it thinking we didn't know when the hotels were going to open back up. The Governor obviously made decisions that was obviously in the best interest of Nevadans and we respect that and appreciate those decisions. But what we learned through the pandemic is a lot of our hotels learned how to run a business from a different perspective and how they operate at their facilities. We also learned a lot that who our customer is and how they get here and where they come from. And because of that, we were fortunate to perform at a level that we didn't anticipate. Much better as we go into our budget season now. We're looking at what is a realistic number on what we think we're going to achieve. And the good news is that we have a benchmark and we have a playbook from this last fiscal that we feel has taught us a lot. So, as we go into next year's fiscal, we're somewhat optimistic. One thing about pitching in for Charles today is I'm happy to pinch in any time when things are going in the right direction. So, that's a good thing, right? I'm happy to do that. If God forbid anything goes in the other direction, I'm not available. So, I hope he doesn't call. But with that, I want to focus a little bit on the segments that I mentioned earlier in convention sales. So, what we're seeing in Northern is we're definitely seeing our lead volume increase. We're seeing site inspection starting to happen. And we've been working very closely with business and industry submitting our plans for approval for groups that want to obviously materialize before June 30<sup>th</sup>. And we're also looking forward to working with a local jurisdiction as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, when they take control in terms of capacity level and gathering limits. And we look forward to working with those individuals here in Washoe County. We've seen a significant demand for the sports segment. I mean, I think for all of us, those that have kids that have participated in youth sports or competition sports or traveling teams, Reno's always done extremely well in the sports segment. It represents almost 50% of our production on the overall group number on annual basis anyway. And so, what we have seen because of that pent up demand of kids wanting to participate, kids wanting to play, we've seen a huge demand in the number of tournaments that want to materialize in our market, as early as April. A lot of the plans that we have submitted to business and industry are really in the sports segment. Obviously, the list of sports that are on the approved side, not those that are still unfortunately not available to participate at this time. But we hope that opens up as well. Right? We want to see basketball. Basketball tournaments is a huge business for us here in the spring and the summer so we're hoping that that opens up as the numbers continue to improve. On the tourism side, the team's been working very closely with all the major OTAs. We've been working with our stakeholders and putting together cooperative marketing plans to really focus on the next 30, 60, 90 days. We've seen that our booking window is actually shortened, which then again, we think that is pent up demand and OTAs in this market represent a significant portion of our business. A lot of that is domestic. A lot of that is a drive market. Different from Las Vegas where you have the true package customer that is bundling their air in their hotel together; we see the majority of our businesses coming through the online travel agency portals represents over 90% of the business in that segment -- in that third party segment. Also, the international business is not as significant for our market down South so that hasn't hurt us as bad. But we're also focusing on that segment. We do have some lift as we move into the next fiscal year, and I'm looking at opportunities and programs and co-op marketing on that front as well. The team is also looking at sales missions as early as June and July. And we're looking at markets where we have obviously existing lift and we want to support those carriers and those agents in those markets. We're also looking at new lift. We just announced a new flight out of Charlotte on American Airlines, and we were looking at a sales mission in that area, in the June, July area. And what we tend to do up here is we will combine both meeting and conventions and leisure into one kind of two birds, one stone philosophy where we can go into the market and really promote both the meetings and convention segment and the leisure segment, all as one. On the marketing front, we continue to manage the spring and summer post COVID messaging. As most of you have seen, most of our focus is on outdoor activities and open spaces, right? I mean, that is something that we promote diligently here in Northern Nevada and Lake Tahoe. And for all those of you that live in this area, those of you visiting, how beautiful it is. And so, open air activities, outdoor activities continue to be our messaging through our marketing division. As we promote that out through digital, promote that out through print, and, of course, there's social media. On the PR front and I think Steve talked about this as well as we're really looking at influencers, travel writers. We've seen a lot of requests and demand for them to start visiting our area. They want to talk about Northern Nevada. They want to talk about the State of Nevada. They want to write. They want to reach their bloggers, their influencers, and we need those people here. So, it's good that we are seeing that request and those demands increase and getting them into the state and talking about everything that's going on here. On the regional air service side, RASC, we continue to work with them. We're a huge contributor to that organization here in Northern Nevada. And again, that's focusing on how do we help our airlines, our existing airlines and

