

MINUTES of the NEVADA COMMISSION ON TOURISM  
RECOVERY COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, September 29, 2020

The Nevada Commission on Tourism held a Recovery Committee meeting at 1 p.m. on September 29, 2020 via Zoom.

**Call to Order**

Christian Passink called the meeting the order at 1:04 p.m.

**Committee Members Present**

Christian Passink  
Julie Pazina  
Patty Herzog  
Tim Haughinberry  
Tracie Barnthouse

**Committee Members Absent/Excused**

Kristin Windbigler  
Pam Robinson

**Staff Present**

Jessica Grundy  
M.E. Kawchack

**Guests Present**

Kate Wilson

**Roll call and Determination of Quorum**

PASSINK: It's my pleasure and my honor to call the first Nevada Commission on Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Committee to order. It is September 29th, 2020, and it is 1:04. Before we get started, there are a few items that we need to cover first. I just covered the absent/excused of Commissioner Windbigler. Jessica, can you verify that this meeting was properly posted?

GRUNDY: Yes, it was.

PASSINK: Thank you. We'll go ahead and call the roll. Jessica, could you please call the roll to verify that we have a quorum for this subcommittee?

GRUNDY: Sure. Christian Passink?

PASSINK: Here.

GRUNDY: Tracie Barnthouse?

BARNTHOUSE: Here.

GRUNDY: Pam Robinson is absent/excused. Tim Haughinberry?

HAUGHINBERRY: Here.

GRUNDY: Did I get that right?

HAUGHINBERRY: You did. Thank you very much.

GRUNDY: Okay. Someone did a little digging for us, so. Julie Pazina?

PAZINA: Here.

GRUNDY: Patty Herzog?

HERZOG: Here.

GRUNDY: And Kristin Windbigler is absent/excused.

PASSINK: Great. Thank you, Jessica.

GRUNDY: Yep.

PASSINK: I would like to take this moment to remind everybody to please put their microphones on mute, unless you are planning on speaking. And if you do speak, please identify yourself for the record. At this moment, I would like to open up the floor to see if there is any public comment. Public comment is welcomed by the commission. A period of public comment will be allowed at the beginning of this meeting and at the end. Because of time considerations, the period for public comment by each speaker may be limited to three minutes, and at the discretion of the chair. Speakers are urged to avoid repetition of comments made by previous speakers. At this moment, I'd like to see if there is any public comment, and if not, we will have another opportunity at the end of the meeting. At this point, I am seeing none. I am hearing none. We will move on to agenda item C, which is introduction of the committee members. Since I have been talking, I will go ahead and take the liberty to introduce myself. My name is Christian Passink. I am the Director of Sales and Industry partners for Travel Nevada. I began my career here at Travel Nevada in 2008, where I was hired for rural programs manager. As we expanded our international programs, I transferred over to the sales side, and oversaw Travel Nevada's efforts in international sales, overseeing our efforts in Europe, and now I am the director of sales and industry partners, and it's a privilege to be able to lead this group and this committee for today. Since all committee members are voting members, there are two people on this committee that are not voting members, and that's because we're staff, and that

includes myself and Tracie Barnthouse. I'll go ahead and let Tracie introduce herself, and then we'll let the rest of the committee members introduce who they are. Go ahead, Tracie.

BARNTHOUSE: Hi everyone. I'm Tracie Barnthouse, Public Relations Specialist here at Travel Nevada. I am coming up on my second-year anniversary with the agency, and so much has changed over that time. I worked primarily in international public relations, prior to COVID, now domestic media relations, doing a lot of pitching to local media, national media, and so forth. I also handle our legislative affairs program, which I'll talk about later in the meeting. Thank you so much.

PASSINK: Okay. Tim, would you like to go ahead and introduce yourself to the group?

HAUGHINBERRY: Yes. Thank you very much. Hello everybody. My name is Tim Haughinberry. I moved to Las Vegas in 1987 to attend UNLV. I worked my way up through bartending. I worked for some companies like Southern Wine and Spirits, and eventually started my own company, which is what I own now for the last 12 years, called Backbar USA. We're a marketing company that focuses on hospitality groups and the liquor industry. We represent Kimpton hotels worldwide, MGM resorts, IHG international; so I have extensive knowledge on hospitality and marketing in the industry. I joined the gay and lesbian chamber of commerce and became president a year and a half ago. We went from seven members to nearly a hundred now, and just expanded up in Reno and Carson City. We're growing the LGBT initiative statewide, and I'm excited to be part of this project to tie in the marketing efforts that we do and the LGBT community into this group. Thank you very much.

PASSINK: Great, thank you. Julie, or Commissioner Pazina, I should say.

PAZINA: Julie is fine. Thank you so much. I am so thrilled to be on this call. My name is Julie Pazina. I am a member of the commission on tourism, also a former president of the Las Vegas hospitality association. In my day job, I'm the national Director of Sales for Edlen Electrical Exhibition Services. We're an IBEW company that does power for trade shows, conventions, and special events, a very active member, I'm chair of committees and on committees for the International Association of Exhibitions and Events for the International Association of Venue managers, and just really embedded in the trade show hospitality industry here in Las Vegas. I'm so thrilled to be part of this committee. Just in the last week, speaking with some friends in the industry who are going through real challenges right now, being either unemployed, furloughed, not knowing when they'll be back to work, I think

everyone's very excited for the governor's announcement today, and yeah, just so honored to be part of this committee. So, thank you for having me.

PASSINK: Great. Thank you very much. Last but not least, Patty Herzog.

HERZOG: Thanks Christian. My name is Patty Herzog, and similar to Tracie, I've just passed my two-year anniversary here at the governor's office of economic development. I'm the rural director. I oversee the community development block grant program and the establishment of the main street program, focusing on downtown revitalization for our rural communities. Although, we do have a couple of urban programs that are involved in that as well. I'm grateful, as Julie pointed out, so grateful to participate on this committee and help support our rural communities and our state recover from this pandemic and see what we can come up with together to support our state. Thank you for the opportunity.

