



**Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD)
Board of Directors - Meeting
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, June 12, 2024
9:00am

Location

Great Wolf Lodge
201 Rainmaker Dr, Mashantucket, CT 06338
In-Person Only / No Zoom or Hybrid Video

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Chris Regan, Jill St. Clair, Bruce Flax, Todd Babbitt, Lori Corriveau, Fran Kefalas, Angela Adams, Shannon Fagan, Catherine Foley, Robert Ignatowicz, Jill S. Keith, Gary McKeon, Kathleen Paterson, Tyra Penn-Gesek, Wendy Russell, Ryan Snide, Mike Urgo

Guests: Andrea Manning, Tony Sheridan, David Quinn, Jillian Lozier, Jill Larsen

1. Call to Order
 - a. The meeting was called to order at 9:15am.
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes 03/13/2025
 - a. Bruce Flax made a motion to approve the March 13th meeting minutes, seconded by Gina Kunst. All in favor the motion passed.
3. Board Chair Report
 - a. Chris Regan opened the meeting by thanking Henry Hessman and Great Wolf Lodge for hosting, and expressed appreciation for the Board's commitment over the past year. He emphasized the importance of Board members as ambassadors for regional tourism and called for a more unified push for increased state funding. Chris noted he had submitted a 15-page proposal, The Governor's Challenge, outlining a public-private partnership model. He highlighted Connecticut's last place ranking in tourism investment among New England states and stressed the need to use data to demonstrate tourism's impact.
4. Treasurer Report
 - a. P&L Budget v. Loss and Balance Sheet
 - i. Catherine Foley made a motion to approve the P&L and Balance Sheet as presented, seconded by Tyra Penn-Gesek. All in favor, the motion passed.
 - ii. Discussion noted an increase in anticipated distribution costs and the allocation of \$7,000 in unspent funds for upcoming influencer collaboration.
 - b. FY2026 Budget Approval



- i. Catherine Foley made a motion to approve the FY2026 Proposed Budget, seconded by Tyra Penn-Gesek. All in favor, the motion passed.

5. Officer Elections

- a. Todd Babbitt, Chair of the Nominating Committee, conducted the process of Officer Elections. The Nominating Committee put forth a slate of Officers for recommendation: Chris Regan – Chair, Jill St. Clair – Vice Chair, Jordan Lumpkins – Secretary, and Bruce Flax – Treasurer. Chair. A vote was conducted by a show of hands.
 - i. Chair: The election began with the Nominating Committee’s recommendation of Chris Regan as Chair. Todd Babbitt called for nominations from the floor three times. Hearing no additional nominations, Catherine Foley moved to close nominations from the floor. Chris Regan was elected as the Fiscal Year 2026 Chair.
 1. One ballot will be written for the uncontested Chair position.
 - ii. Vice Chair: The election proceeded with the Nominating Committee’s recommendation of Jill St. Clair as Vice Chair. Todd Babbitt called for nominations from the floor three times. Hearing no additional nominations, Jill S. Keith moved to close nominations from the floor. Jill St. Clair was elected as the Fiscal Year 2026 Vice Chair.
 1. One ballot will be written for the uncontested Vice Chair position.
 - iii. Secretary: The Nominating Committee recommended Jordan Lumpkins as Secretary. Todd Babbitt called for nominations from the floor three times. Hearing no additional nominations, Tyra Penn-Gesek moved to close nominations from the floor. Jordan Lumpkins was elected as the Fiscal Year 2026 Secretary.
 1. One ballot will be written for the uncontested Secretary position.
 - iv. Treasurer: The Nominating Committee recommended Bruce Flax as Treasurer. Todd Babbitt called for nominations from the floor three times. Hearing no additional nominations, Gina Kunst moved to close nomination from the floor. Bruce Flax was elected as the Fiscal Year 2026 Treasurer.
 1. One ballot will be written for the uncontested Treasurer Position.
 - v. Assistant Treasurer: Todd Babbitt called for nominations from the floor for the open Assistant Treasurer position.
 1. Jill St. Clair made a motion to add Shannon Fagan to the slate for the role of Assistant Treasurer. Tyra Penn-Gesek seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.
 2. Todd Babbitt called for nominations from the floor two additional times. Hearing no additional nominations, Shannon Fagan was elected as the Fiscal Year 2026 Assistant Treasurer.
- b. Fran Kefalas Made a motion to accept the slate of officers with the addition of Shannon Fagan as Assistant Treasurer, seconded by Gary McKeon. All in favor the FY2026 Officer Elections concluded.