existing flights, market the area to bring both FIT, to bring obviously gamblers, meetings and conventioners to our area. But we're also looking at new markets. Opportunities to increase Lyft to the area, which we think there's opportunity there. There's an interesting stat that I was on a webinar the other day, and Charles mentioned it; that going into the pandemic, the number of areas that serviced the Reno Tahoe International Airport. We had 17 cities pre-pandemic and going into the pandemic, which now we are at 19. Our seat capacity down, but we've actually increased the number of flights number of cities that are servicing Reno. Obviously, nowhere near the numbers of Las Vegas but I think the message more is that we've actually improved and increased. And I think a lot of that credit goes to the team out at the airport. Daren Griffin, as the new CEO, has done an exceptional job in his short term with us. And we're very fortunate to have him. As you all know, special events are a huge part of what we do in Northern Nevada. And they're extremely important. We need them. We want them. We've got to have them. And we look forward to hosting them this year, as early as this Spring and the Summer and this Fall. Some of the events have already started selling tickets. The Reno Rodeo. I'm sure some of you saw that in the local trades and ticket sales are going through the roof. But there's numerous events. I mean, from basically the end of May all the way through October. There is an event in Reno or Sparks and North Tahoe it seems like every weekend. So, it is extremely important for those events to return. And we anticipate, obviously, we're going to continue to monitor the cases and follow the guidelines that are established by the state and the local jurisdiction. But we fully anticipate those events returning to Northern Nevada and Reno and Sparks. Just want to mention this -- all the events that are on our website right now at VisitRenoTahoe.com and are materialized based on the latest state data gathering and capacity guidelines. So, we hope that we're all crossing our fingers, of course, and toes that our numbers continue to decrease. And then we'll be able to host those events as early as the spring, the summer and end of the fall. Happy to take any questions.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Mike. Any questions from committee members? So, I was really excited to see that Reno Rodeo was selling tickets. Did they have to go through a significant change in how they're going to produce the rodeo or the carnival in order to make it happen?

LARRAGUETA: So, I don't know the exact answer to that. My assumption is that they would have had to submit a plan like any major gathering, right? I don't know whether the Reno Livestock Event Center is considered a fixed capacity venue, which obviously had different guidelines and regulations versus a trade show or a convention hall or even just a gathering in a social area. My assumption is that they did and hopefully they got the green light to move forward.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Mike.

LARRAGUETA: You bet.

ROBINSON: Appreciate you stepping in at the last minute. Our next presenter will be David Peterson. He's the Executive Director of Visit Carson City, which is our Capital City's Cultural Convention Visitors Authority, and David is also the former Director of the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and has worked in the industry for a number of years. So, thank you, David. I appreciate your participation.

PETERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I don't know what more I can add. I'll talk a little bit, maybe, from a rural perspective. I was pleased to hear what Steve was saying about April as far as an inflection point. We kind of see that as the case as well. As of today, we're still on our Visit Carson City safely campaign. So, we have a Discover Your Capital campaign. So, we are today only advertising, marketing to Nevadans. But next month, we're going to start to open up a little bit. Get into Salt Lake City. Get into Boise. And we're going to look at Washington and Oregon, and then California and Arizona as well. So right now, again, we're still focused through the end of the month to Nevadans with our messaging. What's interesting, the safety message, we too, are going to slowly kind of dial that back a little bit and really try to approach what's open. That's what we find people want to know. They still, yes, want to know that we're a safe location. We address that through our Visit Carson City safety landing page on our website. We have some video series up there about the lodging properties and what they are doing from a safety protocol perspective. So, we've done a series within the lodging properties and we've also done that with restaurants, and we've done that with museums and galleries as well, which are super important to Carson City. So, we still have that message out there, but we really want to talk about what's open and I'm sure for a lot of my colleagues and all of you on the call, it's been frustrating, you know. Things open, they close. They open, they close. And that's been something we're trying to work with the Chamber and work with the different associations in Carson City to all be on the same page, as far as, okay, are you open? Are you going to be open to a standard set of days? A standard