PASSINK: Thank you, Patty. And as you heard during the roll call, normally Pam Robinson and Kristin Windbigler would be on this call. You can see it's a very well-rounded statewide subcommittee. We're excited about moving forward and doing the business for the people of the state of Nevada, to try to get this industry back on its feet and recovered to where we can start to get back to normal as soon as possible. Just for the good of the group, the Nevada commission on tourism at the most recent meeting decided to create two subcommittees. One is a marketing committee and the other one is this recovery committee. The actions of those two bodies will report back to the full commission, which leads us to our next item on the agenda, which is item D, for possible action is nomination of a recovery committee chair. And this chair needs to be somebody who is on the committee, but unfortunately, it cannot be myself or Tracie Barnthouse, as we are staff. So at this point, I would like to see if I could entertain any nominations from the floor for somebody who would be nominated as the chair of this committee that we would present to the full commission for them to vote, to make it permanent. Do we have any nominations from any of the committee members to chair this committee?

WILSON: I would like to motion to make a nomination for Pam Robinson to serve as chair of this committee.

PASSINK: Okay. We have a motion from the floor for Pam Robinson to be the chair for the Nevada Commission on Tourism Recovery Committee. Do we have another motion, or do we have a second? And just to cover, since this is my first time doing this, can we name somebody a chair who is absent?

WILSON: This is Kate Wilson, for the record. I have spoken to Pam. She is amenable to being nominated and is interested in the position. She just had something come up late last night, so she was unfortunately unable to, but she is aware of the nomination, and is interested in fulfilling the position.

PASSINK: Wonderful. Thank you. We have a nomination from Commissioner Pazina to nominate Pam Robinson as the chair for the recovery committee. Do we have a second?

HERZOG: This is Patty Herzog, for the record. I will second that nomination.

PASSINK: Okay. We have a second, the motion carries. We will then present Pam Robinson to the full commission to be the chairperson for the Travel Nevada Commission on Tourism Recovery Committee. Okay, thank you. Okay. Now moving on down the agenda to item F for possible action. There are two action items, and two updates on this section. It's my privilege to cover this section, so I'll continue on with E1, and that is overview and goals of the destination development program. I'll try to cover this as concisely as possible, but it is a very complicated subject. And first off, if you ask 10 people what their definition of destination development is, you would probably get 10 different answers. For the brief overview, the most obvious explanation of this is the typical scenario of the coal mining town in West Virginia. The coal mines have dried up, and their economy has crashed. And they're trying to decide how they're going to move forward. What they realize is they have an amazing trail system, and they wanted to try to now have a tourism based economy, to attract ATVers and kind of change the look and the feel and the intent of their town to be more set up to be a tourism destination, as opposed to a mining community. We have the same situation in Nevada, where we have a lot of communities that have suffered boom and bust cycles. And we're also trying to do our best to try to diversify our economy as much as possible. As I mentioned in a commission meeting a couple of meetings ago, we do a really good job of attracting visitors to the state, but we're not doing a very good job of converting those visitors into economic benefit for the state. So, destination development is something that Travel Nevada was a forerunner on years ago, when I first started in 2008, we

had two grant programs. We had the projects relating to tourism infrastructure grant program, and we had the rural marketing grant program. The infrastructure grant program was ahead of its time, because none of the other states were doing anything along the lines of trying to develop the community. Along those lines, what we did through the grant program is, we did a lot of community assessments, and a lot of you guys will remember the name of Roger Brooks. We hired Roger Brooks to come in just about every community and do an individual assessment of what each town could be doing to improve its possibility of attracting tourism and having a tourism-based economy. The program was never funded enough to where it could get traction, and our efforts have been mostly in the advertising of these destinations. We decided that it's in everybody's best interest to improve the product that we have. And as I mentioned before, to go from rural programs manager to go to sales, where now you're expected to sell the state and talk about it, we need better product, and we need to better identify the communities in Nevada that are set up for a long-term tourism plan, and ones that aren't really that motivated to attract the visitor. What we're trying to do, when we sit there and we award money for infrastructure, the question comes up all the time, do they have a plan? And the answer is usually no. Most often, these are one-off type projects. And our goal is to try to help as many people as we can. But what we need to do now is, better identify the communities within Nevada that have more of a long-term strategy to try to attract tourism. And if they're going to spend marketing dollars to put behind these campaigns, we have to make sure that they're delivering on the promise. And so, what we're trying to do is, identify a community within Nevada, put all of our resources into this one community, to try to have proof of concept, and to try to get a win right out of the bat, and we can use these techniques and these strategies to use them in other communities and make that part of our rural programs. So currently our rural programs consist mainly of the rural roundup conference, marketing grants, infrastructure grants, and the six territory organizations. What we're going to propose is that we have allocated staff and resources to try to make destination development part of our normal curriculum. When we attend a territory meeting, this will be something that we cover in each of our meetings, along with special events, target markets, advertising, and that type of thing. We have decided, just to give you a quick update, normally our sales schedule in a regular year is over 30 events. As you can imagine, in the situation that we are in right now, travel is extremely restricted, especially internationally. We want to make sure that we're using the resources that we have and the time that we have to dedicate to this, to

