



**Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD)  
Executive Committee**

Regular Meeting

March 6, 2025 - 9:00AM

Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89348754065?pwd=cDV1M2J5S2ZnZ2hkNWJka3RSbXpTZz09>

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Meeting ID: 893 4875 4065

Passcode: 836268

**Meeting Minutes**

Attendees: Chris Regan, Jill St. Clair, Stephen Gencarella, Bruce Flax, Cathy Barnard, Todd Babbitt, Charlie Tracey, Fran Kefalas, Lori Corriveau

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

1. Call to Order
  - a. The meeting came to order at 9:00am
2. Approval of Minutes - 02/06/2025
  - a. Cathy Barnard made a motion to approve the meeting minutes with noted edit, seconded by Bruce. All in favor, the motion passed.
3. Board Chair Report
  - a. Chris Regan expressed gratitude towards the Chamber team, for their successful organization of the tourism conference, which was well-attended by members of the Executive Committee. The conference was highlighted as informative, fostering discussions on tourism and raising awareness about its importance within the district and the state.
  - b. He emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics was underscored, particularly their potential to provide deep insights into regional impacts and visitor demographics. Chris shared specific data from the economic impact study of Olde Mistick Village, indicating that 49% of visitors were from Connecticut, with a significant portion also coming from New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Jersey.
  - c. Chris advocated for greater engagement and support from the state in providing detailed analytic data to better understand visitor patterns and to enhance marketing strategies across the region.
4. Treasurer Report
  - a. P&L
  - b. Balance Sheet



discussion on legislative engagement and strategize on effective outreach to support tourism initiatives.

- c. Bylaws -
    - i. Charlie Tracey will review the bylaws to determine the viability of expanded advocacy efforts.
  - d. Nominating -
    - i. Todd Babbitt reported no progress on filling vacancies despite efforts to reach municipalities with open seats.
    - ii. A discussion is held on strategies for reaching the first selectmen, including putting together a packet of information on the value and benefits of participating in ERTD's efforts by appointing municipal representatives to the board..
  - e. Legislative Advocacy
    - i. [Legislative Advocacy Toolkit](#)
      - 1. Andrea Manning presented this ongoing project by the Legislative Committee. The toolkit is a living repository of resources to educate and inform legislators and tourism stakeholders on the economic impact of tourism in CT, including data driven talking points and common language to include in advocacy efforts, tourism data, and contact sheets for legislators.
  - f. Grants
    - i. Fran Kefalas updates the committee that all but one check has been cut and are awaiting signatures before sending.
    - ii. The committee discussed strategies for 2026, and the possibility of adjusting score cards to acknowledge projects that address America250.
6. Quinn & Hary Update
- a. David Quinn introduced Jillian Lozier to deliver the report
    - i. February marked the last month of reduced advertising spend through the winter months. Despite lower spending, achieved significant campaign metrics, including 151,000 impressions from sponsored content.
    - ii. Social performance remains strong. Top performing posts include collaboration with Explore New London, illustrating the value of collaboration as a means to capture the attention of crossover audience, and expand reach.
    - iii. Recent Blog posts include Memorable date ideas
    - iv. David Quinn reported on the ongoing expansion of the visual asset library, with a list of towns and events featured in the new visuals.
    - v. Press on the ERTD
    - vi. Jillian shared the link for the upcoming social calendar, and shared the upcoming content strategy planning fresh visuals and cycling creative content to align with the spring season .
    - vii. Upcoming district blogs include sledding spots, date ideas, dream wedding venues, and a behind the scenes look at Hell's Kitchen
    - viii. A discussion took place on adjusting content and ad spend in response to seasonal trends and aligning with the upcoming season. The committee also discussed the importance of leveraging data and remaining adaptable to market conditions in their strategy to reach the right audiences.
7. Connecticut Office of Tourism Update

- a. Rachel Lenda presented the Office of Tourism update
  - i. Upcoming events include
    - 1. Coffee with Rachel in New London on 3/27 and 4/17, and in Pomfret on 4/1 and 5/6.
    - 2. ConnCon 25.2 on 5/13 in Bridgeport, presented in partnership with University of New Haven. This event will focus on marketing tourism to Generation Z and Gen Alpha, emphasizing their significant influence on family travel decisions and digital interaction trends.
  - ii. New initiatives include the launching of a new trails developed by University of New Haven students, which features Amtrak train lines and ethnic food within a 10-minute walk from train stations. They will also launch a runner-up trail focused on coffee and hiking.
  - iii. Connecticut Open House Day is scheduled for June 14th. Promotional materials will be distributed in a digital package for easy sharing on social media or websites.
  - iv. Accolades - Mystic Seaport Museum was recognized in U.S.A. Today on 2/19 as one of the top 10 best open-air museums in the country.
  - v. Rachel updated the committee on trends in web traffic, and advertising updates including a decrease related to ad spending.
  - vi. A discussion on the challenges and restrictions on the use of AI at the state level, impacting their ability to use AI effectively.
- 8. Administrator Report
  - a. Andrea Manning presented a report
    - i. The previous month's efforts, including planning and support for the Tourism Conference, Regional Marketing Partnership Program documents collection and checks, development of the Legislative Advocacy Toolkit,
    - ii. Upcoming efforts will center around brochure printing and distribution, solicitation and collection of brochures from tourism attractions throughout the region, distribution of checks and monitoring for collateral approvals for Regional marketing partnership grants
    - iii. Upcoming events and meetings include the Board meeting on Thursday 3/13 and 9am on Zoom, and Coffee with Rachel at the Innovation Center on 3/27.
  - b. Tony Sheridan thanked those who attended the conference and acknowledged the overall positive feedback, while noting the disappointing lack of attendance by legislators, which was anticipated due to their current preoccupations in Hartford.
    - i. He reported spending time with the tourism coalition in Hartford, meeting with Speaker Ritter who expressed support but also highlighted financial constraints and challenges facing the state.
    - ii. Tony emphasized the importance of vendors writing personal letters to legislators to influence their support for tourism. He suggested providing a sample letter but encouraged personalization to enhance impact.
- 9. Other Business
  - a. No other business
- 10. Adjournment
  - a. Charlie Tracey made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Stephen Gencarella. All in favor, the meeting adjourned at 10:34am.