set of hours? So, we can try to get that messaging out because being a Visitor Center here in Carson City, we've had some frustration from visitors coming in. They see one thing on the website and something on our site, and then they show up to the particular attraction and then it's not open. You know, in spite of what our websites say, so we're going to move to this open messaging from that perspective. And Mike is right. Special events are huge for Carson City. Same thing for baseball and the softball tournaments, basketball. You know this is kind of a core of Carson City, outside of our cultural activities. And I'm happy to say it's not on the scale of the World of Concrete, but we just received the approval last night from business and industry to have our futsal tournament this weekend which will be Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It's very small. Keeping underneath the 250-person limit, but that's the first endorsed event to Visit Carson City in a year that we actually have in person. So, I'm excited to finally have some events coming back. What our challenge is right now with events is a lot of our events that take place in June and July. They have now pushed back to August and September because they're concerned just about what the rules may or may not be and what the capacity limits are going to be even into the summer. So, we are starting to fill up end of August through September and now even have some events into October for ourselves, which is great. But everybody's sort of pushing into this collapse of six, maybe eight weeks, maybe period. So, from a collaboration standpoint, they're working very closely with the city and helping them with services and gave them my team as a part of the task force for the new changes and what our city goals are going to implement on May 1<sup>st</sup>. So, we're trying to stay close. We're trying to give our thoughts and feelings about the reopening capacities and just the concerns that have been shared with us by event promoters, right? As they are looking to bring events later on this Spring and Fall. So, it's kind of an update from an event's perspective. I just wanted to share, Pam, if I can, as challenging as this last year has been, I really do want to give credit to our tourism industry partners. You know. I'll give a couple of case examples of that. You know, the Brewery Arts Center, we have our Levitt AMP concert series that was completely canceled last year. A ten-week concert series, 2,500 to 3000 people, completely shut down. But what did they do? They started this whole flat-bed truck concert series where we've been bringing music out into the neighborhoods where residents and where we have visitors who would go into the neighborhoods. And literally people were following them around on their mountain bikes as they were bringing, you know, the bands through different parts of Carson City. I'll use another example with the V&T railroads. So, we did have to stop the train, but in the midst of a pandemic, we created a brand-new experience on the V&T railway with rail lights. You know, outside outdoor experience, you can socially distance and it was just a wonderful opportunity for folks who wouldn't ride the train. But, at least, we got them out and into the Carson River Canyon. So, Mike and Steve said earlier about, we have this wonderful outdoor space right in rural Nevada, and we are really trying to take advantage of that you know and show that people can like Carson City. I kind of feel like we are a center point. You know, we have Lake Tahoe. We've got Reno. We've got Virginia City. And of course, you know, Gardnerville and Minden. And so that's a part of our messaging as you know is based out of here and you can do all these other amazing things, you know. Outside, you want to boat, and you want to ski, whatever case may be. As we move forward, though, we are working on messaging about how safe are museums galleries, right? As those reopen because I think it's important. You know, a lot of people are concerned about going into a museum. I get that. And so, we're trying to promote a messaging behind, "no". They have protocols in place. This is a safe experience that you can have in your family. And it's not something you need to worry about. So, we're hearing some of those concerns and we're working on addressing those as well. And, the other thing I would say is, we have a ton of new restaurants that have opened during the pandemic. We have a Staybridge Suites Hotel that's going to open next month, in spite of the pandemic. And so, I know people are always looking, what's new, what's new. And from a motor coach perspective, we're working with some folks who bring in groups and hopefully it's, as soon as May. Prison may open. The Nevada State Prison for tours, perhaps, in May or June as well. So, we've got some great investment that's taking place from our tourism industry partners and that's helping us. We obviously -- we're not as dependent as Mike was saying on the international traveler and on the convention side of things. So, you know, we've fared better than Las Vegas and, you know, I think because of those two things, but what's interesting is a lot of our hotels came to us and said "Hey, can you take a look at what kind of meetings basically we actually have in Carson City where a lot of our partners don't have a convention center per se, and maybe they'll have a very small meeting space to understand what else is out there in Carson City?" Because they were getting calls from a lot of different companies in California wanting to get out of California and bring their business, bring their group, a group of people here to the Carson City. So that's something that's been new for us right during this pandemic. So, we created on our .biz page, a whole resource section for convention and meeting space facilities in Carson City, which wasn't even something on our radar, you know, pre- pandemic, right? And so, I think we've kind of, in this last year, we've moved from like a destination marketing to a destination management organization I would say; in terms of our relationships with several of our partners, not only in Carson City, but also within the territory and just collaborating our other GMOs to kind of share experiences and for visitors to be able to have somewhat of a great outside outdoors experience here by visiting different communities within the Reno Tahoe territory. So that's what I would kind of throw out at the group. We also re-imagined our Kit Carson Trail experience as well. And that was a collaboration with the city, public works, state land, state public works,