plan for it. And we have appointed George Sojka who was hired to be international market manager, to take over as full-time destination development specialist. He can work with Shari to try to get into some of these communities and help them improve their infrastructure, and their overall product. We have decided we needed a criteria. The criteria that we chose to pick the pilot community was, it had to be within a reasonable drive market, so that it could have some sort of a success right out of the bat. We wanted to make sure that it had some sort of intrinsic quality that you could build a program around. And we wanted to make sure that it had buy-in from the community. Shari and I were trying to look to see which communities fit this criteria, but we realized the most important criteria was, the community had to have buy-in, they needed to be involved and they wanted us to come. Shari was working hard, she was trying to build coalitions, and that's where she came across Patty Herzog and her group at economic development. We were kind of calling Patty the Shari Bombard of economic development. They were already in Caliente, and they were working on diversifying their economy right there. It was a serendipitous moment, where they happen to hit all our criteria. They were also trying to organize the same coalition of BLM, state parks, USDA, economic development, Lincoln County community action team, and some of the other entities. And so right now, that is our goal, is to use Caliente as the pilot program. Nevada silver trails territory, that oversees that area, has hired a consultant, to try to guide them through the first steps of this, so we can have the best chance of success, and then we hope to show results, and then use these techniques to other communities. And then you can see kind of when we get a little farther down the agenda, how this will tie into some of our other programs. So, I would like to take this moment, I know that was a lot of talking on my part, to see if anybody has any questions or comments before I continue on with it. Does anybody have any comments at this time? Is anybody confused, or did I explain that properly, what the goal is? Okay.

BARNTHOUSE: Hey Christian, just something really quickly. I think we missed agenda item E the coronavirus relief funding. I just wanted to point that out, in case your next section refers to that.

PASSINK: No, thank you very much.

BARNTHOUSE: You're welcome.

PASSINK: Okay. I will backtrack for that item, because it is very important, because everything else that we talk about flows off of that, so thank you Tracie, for catching that. So that will include item E1, unless anybody has any further comments on that.

Back to item E, Coronavirus relief funding. What I'm going to do right now is just give you a breakdown of the funds. Travel Nevada did secure \$4,624,000 in Coronavirus relief funding. Of that \$4.6 million, just slightly over \$445,000 is going to offset the loss of payroll funding that Travel Nevada received. Travelnevada.com received \$100,000. We requested \$290,000 for the Travel Nevada visitor's guide. The Discover your Nevada program will be funded at \$1.5 million. The voluntourism program that we're proposing is funded at \$45,000. The grant program that we'll be discussing today was funded at \$1.65 million. There is \$93,850 allocated for additional research. \$500,000 is allocated for creative. So those totals come up to the \$4.6 million. So that is the total amount of money that Travel Nevada has received in Coronavirus funding, and the breakdown for what those funds would be used for. Does anybody have any questions on agenda item E?

PAZINA: Is it possible for you guys to email a breakdown of that later on? Just what the \$4.6 million, what all of it went to? I just couldn't take notes fast enough.

PASSINK: Yes. You bet. And I apologize for auctioning off those numbers. So yeah, we will make sure that we put that in the record, so that it's in the minutes. Thank you.

WILSON: Kate Wilson here also. I think it would be helpful, Christian and Tracie, to make sure that it's clear for this subcommittee which portions of that recovery funds will be discussed in this committee, and I believe that you're going to get to that Christian, but just want to make sure that that's clear, so the commission knows what they'll be reporting back to the larger committee about. That'd be super helpful.

PASSINK: Great. Thank you, Kate. Yes. Of these eight items for the purposes of this meeting, we will be discussing the funding for the voluntourism projects at \$45,000, and the grant program, which is at \$1,650,000. Okay. Moving on to agenda item E2, recovery guidelines review. For this one, I would like to mention to the committee that rural programs manager Shari Bombard and I, we're already in the process of trying to devise a hybrid grant program. To give it just a little bit of a background for the benefit of the group, Travel Nevada typically operates two grant programs. The most common grant program is the rural marketing grant program. This program is for out-of-area marketing, so we like to have the advertising to take place outside of a hundred-mile radius, because that gives us the best opportunity to attract overnight visitation. And this program also is a matching grant program,



which means that the applicant is required to provide an amount equal to, or more than the amount they requested. This program is offered through two different cycles throughout the year. Generally, the first cycle is a larger cycle, where we award around a million dollars, and then the second cycle, since most of the large projects are done and they don't have as much time to execute it, we award the balance of that in the second cycle. The projects relating to tourism grant program is a little bit different. It is an every-other-year program, and it is funded at \$200,000. This program, when it comes around, is very coveted by our rural Nevada industry partners, but it makes it difficult for them to plan and to make improvements, when this funding is only available every other year. Before the pandemic started, we had already awarded the first cycle rural marketing grants, and we were taking applications for the second cycle. The projects relating to tourism cycle had already gone through the entire evaluation process, and we were on the cusp of awarding those grants. So right before we were able to take that action, the governor declared a financial emergency for the state of Nevada, so those funds were withheld. All of the grant programs were put on pause. We ended up honoring all the grants that were out there, but we recaptured, I guess you could say, all of the unspent funds, all of the breakage, and all of that went back to the state for the recovery efforts. We were trying to devise the plan if we were able to get room tax, or if we were to get the interim finance committee to approve funds, and in the interim, Director Scolari was able to secure coronavirus relief funding. So then what we did was, we took the hybrid grant program, that we tried to combine these two infrastructure program and marketing program, and then we added in all of the federal guidelines; the coronavirus relief fund, federal grant guidelines, because the federal grant guidelines supersede the Travel Nevada grant guidelines. So, Shari Bombard took what we had put together for a hybrid program, to make it simple for our industry partners to apply and receive funding, but we wanted to make sure that it was important that the federal guidelines were followed beforehand. In both grant programs, the applicants have an opportunity to send in the applications to us, and we will have a review period where we can check them, to make sure they comply. We want to make sure that nobody's going to receive an award or denial letter, unless the grant is fully in compliance with all COVID-19 related regulations. Unlike other grant programs of this nature, this isn't a block program, and they aren't being given chunks of money. Nobody's just going to receive, for instance, \$10,000 for whatever purpose. They have to actually go out, execute the project, send in receipts, and those receipts are matched up against the grant application, to make sure that they jive, and then

they will be reimbursed after the fact. We have pretty strong controls over the program, and we feel comfortable that we won't be releasing any funds to projects that aren't in compliance. Shari, do you have anything to add to that really quick?