6. Committee Chair Reports



- a. Finance
 - i. No further report
 - b. Marketing
 - i. Lori Corriveau reported a strong year of collaboration with Quinn & Hary, noting success in paid media, influencer campaigns, and social engagement. She highlighted improved coordination with the CT Office of Tourism and continued efforts to diversify imagery and explore trends like AI, influencer ROI, and content strategy.
 - c. Bylaws
 - i. Andrea Manning presented on behalf of the Bylaws Committee. She noted that one update was made during the September 2024 Board meeting, changing terminology across ERTD's governing documents to reflect gender-neutral titles of Chair and Vice-Chair.
 - d. Industry reps
 - i. Campground Industry Representative
 - 1. Todd Babbitt presented a recommendation to formalize a Campground category under Industry Representation and to appoint Daniela Gjergjaj of Aces High RV Park to serve in that role.
 - a. Jill Keith made a motion to create the Campground Industry category and to appoint Daniella Gjergjaj to the position. Bruce Flax seconded the motion. All in favor the motion passed.
 - ii. Amusement Attraction Industry Representative
 - 1. Todd babbitt presented a recommendation to formalize an Amusement Attraction category under Industry Representation with Great Wolf Lodge identified as potential representative.
 - 2. A discussion was held on the scope and definition of "Amusement Attraction" and how this category might apply to other venues within the region.
 - 3. Given the need for further clarification on definitions and the parameters for industry representation, the Board tabled the decision to the September meeting.
 - e. Legislative Advocacy
 - i. Andrea Manning presented on behalf of the Legislative Advocacy Committee and provided an overview of the ongoing toolkit efforts and upcoming outreach and actions planned for the first quarter of FY2026.
 - f. Grants
 - i. Fran Kefalas delivered an update on the Regional Marketing Partnership Grant process this fiscal year, noting the challenges in ensuring that grant recipients fully understand the partnership and marketing requirements. The committee will meet in the coming months to review final grant reports and to refine the program structure for FY2026.
7. Media Agency Report - Quinn & Hary



- a. David Quinn and Jillian Lozier presented an overview of FY2024–2025 media and content performance, highlighting strong results in paid campaigns, social media growth, influencer partnerships, and visual content production.
 - i. Campaign Performance
 - 1. Paid advertising efforts generated over 15.6 million impressions across digital channels.
 - 2. Paid promotion of blog content delivered an additional 4 million impressions, helping to amplify regional storytelling.
 - ii. Social Media Growth
 - 1. Organic posts continued to drive strong engagement, with top-performing content featuring people actively participating in local events and experiences. Reels and short-form video remain the most effective formats, particularly on Instagram, contributing to sustained audience growth and visibility.
 - 2. ERTD continues to see growth across Instagram and Facebook in followers and reach.
 - iii. Influencer Engagement
 - 1. 6 Influencer collaborations focused on a range of topics including family travel, culinary experiences, hidden gems, arts and culture, and seasonal activities, highlighting the diversity of offerings across Eastern Connecticut. Influencer content supported blog and social campaigns, with top-performing posts focused on personal, experience-based storytelling.
 - iv. District Blogs
 - 1. Recent and upcoming blog topics included seafood guides, lighthouses, local wineries and breweries, shopping, and summer activities. Blog content is amplified via paid promotion and social posts to increase reach and engagement.
 - v. Visual Assets Expansion
 - 1. The District’s asset library continues to grow, now consisting of approximately 75% video and 25% still images, organized by region, town, and venue. Dozens of new locations were added this year, featuring farms, festivals, breweries, trails, cultural sites, and seasonal events.
 - 2. The Board reviewed the Visual Asset Sharing Policy, which outlines partner access, attribution guidelines, and alignment with District branding. Members were encouraged to submit ideas for future content capture.
 - vi. Calendar of Events calls for content, and the format for blog posts was shared with the board.
- 8. Connecticut Office of Tourism Update
 - a. Jill Larsen presented on behalf of the Office of Tourism -
 - i. She highlighted continued collaboration with the regions despite statewide tourism funding being reduced by 44%.



- ii. She highlighted strong regional engagement in the “Coffee with Rachel” series and shared that COT is developing a social media training webinar to meet partner needs.
- iii. A semi-annual All-Districts meeting on June 25th will be open to all Board members and contracted partners.
- iv. She shared highlights from the statewide “Pizza” campaign, including billboard placements in NYC, Chicago, and Detroit, and discussed both the enthusiastic response and lessons learned from public engagement.
- v. COT is awaiting new data from the Tourism Economics Report, including short-term rental trends and updated CTvisit analytics. She emphasized their focus on understanding and verifying tourism data sources.
- vi. Jill closed by encouraging continued communication between the districts and the state and noted that COT would be on the road capturing content during CT Open House Day.
- vii. Board discussion centered on the importance of category flexibility on CTvisit.com, access to subregional tourism data, and strategies to strengthen alignment between district-level content and COT campaigns.

9. Administrator Report

- a. Andrea Manning delivered the Administrator Report, highlighting key operational and strategic accomplishments from FY2024–2025. A full written report will be distributed digitally following the meeting.

10. Other Business

- a. This season’s TLGV Explore Guide available from Fran Kefalas
- b. CT Tourism Coalition meeting scheduled for June 20 at 10:00am
- c. Tony Sheridan reported on legislative discussions at CBIA.

11. Adjournment

- a. Gary McKeon made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Catherine Foley. All in favor, the meeting adjourned at 10:47am