cultural, the -- excuse me, the historical society for Carson City among other groups. And so, it kind of forced us to rethink our own experiences and retool them and almost make them a little more sacred, I guess. You know, for more folks to be able to get out and enjoy and do those sorts of things. So that's, you know, brief update from Carson City, and I just, again, want to give credit to all of our partners. And I think we were kindly rewarded earlier this month by Forbes who acknowledged Carson City as the number one destination of travel to avoid the pandemic. So, I think the work of everybody here in Carson City, you know, paid off quite nicely to be acknowledged as a great community to visit. So, thank you.

ROBINSON: Thank you, David. Are there any questions from our committee members? You already answered my question, David. I was going to ask you about the sports tourism in Carson City because I know it's been something that the city has really taken a pride in and so that -- where that's happening again, and you're getting that -- the tournaments coming back is really positive.

PETERSON: Yeah. We're trying, and you know, there's some concerns about like, we're we have midnight madness and camping in the park and how that's all going to work. You know, moving forward, what can and can't be done. And my comment to a couple of hotels is that what they're not able to do camping out at the park; well, then they're going to be staying in your hotel properties perhaps. So that's a good thing, right?

ROBINSON: Right.

PETERSON: Yeah. Yeah. And it's just, it's a lot of coordination. You know, for sure. And I think there's a lot of new players that are involved in the process, but I think what I've been saying to people is just slow down a little bit, and let's make sure we're all on the same page and presenting the same goal, right? To be able to have a softball tournament or basketball tournament or whatever the case may be. Just make sure we're collaborating and working together, you know.

ROBINSON: Right.

PETERSON: So, it's been fun, you know. And I'll throw out another thing, you know. Who would've thought as a DMO, you know, we'd be in the business of producing hand sanitizer? But believe it or not, you know, with CRF money through the city in a partnership, we've distributed 18,000 little miniature bottles, which I have one on my desk. I'll show you. I mean hand sanitizer to hotels, to galleries, to restaurants. You name it. Just about every, you know, possible business in Carson City. It just went over so well. We ordered 10,000 and blew through those. And I had to call the city manager and say, "Hey, could we get another 10,000, please"? You know. So, it's very different. New things we've been doing here in Carson City.

ROBINSON: Thank you, David. And we now go to Caroline McIntosh. She is the Chair of the White Pine County Tourism and Recreation Board. And I've worked with her for a number of years and she is a force of nature. So, Caroline, take it away.

MCINTOSCH: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. We're working on sharing this screen. We don't get asked to the dance all that often, so we thought we'd better get ourselves organized. So, if you'll wait just a moment, it will come. There we go. Can you see that now?

ROBINSON: Now we can.

MCINTOSCH: Oh, thank you so much. So, it's been really interesting for us to listen to our partners in Reno, Las Vegas, Carson City, and also to hear from the Governor's office. And, of course, our Lieutenant Governor. In White Pine County, we are a drive market only and we're at the intersection of U.S. 93, 50 and 6. We're outdoors 100%. So, we're always open. And, just as a difference, we have actually been in session. Our schools have been in session the entire year, so we just have a totally different set of challenges or opportunities. The other part is that our unemployment in December was 3.1%. So, if you wanted a job in White Pine County, you could get a job. And we actually have gone up 3% in our year over year, this last year on room taxes. So, we just had the credit to being outdoors all the time. And we have also just that we're an anomaly because predominantly we're a mining town. So, what we have done is -- how we are going to recover; we started looking at this last year, early on, right before our budget season. And we came up with our Board. Looked at how are we going to recover? And we looked at it for the three different ways,