BOMBARD: Well, I think just that the governor's finance office did review everything. We took kind of an amalgamation of the two, the PRT and the rural marketing grants, and then added in all of those stipulations, federal stipulations due to COVID, and then they reviewed it and approved all of it. So of course, you know, it's open to any changes or anything, but it has been approved at least. So we know we're good to go. And if there's ever a question, like if I do get an application that I think, mm, I don't know, the governor's office is more than willing to direct me, even on specific applications. I'll always have help regarding that, to make sure that we are always in compliance with that.

PASSINK: Great. Thank you, Shari. One other thing I'd like to add really quick is, since awarding grant funding is a normal function of what we do, we are able to use the existing Travel Nevada grant program to distribute these funds. Our industry partners throughout the state will be able to use their regular login information and password, so that makes it a lot easier for them. We're not having to create this entire program from scratch, in order to award the funds. So that is a benefit in our favor. At this point, the committee was sent the draft of the grant guidelines and questions. We did just kind of clean it up a little bit. We didn't change any of the content of it, we just wanted the version that went into the minutes to have a cleaner copy, so hopefully everyone has had a chance to look them over and review them. Keep in mind that when you see the part on the questions about the budget, it looks awkward because normally, that's in an application, and those are categories where people will show us the breakdown of what they're applying for. It doesn't look like that in the actual questions, because it's part of the grant form, but those are the questions that they'll receive. This is an item that we are requesting a motion and action on, because we would like to have approval of this subcommittee before we move on. So we did approve – and I'll show you this on the timeline, which is the next item – but we did get approvals from the interim finance committee on Friday, and we did get approval for the use of these funds from the governor's office. This body is basically approving the guidelines and the questions that are going out in order for us to execute this program.

PAZINA: This is Julie Pazina, I'd like to make a motion to approve the rural recovery grant guidelines and questions as presented today.

PASSINK: Okay. Thank you, Commissioner Pazina. Do we have anybody that would like to second the motion?

HERZOG: Excuse me, this is Patty Herzog, for the record. I have a question on the materials.

PASSINK: Okay.

HERZOG: Specifically, in the application question section, at the very beginning, there are three lines there that say, yes, the project was included, and then it says, no, the project was not included. at the end of the other two it says the project is ineligible, the project may be eligible. I'm just wondering in that last line, if you wanted to include the project may be eligible for some definition at the end of that as well. Just as a suggestion.

GRUNDY: I'm pulling that up right now. Okay. I agree. I think that's great. I'm not on the committee, but I think that should have been in there. Thank you for catching that.

PASSINK: Thank you. See, your expertise is paying off. Thank you. We appreciate the extra eyes on that. And that's a great comment. And that was one of the federal guidelines, so it's important. Thank you. Okay. We still have one motion on the floor from Commissioner Pazina. We had an amendment from Committee member Herzog. So now I am waiting either another question, or a second to carry the motion.

HERZOG: This is Patty Herzog, for the record. I'll second the motion.

PASSINK: Okay. Thank you. Committee member Herzog seconds the motion, the motion carries. Travel Nevada and Shari Bombard can go ahead and use these for the application for our industry partners to apply for funding. The next item, unless we have any other comments on that one, is the timeline, and so I'm going to do a quick screen share here, so that you can see this. This timeline will also be emailed to you and entered into the record. As you can see, a few short weeks ago, we received notice that Travel Nevada was possibly going to receive coronavirus funding. Director Scolari has done a fine job at applying for this funding and getting us to this point. You can see September 23<sup>rd</sup>, Shari created the guidelines for this using the hybrid application, using the grant guidelines that we already had, plus approval from the governor's office. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, this first bit of CRF

money, in the form of COVID-19 rural recovery grant program, was approved by the interim finance committee, which was last Friday. Then, you can see on the 26<sup>th</sup>, we did kind of a soft roll-out of this. We wanted to let our industry partners know that this was coming, so that they could plan on it, because prior to this, all they were told was that the programs were suspended, and that we would keep them informed. It was kind of what we would call a soft opening. You can see on the 29<sup>th</sup>, which is today, we are hoping to have all of this stuff approved, which was the action item that we just had, so thank you committee members for that. And as you can see this all culminates with tomorrow. Tomorrow, Shari will start accepting applications, and we know that this is different than our normal course of business and so she has decided to do three consecutive workshops. She's going to do a grant workshop tomorrow, Thursday, and Friday. They are going to be the same workshop. They're going to be repeated, to give everybody the best possible chance. Also, tomorrow, we have our weekly directors' call, so that gives us another opportunity to get the word out to the key players for our industry partners there. You can see that it's a pretty short window of application. This application process is going to have to close on October 18<sup>th</sup>, to allow time for the evaluation and the review process. So all of these grants will be reviewed by staff, and then the final recommendations will go to the full commission for the November 4<sup>th</sup> commission meeting, and they will hopefully approve those, and then we can notify the applicants, and so you can see that right after that meeting is the notification of applicants. They will receive either an award letter or a denial letter, and then they really have a short period of time to execute these projects. And that's going to have a lot to do with our evaluation process, is will they be able to execute these projects in the amount of time that they're given. So you can see that they have to have all the funds expended by December 30<sup>th</sup>, and then all of their reimbursements and everything has to be in through to Travel Nevada, January 29<sup>th</sup>, because any applications or reimbursements submitted after that will not be reimbursed. So, does anybody have any questions on this timeline, or any of the stuff I just covered? And like I mentioned, this is a little bit different, because generally we have an entire fiscal year, we do it over two cycles, and there's a lot more time open for them to apply and to ask questions, and that's why she's going to do three consecutive grant workshops, to try to educate our industry partners in the best way possible. So that was an information item that as I mentioned, we will send to you and will be in the minutes. Does anybody have any questions on the timeline itself? Okay.

PAZINA: Christian, before you do go on, I do believe that we have to go back to our motion.