through investment in ourselves and in our tourism assets. In partnerships and in small towns, it's partnerships -- make it or break it. And so our partners, our community, the state and the region, and then our marketing, and we've doubled down on marketing. And we wanted to say, thank you, thank you to NCOT for all of the grants because we were able to reach markets that we couldn't afford before. So, we started with rebranding and we were elevated and, you know, we're 6,500 feet in elevation. But now we're *Elyvated*. So, we started with a new website. We have a new social media platform, new logo, thousands of new images, all the print pieces, stories, itineraries, and all of these professionally done videos. And, of course, Travel Nevada has access to 100% of these because that's our strongest partner, Travel Nevada. =We've been rebranding and we're just that year-round mountain town. We have major events and we have this unique arts and history. But the one thing that we really wanted to focus on was our outdoor recreation. It is the best in the state. You might think, well, how could you be the best one? But we definitely are marketing, promoting and developing it, but not many places can say that they have caving, disc golf, ice fishing, spear fishing, fat biking, and the list goes on as you can see. And we have those phenomenal Dark Skies. So, the three leading investments for the outdoors starts with our Dark Skies. And our partners are the Great Basin National Park, the only national park in the State of Nevada and Nevada Northern Railway. And of course, White Pine County Tourism and Recreation. The three of us partnered together. There's an astronomy festival. And in September, we have star photography workshops, star trains, sunset stars, and Champagne trains. And now this brand-new initiative called Park to Park in the Dark. And we are linking Great Basin National Park with Death Valley. So, we'll be going from Baker to Ely, to Tonopah, to Goldfield, to Beatty so that we can continue to connect our state through US 6. This is a huge project with Travel Nevada involved with this as they are with everything. And we have all the land agencies, all of those different tourism and cities and communities along the way to partner together. Then of course, our next one is the Great Basin National Park we're investing. And they are -- that's the national park service. And, also the town, it's so quaint. The town of Baker and the actual unofficial mayor of the town of Baker is our Lieutenant Governor because she is there so often and she's just become one of the residents out there they think, and we're very, very honored to have her so often. So, really, Great Basin National Park -- it's a land of extremes. We've got the tallest mountains, the oldest trees, the only glacier, and of course, those beautiful night skies. So, we've been working on enhanced marketing. Last year during the pandemic, in that big season, they still had 150,000 visitors. And it was amazing what had happened. How we became a destination. And, of course, that all the collaboration on the astronomy programs -- you may not realize it, but the only observatory in a national park is located at Great Basin National Park. And so, if you go on to Great Basin observatory, you can see the images at our own Western Nevada College, University of Nevada Reno, are research partners in this. It's really an amazing opportunity for us. And the third thing, we're investing in is mountain biking. So, we have these amazing partners with the Forest Service, the BLM, Nevada State Parks, Great Basin Trails Alliance, and Nevada Northern Railway. We really have phenomenal land managers. So, what our goal is, is from downtown Ely, you'll be able to access 100 miles of non-motorized trail for hiking and biking. So, of course #RideElyNevada. So, how do we invest in the outdoors for my mountain biking? Well, we currently have 50 miles of world-class single track and with the US Forest Service adding a 35-mile expansion plan, and then the BLM and International Mountain Biking Association with 25 miles of trail that they're working on for the accepted plan, we're going to be over our goal. We're recognized by internationals on our mountain bike community, and we were recognized recently by industry leaders as a mountain biking's next Boomtown. What we've always had unique is our beautiful public art, which has been 21 years of this through the Ely Renaissance Society. So, we continue to build on these assets. We have four new murals this last year, and two new mural refreshes, plus we've done an audio mural tour. We're investing in history. Nevada Northern Railway through the astrotourism that they do this star train sells out a year or two in advance. It is just amazing where they have a concrete platform that to go out in Great Basin National Park. Astronomy brings in these high- power telescopes for the folks that are riding the train, on the star train, to be able to see exactly the stars. And I've been on it. I've worked with it. And it's just absolutely phenomenal. So, they started -- Nevada Northern started the Champagne, the Sunset Stars and Champagne now. And so, we can't get enough of stars around here. So, the one thing is when trains sell out, they just add more trains. You know, when the people are here, we just need to fire up the trains. So, the new programs for that will be Trains to Trails. So, you load your bike on the train any time, they'll drop you off and you just ride your bike back. And then the HI Rail 18, which you see in the image. And that goes on, actually, it was part of the Nevada Northern Railway and we've gotten a lot of grant money to refurbish that, and you can rent that to go on the railway. It's a 1950's Pontiac. We've been investing in history. We have a partner in the White Pine Public Museum and the McGill Drug Store. They're open seven days a week and White Pine County Tourism and Recreation invests a lot in this museum to help them keep going so we can preserve our history. But the new thing coming is the Ping Pong train. And it will be a Ping Pong train from Nevada Northern Railway to the museum. And it, again, strengthens that partnership. We're also investing in events. We have Fire and Ice Winter Festival. And that's, of course, the only place that you can see all those fireworks being shot from the moving train. We have them shot from downtown Ely. And as you know, we're kind of in a bowl. And so, it echoes. It's just absolutely beautiful in the winter skies. We have the horse races, which will be the third weekend in August, quite unique. Elko is the