PASSINK: Okay.

GRUNDY: Because Patty had made a suggestion, a change, so I think Julie needs to amend her motion, and then second and change it.

PASSINK: Okay. Thank you. There was a comment and an amendment to the recovery grant questions. The comment was taken, and those changes were made. So now, I would like to see if there's a motion to approve the grant guidelines and questions with the changes made.

PAZINA: This is Julie Pazina, for the record, and I would like to make a motion to approve the amended rural recovery grant guidelines as suggested by committee member Patty Herzog today, and as recommended by Christian Passink with Travel Nevada during today's meeting.

PASSINK: Wonderful. Do we have a second for that motion?

HERZOG: This is Patty Herzog, for the record. I will second.

PASSINK: Okay. The motion carries. Thank you very much. And thank you Jessica, for keeping us on schedule. Okay.

Seeing no other questions or comments on item E3, I would like to move on to voluntourism projects, item E4. As I kind of alluded to before, this is a function that Travel Nevada hasn't really played in the past. We have always looked to nurture our volunteerism. All the territories are all volunteer organizations. They're a force multiplier for Travel Nevada, and we could not do what we do without them. Over the course of the years though, we have seen our volunteer base dwindle, and we've also seen a lot of projects that aren't getting done, because we don't have a workforce. It is great to offer monetary assistance, but sometimes people need assistance getting these done. They need the human resources. And I was looking forward to Commissioner Robinson to be on the call, because when I referred to the projects relating to tourism review meeting, a lot of the projects that were denied, we were lamenting that there's got to be some way that we could still get this done. There's got to be some way that, just because we denied it for whatever purpose, that this still can't happen. And during the shutdown period, we've seen a lot of abuse and overuse of a lot of our facilities. And we can see a lot of the things that we cherish as Nevadans, and it breaks our heart to see people go into a place

like Lamoille Canyon and disturb it, and boondocking and trashing the place. You see a place like Lake Tahoe, where they have some of their commissioners who are discussing not wanting to promote tourism. And we have a certain responsibility as the promoters of tourism, to give back and to try to mitigate some of the problems that can be caused by this. What we'd like to propose is that Travel Nevada creates a voluntourism committee, and the current working title that we have is the Travel Nevada Voluntourism Impact Program. It's Travel Nevada VIP's. Basically, we can establish a program like the grant program, where it can run alongside the grant program, where people can apply for not only financial assistance, but to have a workforce come in. And some of the projects that we're discussing are things that we've done in the past, and things that will have a benefit to the state and for the people volunteering. And a good example, as we all know, there's the Tahoe Rim Trail Association that does all the trail remediation. There's 174 miles in the Tahoe basin that needs maintained. We also have the Reno Tahoe territory, which is also an all-volunteer organization. If we created a situation where members of the Reno Tahoe territory could assist with the Tahoe Rim Trail Association, there could be some crossover benefit to that. And the Reno Tahoe territory might attract a few more members, and the Rim Trail Association might attract a few more members. So what we're trying to do, is establish this as kind of a grassroots effort, to be able to go in and make improvements, and do some things that are giving back, and allow Nevadans an opportunity to help out and give back. What we're trying to accomplish here is, what we do with Travel Nevada is we build coalitions, and we are good at getting groups of people together, all pulling in the same direction. And that is something that I think was missing from our rural programs. I'd like to try to start this off on a territory basis to work with those organizations, to try to identify things that we can come and have an immediate impact. And so basically the way to think of it is as a tourism cares, Nevada style, so that rural Nevadans can find ways to make themselves helpful, and make improvements, so they're not just sitting there, waiting for somebody else to get things done. And what we're hoping to do throughout all of this is, we're going to identify areas throughout the state that need attention, and that need improvement. We're also going to identify maybe that next destination that has these movers and shakers, and they're primed and ready to go to be the next destination for destination development. We will hopefully get an inventory of all of these types of projects that people have identified as a need, and then we can go in there and make improvements. As I mentioned before, someone who did rural programs and sales, and conducted a lot of fam trips, we still use

some of the facilities that the Civilian Conservation Corps built back during the depression. So we also figured through this time of limited travel and staying at home, that there's got to be some silver lining that comes out of all of this, and hopefully this will be it, that we can get our rural Nevada tourism industry partners to get involved with a group of likeminded people, to go into these communities and make improvements, and not have to sit around and wait for some other entity to come in and make it happen. So that is my explanation of it. We have decided that George Sojka, since he's doing destination development, and Tracie Barnthouse to help lead up this program, because it's going to take a lot of attention, and it's going to take a lot of nurturing to try to get it to go. There's also a large PR value in this type of event, so when we have a situation where tourism is causing problems, to have a workforce come in and mitigate it and do it, it's a good story to tell. I was using the example of; I have brought so many fam trips to Valley of Fire. We always stop at the Moapa Travel Plaza, people buy fireworks there, they set them off right out there, and it's caused a lot of problems. Every single fam trip, somebody says, "Somebody should clean that up." And then they all look at me and I think, "Who is that somebody?" Well that's somebody is us. And so, that's kind of the impetus of this program, and how it was conceived, and we hope that we get a lot of volunteer involvement. And I hope that the commissioners will get involved, and the committee members will get involved. And I know that our territory organizations are already primed and looking for assistance with these types of projects. At this point, I would like to open it up, to see if anybody else has any other comments or questions about agenda Item E4, The Voluntourism Project. One item that I would like to mention is that we are planning on using the coronavirus relief funding of \$45,000 to fund this program, so that these projects have seed money to get going. Are there any questions regarding any of these items that I've discussed?

PAZINA: Hi, this is Julie Pessina, for the record. How will the money from The Voluntourism Project be dispersed? Will specific territories reach out and say, "This is my idea, we'll need X amount of dollars to make this happen," or will Travel Nevada speak to certain territories? How will that work?

PASSINK: Basically, what we're doing is we're running this parallel with the regular grant, the Hybrid Grant Program. The question is there for that purpose, is this a project that could be considered for The Voluntourism Program? We're trying to run it parallel with that. So just like the example I gave with the projects relating to tourism, that's where we identified a lot of these

problems, just through the regular grant program. Since it is new, and usually our normal method of disseminating information is through the territories, there will be a call to action for the territories, and a separate call to action that you'll see upon approval, is a call for volunteers. We're going to call for workforce development, for people that would like to get involved in tourism related projects, to try to start building this. And then what we're going to do is build a calendar where people can look and see the different projects that they're interested in, and then sign up for those projects that way. So yes, it's a very good question. We're going to promote it through the grant program. As Shari and I are evaluating these, we're going to designate ones that would be candidates for this program, and then Tracie and George will evaluate those. The normal process, that they receive an award or denial letter, they will also receive a letter saying, "Congratulations, your project has been chosen to do this." They will still have to purchase the equipment, or the supplies or whatever, and then submit that through the normal reimbursement project. This is a little bit difficult, because the time is compressed, so you know, the criteria is going to be limited by the timeframe that we have, but we do hope, like I was saying before, for proof of concept of this, once we are recovered, and we are not using federal funds for anything, that this program will be more of an annual rolling program, where there's constantly new projects being added, and other ones being accomplished. The goal is to look back in a few years from now and have a list of all these projects that we've been able to accomplish. We want to show proof by showing before and after pictures. We also talked about making it into some sort of a competition that we roll out at Rural Roundup every year, during the lunch session, that people come out and brag about their projects, and show what they've done, to try to instill that kind of motivation into other people to say, "Hey, we could do that. All's we need is a little bit of money. We have the idea. If we could get a crew to come in and help us get this done." And I think that one, it gives you it's a good feeling of accomplishment. And I think one good idea will spawn another good idea, and it'll become contagious. But yes, it's going to be administered through the grant program, through our normal avenues. I hope that answers your question.

PAZINA: Yes. Thank you very much.

PASSINK: Okay. Okay. If we don't have any more-- Yes. Yes, Patty.



HERZOG: Yeah. Thanks, Christian. Patty Herzog, for the record. Congratulations to staff. I think this is a very exciting, awesome idea. You know, a few years ago it was kind of a trendy thing to do ecotourism, like you would go to Costa Rica, and you'd pay to go on a trip and do something ecological, something to help the environment there. I'm just wondering about the expansion of this project as a possible way to bring tourists into the area. I'm thinking in particular how the railroad in Ely, I mean, those guys, they get people taking their vacation time to come there and just work and play railroad for a few days. And I'm just thinking of all the projects that might get done around our state, because people want to come out and trail build with, I don't know, Alex Honnold or some of the famous people that live in our state. And that boost to our tourism economy from folks outside that want to come in. Secondly to that, I think about all of the nonprofit groups we have in the state, the Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Those groups are always looking for projects to do, and if there's a way to maybe tie in with some of the nonprofit groups to do that, I'm hoping maybe there's a calendar of events on the Travel Nevada website, where you could go in there and just sign up. I'd love to go out to Ely and work on some trail building out there, or something like that, just as an individual too. I just think it's a fabulous idea, and I'm super excited. I think this could really be a great thing for this state. Thank you.

PASSINK: Great. Thank you for your comments. And that's a perfect example. The Nevada Northern Railway in Ely, people pay to come out and work on the train, to be volunteers. And as you know, last year a group of Travel Nevada staff and Nevada Magazine staff took their kayaks and their snorkels out and pulled tons of trash out of Lake Tahoe. We all know that there's a big effort at the lake to do this right after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, to go across the beaches and do it. We're going to try to put a little bit of structure into it, and a little bit of funding behind it. And I think that it's going to be a big success. I know everybody on this call will probably be involved, and it will be a good opportunity for us to rejuvenate our volunteer efforts here in Nevada. I guess we can go ahead and move along, if anybody has any other comments or questions, I can move the agenda along to Item G. And this is for public affairs. I will turn it over to Tracie Barnthouse, go ahead.

BARNTHOUSE: Hi, everyone. I'm Tracie Barnthouse, for the record. Though I'm here today to talk about our public affairs efforts, I wanted to start by providing some information about a campaign that we launched last week, called Discover Your Nevada, which is designed to encourage instate travel. The campaign started with a public relations effort, and you might've seen or heard some of

the coverage over the past week on local TV and radio stations. We're also working to build relationships with media in Las Vegas to further our public relations down South. And actually, just did an interview this morning with KLAS, which will air later this week. So that's kind of exciting. Discover Your Nevada is an ongoing campaign that's complemented by a commission-approved marketing plan with very specific, very goal oriented KPI's. We believe that Discover Your Nevada campaign will dovetail really nicely into our public affairs arm, which is called Tourism Means More, with a message that will resonate with both residents and elected officials. Moving on to our public affairs program overview and goals, which is agenda Item F1, the goal of the public affairs program is to position Travel Nevada as a proactive tourism thought leader through outreach to stakeholders and legislators. As you know, Nevada's tourism industry has long been the economic driver of the state's economy, and that will be an essential message now more than ever before, as we go through the pandemic. Although the economy has diversified, the tourism industry must ensure that key stakeholders, elected officials, industry influencers, et cetera, understand the value of tourism and its role, not only in driving the economy, but also enhancing the perception of the state and conveying its contribution to the quality of life to its residents. The strategies for this plan include a broad communications program to show the impact of Nevada's economy, safeguarding the jobs and revenue created by the tourism industry, and acting as a leader in the industry by advocating and educating our audience about tourism's value. As a state agency, Travel Nevada cannot lobby, however, we're fortunate to have a very strong and persuasive group of industry partners and commissioners who will call on to help us spread the message about tourism's impact to our state. We hope to inspire these partners and mobilize them to help share this message and will ensure that they have the proper tools to do so. We'd also love to solicit the support of the Recovery Committee in these efforts as well, and more will be to come. I'll take any questions. That's the end of my first agenda item. If there are any questions. If not, I will continue. All right.