only other community with horse racing. Raise the Rails and new trails. And so, Raise the Rails, it's a mountain bike and rode bikers. Highway bikers will race the steam train back to the station. Of course, steam train has to give them a little bit of time. And then we have Fears, Tears and Beers. It's the first and the longest running in that 16 years - and that is phenomenal, where they ride their bikes through the casinos and it's really quite fun. And then we added -- the White Pine Main Street added the Ely Film Festival a year ago, and it was in-person right before everything shut down. So, this year we were virtual, and we will be adding the all class reunion where all of our alumni come home in July. We've been investing in our convention center. And if you've been here, it's a small convention center because most everything's outdoors. But all of the facility upgrades so that we continue on with this. This is the one place people can meet whether it's a funeral, whether it's a wedding, whether it's conference. And we want to make sure we have the most current AV technology. And, we also collaborate with the Ely Art Bank and we have a revolving art show here. Most of all, we appreciate the cleaning and sanitation technology that we were able to get through the CARES ACT to the City of Ely and White Pine County to actually make sure that we can be safe in here in this current pandemic. So, we, for the first time had paying customers, in quite a while, in Bristlecone Convention Center. And it was such a shock to see cars parked here. And so, it was the annual refresher for the mine. And it was certainly nice to see people back here, socially distanced, of course. So, we're also investing through our White Pine Main Street Association, and we want to thank Patty Herzog from GOED. We're part of the Nevada Main Street family. And we, our goal is to make sure that our downtown is open and vibrant. We invest a lot of money in Main Street in making sure our local businesses stay solvent. We have all kinds of campaigns going on to help these folks get drive business through the doorway, but we're also improving signage and the infrastructure. We have new businesses and we support events like the Ely Film Festival. And then we have a new Visitor Center and we, as in White Pine County Tourism and Recreation, paid for a remodeling of the Chamber. And that's where we've moved most of our visitor information since it's right downtown. So, it's one stop and people come in seven days a week. Over the last year, we have come to a new realization that we were the communities -- that we were a drive-through market. If you're going to Moab, or if you're going to California, people drove through and they'd stop at Great Basin National Park. But this last year, we became a drive to destination. And that's really exciting for us because, again, we're so isolated. For those that haven't been here, the closest Walmart is three and a half hours away. So, you just put it in perspective and to become that destination is very exciting for us. So, with that, I'd like to say, thank you, Madam Chair and are there any questions?

ROBINSON: Thank you, Caroline. Are there any questions from our committee members? I just have to say Ely is one of my favorite places and I've been out there for a number of these events and they have just done a phenomenal job to create a community and events. And doing things outside that just compliment the kind of community that Ely is. So, I really appreciate you coming on and showing us what you were able to do during this pandemic and what we all have for have to look forward to.

MCINTOSCH: Well, thank you so much, Pam, and just a very strong debt of gratitude to our partners at the Commission on Tourism, because without their help, you can see that they are a main partner in most of our activities. So, we certainly want to make sure they know that they're valued. Thank you.

ROBINSON: So, we are now going to Brenda Scolari. She is the director of this wonderful department and she and her staff are small, but mighty. And how I think done wonderful things during the pandemic. So, thank you, Brenda, for giving us a quick update on what Travel Nevada has been doing.

SCOLARI: I'll quickly unmute myself. Thank you, Pam. Hello, tourism colleagues. I know I'm batting clean-up here, so I'm just going to quickly run through my notes on what I thought I'd briefly talk about is some of the silver lining outcomes for our agency in a very tough year for all of us. You know, Travel Nevada has experienced a lot of change in hardship, but the good news there is some of our recovery strategies have proven to be a value long-term and they will become a part of our new strategic plan; our projections in the next fiscal year continue to improve, which is also good news. And we look closely and often at travel sentiment to adjust our planning. We just had a media buy approved this week by the commission that will mark our first efforts in domestic markets. I'm not going to go into detail about that, but you know, we're all just so happy to be at that point. As you all know, Travel Nevada had dramatic reduction in its revenue this fiscal, and we relied on coronavirus relief funding to award grants to our tourism partners for their own open and safe messaging. But, also to fuel our in-state campaign, Discover Your Nevada. That campaign targets Nevada residents and promotes exploration of local communities, including day trips and overnight road trip stays within our borders to try to boost our own economy. And this campaign has been just remarkably effective. We recently surveyed residents and 78% were planning in-state travel in the coming 12 months. So, we'll continue to produce content aimed at residents because

we know they become the ultimate of brand ambassadors. Also, in our recovery plan is expansion of our destination development program in which Travel Nevada and a bigger team helps facilitate long-term growth in local tourism economies. Many of which have been significantly set back by the pandemic with the business closures, et cetera. But so far, we focused on Lincoln County holding stakeholder workshops to establish baseline opportunities and implement a strategic roadmap that will benefit existing businesses and build upon regional outdoor recreation assets like the incredible trail system in Caliente. It was their best example. We've established a destination development team. Some of whom are on this call, made up of state and federal partners, such as the Division of Outdoor Recreation, the Office of Outdoor Economic Development, UNR, the U.S. Department of Ag. And I wanted to emphasize how important these collaborations are to us not only because they meet mutual goals but because they move us more quickly to a direct benefit to residents. We are stronger when we work together and collaboratively rather than on parallel paths. And as our state now works to diversify the economy, you know, another result of the pandemic, is it kind of exposed -- or further exposed our vulnerability in that area. Travel Nevada will continue to stand for the importance of tourism as a fundamental to a better quality of life for all Nevadans. Tourism businesses make our communities better places to live and work. And without them our cities and towns aren't as vibrant and aren't as attractive to other job creating sectors. This year as I hope you know, and I hope you participated in, we made a commitment to more frequent industry calls and communication with our statewide partners and others. We invited speakers and tried to, you know, always incorporate an educational component whenever possible. Those started about, you know, we're COVID related looking at effects and needs, but have turned into a real kind of forum for communication similar to this call today. These connections with our territory committees, the RSCVA, LVCVA, all the local DMOs and Chambers are more important than ever as we experience recovery in the coming year. We should all be talking about how we plan to prioritize the visitor experience above all Nevada is of course, is known for hospitality. It will be a critical factor in this transitional time. We really have to distinguish ourselves as a destination that makes every business and leisure traveler not only comfortable related to health and safety, but, comfortable with their travel choice. Because there are a lot of choices and I'm comfortable that they decided to come to Nevada or Vegas or Reno, or one of our wonderful cities or towns but then ready to book it again. Overall, I really feel like Travel Nevada's partnerships and programs have evolved and become more focused during the pandemic. Something I didn't expect or count on and we'll be even more prepared now to help our economy reach full recovery. I'll just wrap up by saying, you know, we're looking very closely at tracking the Federal American Rescue Plan funds and what will be available to us as a state DMO, either through the state allocation or possibly the EDA. And we'll of course be ready to share that information, whatever we know, with our tourism partners as well. That's all I have, Pam.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Brenda. You guys have done yeoman's work. So, it is wonderful to hear that I am going to ask my fellow committee members to keep their comments to a really, really, really, really bare minimum. We are coming up against our timeframe. And if we can have some public comment, I'd like to. So, Julie, do you have?

PAZINA: Yes. Thank you so much. Julie Pazina for the record. Really, I just wanted to thank Travel Nevada, the commissioners that are on the call, the Commission on Tourism, this committee, and especially Chair Robinson for all the work you put into making this successful. Thank you to all of our speakers and, on a personal note as part of the tourism community here in the state, I can't thank all of you enough for being on this call for caring and loving and being so passionate about the tourism industry. Thank you for all you do. And I hope that you enjoyed all the extremely educational and informative speakers. Thank you.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Julie. Patty, do you have anything?

HERZOG: Thank you. I just wanted to echo the comments that Julie had and also mention what Brenda said about partnerships. I think that's really been the key through this whole pandemic, and Caroline also mentioned this as well. Those partnerships have just been critical and I'm just happy to participate and work together across the state, no matter where we're at, even through Zoom. Just really thanks to everybody.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Patty. Kristen, do you have anything you'd like to add from Elko?

WINDBIGLER: Sure. Kristin Windbigler for the record. I just want to echo the previous comments. I'm really grateful for all the information that was presented today. As a person who is in the process of planning a major event in Elko, Nevada, for next January, I think I probably speak for a lot of the other folks who are doing live entertainment or planning events. You really just want somebody to tell you what's going to happen in the future, and I think we've all become a lot more accustomed to uncertainty. But,

having access to this information and just creating this dialogue, thank you to Pam and Julie for all the work you put into organizing it. It's really appreciated.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Kristen. Tim?