PASSINK: Seeing —none.

BARNTHOUSE: Onto agenda Item F2, which is the Legislative Action Plan. To inspire and mobilize our industry partners, we're going to be focusing on three specific program areas. The first is to enhance our partnerships. Travel Nevada will create a toolkit for partners, which will include existing resources, social media graphics, ways to contact elected officials, and talking points. We'll also

continue to make improvements on our updates to TravelNevada.biz, which is our industry-facing website, to reflect current economic impact for Nevada, and ensure that our partners have all of the latest data and research needed to back up the talking points that we provide them. The second is to be advocates for the industry. For this, we will write OP-EDs and letters to the editor for our industry partners to submit to their local newspapers. We will also follow U.S. Travel Association's requests, as appropriate to our state, and with the approval from our governor's office. We'll focus on building up our industry's social media accounts, to increase the following primarily of stakeholders and decision makers. Under this tactic, we're going to be establishing an editorial calendar post that continually pushes the message of value of tourism to the state. And we'll also use those industry-owned social media platforms for calls to action. The third program area is Legislative Outreach. We will be setting one-on-one meetings with legislators and key stakeholders, with a focus on the Senate finance, and assembly ways and means committees. We're going to be emphasizing our social media platforms to them and encouraging them to follow along with those for the latest information, and encourage them to visit often, as those messages will change as more data is received. In addition to TravelNevada.biz, Travel Nevada also owns the domain for TourismMeansMore.com, which is the broad umbrella that this falls under. And Tourism Means More is meant to be an essential campaign hub for information on our legislative efforts. We will reposition the content to focus on the damage of the pandemic, and to show how travel can really help the state to rebound. We will create short, shareable videos from partners, sharing how Travel Nevada helps with their tourism efforts, and we'll also develop assets that we hope that stakeholders will share, as well as our industry partners. We will also be establishing a regular legislator email to all of our elected officials, where we'll be sending pertinent information and updates from the industry. That is F2. If there are any questions about the plan.

PAZINA: This is Julie Pazina, for the record. Thank you so much. I love hearing about this, because I think it is so important that our elected officials understand the impact travel and tourism have. And I think, so few come from the industry, it can be hard sometimes to understand it, except knowing that it means a lot of lost tax dollars, but you know, one thing I would encourage, and I'm sure it's probably top of mind for the Travel Nevada team right now too, is especially when making that outreach to our partners right now, having them maybe reach out to those that are furloughed, that have been laid off in our industry, and having them share

their personal stories with their specific elected officials, their assembly people and their senators, because I think that's part of the challenge right now. Not enough of those personal stories have been shared, and it's easy to look at the economic impact sometimes and not look at the personal impact.

BARNTHOUSE: That's great. That's really, really great feedback. Thank you. I made a note on that. Thank you.

PASSINK: Any other comments, questions for Tracie?

BARNTHOUSE: I have one more item on the agenda.

PASSINK: Okay.

BARNTHOUSE: All right. And that is Tourism Day. Tourism Day in legislature is scheduled for Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>. So this is a time when the industry comes together to share what tourism means in their communities. It's always been held in person, but this year it's going to be a virtual event. We are brainstorming what that event is going to look like. Now we're leaning towards compiling a video to be shared with legislators, with mailed-in backup materials and reports, so that they can see everything that we're doing, and how tourism impacts the state. We're working on that now, with more to come there. And that's all I have. I'm happy to take any questions about any of the program overviews, or the public affairs program in general.

WILSON: Tracie, this is Kate Wilson, for the record. I just wondered if you could clarify this commission's interaction with the Discover Your Nevada campaign, the funding that came from the CRF for that, and sort of how that is going to play out, going forward. I know you spoke to our last large NCOT meeting; the larger commission had approved a plan, and I believe it was about \$300,000 at the time, which thankfully it looks, due to this COVID funding, we will actually be able to fund this program much better. So just talk about that interaction a little bit. I think that would be helpful.

BARNTHOUSE: Yeah. This is Tracie Barnthouse, for the record. The \$300,000 that was approved by the commission at the last commission meeting has been extended to a much larger amount. I apologize, I don't know that exact number off the top of my head, but it has been increased significantly. With that comes a much more robust marketing plan that the marketing team is working on. We have started to do co-ops with partners, and have some inserts coming out into local newspapers, and also working to do advertising on certain TV stations. There's some programming out there on channel four, for example, they have a road trip

series that they promote. We're looking into opportunities like that, to further extend that money that we are given as part of the CRF funds. As you know, there are rules and regulations around those funds, so we need to make sure that the message stays on point, and points out the specific wording of safety, and we're open for you, those sorts of messages, to make sure we're complying with the government's regulations, as far as that goes. We're also going to be tapping into our influencer marketing a little bit more than we were before, to reach out to predominantly in-state influencers, because we know that they love the state. We're already seeing that they're sharing a lot of posts from the places that we promote all the time. We're going to be tapping into those influencers to help, to further amplify and extend the message. And we can put some money behind that as well. We really have a big plan coming up, and going to get that launched, and I think M.E. just popped on and she probably has some more to add to that. I hope I did you justice.

KAWCHACK: You did, thank you. M.E. Kawchack, for the record. I'm not really officially part of this, so I don't want to take up too much time, but just to expand on what Tracie said, at the last commission meeting, it was expressed that the general plan was approved, and that if any money came our way, that we should expand on that. So just to be able to expedite this as quickly as possible, that is what we're doing in places where we wanted to do more when we have more money. We definitely took all the commissioners' comments and the approved budget into account, and we're just expanding on that. As Tracie said, we are just having an opportunity to do more with the co-ops and the rent program, and we'll be talking internally after this meeting, to make sure that we're all on the same page for that, but this just gives us an opportunity to do some of the things that we didn't have money for, but everybody wanted us to do, so that's where we are with that.

BARNTHOUSE: Perfect. Kate, I hope that answered your question.

WILSON: Yeah. This is Kate Wilson, for the record. It sounds like while this subcommittee is dealing far more in the grant program and the voluntourism, the end intention is to filter most of the Discover Your Nevada through the marketing subcommittee. Is that what I'm hearing, correct?

KAWCHACK: M.E. Kawchack, for the record. That is correct, we do have a marketing committee meeting at the end of the month. But if things have to keep moving, I just took the direction of the commission, which was if more money comes our way, to

extend the budget that was approved. We're continuing to do that, and I'll give an overview at the marketing committee meeting at the end of the month.

WILSON: Kate Wilson, for the record. That's great. Thank you.

PASSINK: Okay. Any other questions for Tracie before we move on? Okay. Thank you, Tracie. Before we move on to Item H, I would like to just make sure that we sufficiently handle the voluntourism projects. I think we all agreed that it was a good idea and a need, but I want to make sure that we sufficiently had a motion and a second before we proceed, was that sufficiently covered? Or should we just go through the motions to make sure?

WILSON: If you are asking me – Kate Wilson, for the record – I think that it was fine, and I'm not sure, Jessica, if you feel differently, since you're going to be the one putting it into the record. I think that where we stand is okay.

PASSINK: Okay. Thank you.

GRUNDY: I think it's fine.

PASSINK: Okay. Okay. Moving on to Item H, upcoming meetings. We don't have actual meeting dates set. What we planned on doing was having this committee meet quarterly, and we would try to make the meeting so that they occur before the regular full commission meeting, so that it makes it easier to report to the full commission. Our plan right now is to send out a doodle poll for the next meeting in January, and then the following meeting after that would be an April. I guess for this item, to stay tuned, we do know that the next full commission meeting is November 4<sup>th</sup>. We'll try to devise our Recovery Committee meeting before the full commission. We will send that out, a Doodle poll for the next meeting in January. Does anybody have any questions or comments on Item H?

PAZINA: Yeah. Thank you so much. This is Julie Pazina, for the record.

PASSINK: Yes.

PAZINA: Ideally, with this being the Recovery Committee and looking at the state of tourism in Nevada right now, I don't know if it might be possible to meet a bit more frequently, maybe every other month instead of quarterly. I just feel like there's so

much going on right now, and I would hate to put off potentially helping some of our Nevadans, if we could maybe meet a little bit more frequently.

PASSINK: Okay. You would like to propose a meeting in December maybe, or sooner?

PAZINA: Yeah, it's almost October now. I think early December would definitely work. Knowing there's a lot on our plate, the money has to be used by the end of December. I do think it would be important to meet before the end of the year.

PASSINK: Okay.

WILSON: Kate Wilson, for the record. Also, Christian, I believe the larger committee had requested that the subcommittee meet monthly, since the larger committee can only meet quarterly, that the intention was for them to bring back that information, especially in the short term. I can check the notes from the previous meeting. So maybe it's a good idea to table this just for now, until we solidify that. The other thing, I know you had mentioned this, but do you think it's important for this committee to meet prior, once the application has been closed for the grants for this subcommittee to be able to review those prior to making the recommendations to the larger committee in November. It sounds like we'll definitely have to meet in between now and then, and maybe that will give us enough time to solidify a timeline of meetings moving forward.

PASSINK: Okay. I will make a recommendation that we table Item H for now, while we go back to seeing what was discussed at a previous meeting, and to try to meet more frequently than quarterly. I guess we will send out a doodle poll and meeting announcements once we've discovered what the next steps for the next meeting would be. Would that be sufficient, to table it while we do further research on the will of the full commission?

PAZINA: Thank you so much. And Julie Pazina again, for the record. I think Kate was correct, the original will of the commission as a whole was to try to meet monthly, as frequently as possible, since the COT is only quarterly.

PASSINK: Okay. We will move on from that one, pending announcement of the next meeting. That moves us to Item I, commissioner comments. Before we move on to that, I just want to make one quick comment and congratulate Pam Robinson for being nominated chair of the Recovery Committee. And hopefully that that nomination will carry on to be the permanent chair of

this committee. We have now commissioner comments. I would like to open it up for commissioner comments, and I will take the liberty to add committee member comments as well. Commissioner Pazina, would you like to add anything?

PAZINA: Yes. Thank you so much. I wanted to thank you, and Tracie, and Shari, and Brenda, and Kate, everyone from Travel Nevada and Lieutenant governor's office, for all of their hard work getting the grant funds so that we can reach out and help the community during this time, and with all the work that's going on behind the scenes. Thank you so much. I'm honored to be a part of this committee, and I'm looking forward to working with everyone. Thank you.

PASSINK: Thank you. Any committee members would like to add anything to the conversation? Seeing none. Okay. This moves us on to Item J, this is another opportunity for the public comment. Do we have any public comment at this time? Okay. Doesn't look like we have any public comment. And then the last item on our agenda is Item K. I would entertain a motion to adjourn, if so moved.

PAZINA: Oh, this is Julie Pazina, for the record. I would like to make a motion to adjourn.

PASSINK: Okay. We have a motion from the floor to adjourn the first ever meeting of the Nevada Commission on Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Committee meeting. Do we have a second to adjourn the meeting?

HAUGHINBERRY: I'll chime in. I'll second.

PASSINK: Okay. Thank you. Committee member Haughinberry has seconded the motion. The motion carries. All in favor, signify by saying aye.

COMMITTEE: Aye.

PASSINK: All opposed by saying nay. Okay. Thank you very much, everybody. We get to work on this, and we'll start to notify our industry partners. They will be thrilled, so good work, everyone. And look forward to seeing you all at the next committee.

### **Adjournment**

The meet was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.