HAUGHINBERRY: Also wanted to say thank you. Thank you for having me. And thank you for everybody for participating today. You know, as President of the Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce of Nevada, we've actually grown – we've grown tremendously over the last three months. And as of our last meeting, which was only a week ago, the travel and tourism business is coming back for the small businessperson. Our convention services are growing. Our rentals are growing. Our models, our entertainers are growing. So, it's all positive news and it's because of organizations and groups like this. So, thank you. Thank you very much for having me and thank you for all the hard work that you do.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Tim. And I just noticed that we also have Commissioner Jill Lagan on the call from the Boulder City Chamber of Commerce and she has a comment that she'd like to make. Go ahead, Jill.

LAGAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Jill Lagan for the record. Thank you very much for the great information. The stats and data sure have improved and allow us to take a little bit of a deep breath as we're looking ahead. We are all so grateful for the larger cities that provide the bulk of economic stimulus for Nevada and know they're working hard to get back to normality, representing a rural community in Nevada, I am running into a recovery speed bumps that have been a bit frustrating as we are within the larger Clark County yet are in a city outside of Las Vegas. Our COVID numbers have proportionately been less, but we are still abiding by the restrictions of Clark County and understand being team players. But I'd like to point out that the checklist and templates that have been developed have been in regard to larger indoor venues like stadiums, ballrooms, and concert halls. In the smaller cities like Boulder City, where you don't have indoor events space. Our events are outside on city property, and the guidelines have not assisted us with the needed requirements for us to hold public events, so we are stalled in the process. But there are still larger events like in Vegas, such as NASCAR and ABC, and they're able to hold their events and plan in the short term. We'd be really appreciative of anyone that has input into the recovery process with regards to logistics, guidelines and approval processes, to remember rural communities and their space limitations, as we all work together to assist the worlds, to having events again, that do mean a world of difference to the small and micro businesses in Nevada. Thank you.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Commissioner Lagan. Appreciate those comments. Mr. Santos?

SANTOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As a born and raised Nevadan, I want to personally thank all that each of you do for the state of Nevada and by each of you, I mean this committee, our tourism staff and all the partners that are on this call. I wanted to take this opportunity to be able to express my gratitude, not only as a commissioner from the tourism commission, but as in Nevadan. We are in good hands with you folks. And I comfortable that our emergence from the pandemic will be down in true Nevada form, and we will continue to be the premier destination, tourism destination, and the safest destination in the world. I want to give a special acknowledgement to Chair Robinson, who has provided this committee with unparalleled leadership. I know I speak for all Nevadans when I say thank you to you, Chair Robinson, this committee, and all of our tourism partners in the state. And I just wanted to -- I thought I was going to do this as a member of the public, but thanks for everything that you folks do.

ROBINSON: Thank you, Commissioner Santos. Appreciate that. So, we have a few minutes left. I can hopefully try to stretch it a little bit if we've got public comment. If we do wave at Jessica. And if we do have public comment, if you could limit it to a minute that would be really helpful in the event we have more people that would like to speak any comments from. Anybody? Okay. Well, thank you so much. I'm really pleased with this. I think we got just a plethora of terrific information and it's very timely. And I think what it shows more than anything is the resilience of Nevada. Regardless, if you're the urban center down in Las Vegas, or you're one of the rural communities that we've got. The Governor's office, the Lieutenant Governor's office and departments all working towards this economic recovery that is so instrumental to our community. And I totally see us the light at the end of the tunnel. And I just think that when we, I said this before, when we unleash the creativity and ingenuity of Nevadans and Americans, there is no telling where we'll end up. And my, I have really appreciated being able to chair this and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you and as we open up safely and return to being the entertainment capital of the world. So, with that, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.



PAZINA: This is Julie Pazina for the record. I'd like to make a motion to adjourn the meeting.

ROBINSON: Do I have a second?

HAUGHINBERRY: I second that motion.

ROBINSON: Great. I have a motion and a second. All those in favor, say aye.

COMMITTEE: Aye.

ROBINSON: Any opposed? Thank you. Thank you for your time. And for everybody's help. Have a great evening. Bye-bye.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

APPROVED