

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, SMALL BUSINESS, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2022 Interim

September 29, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 4th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology was held on Thursday, September 29, 2022, at 1:00 PM, in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Kim King, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Wil Schroder, Co-Chair; Representatives Kim King, Co-Chair, and Phillip Pratt, Co-Chair; Senators Alice Forgy Kerr, Phillip Wheeler, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Shane Baker, Lynn Bechler, Tina Bojanowski, Josh Branscum, George Brown Jr., Josh Calloway, Jeffery Donohue, Ryan Dotson, Daniel Fister, Deanna Frazier Gordon, Chris Freeland, Jim Gooch Jr., David Hale, Thomas Huff, Norma Kirk-McCormick, William Lawrence, Ruth Ann Palumbo, Michael Sarge Pollock, Josie Raymond, Brandon Reed, Rachel Roberts, Cherlynn Stevenson, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Nancy Tate, Timmy Truett, Bill Wesley, and Richard White.

Guests: Rich Storm, Commissioner, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; Jenny Gilbert, Legislative Liaison, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; Major Jeremy McQuary, Conservation Officer, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Les Stapleton, Mayor, Prestonsburg; Samantha Johnson, Executive Director, Prestonsburg Tourism; Jimmy Carter, Mayor, Pikeville; Paul Bowles, Director, Pikeville Tourism; and Lauren McCoart, Assistant Director, Pikeville Tourism.

LRC Staff: Janine Coy, Kirk Smith, Crystal Thompson, and Sasche Allen.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2022 meeting was made by Representative Fister, seconded by Representative Hale, and approved by voice vote.

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2022 meeting was made by Senator Wilson, seconded by Representative Hale, and approved by voice vote.

Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Update

Commissioner Rich Storm detailed the Department's active role in the Western Kentucky tornado response and the Eastern Kentucky flood response. An update was given on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Although CWD has not been detected in the Commonwealth, voluntary check stations for harvested deer or elk have been placed in Bell and Harlan Counties. The Commissioner provided an update on bear and elk hunting in the Commonwealth. The number of black bears harvested has increased drastically since 2009, and the largest elk ever harvested in Kentucky was taken in 2021. The Commissioner also discussed other state wide programs including the Kentucky Wild program, fish stocking, invasive carp harvesting, improving fish habitats, categorizing wildlife management areas, prescribed fire for habitat enhancement, and the newly launched fishing pole loaner program.

Answering questions from Representative King regarding the Eastern Kentucky flood response, Major Jeremy McQuary stated the rescue and recovery efforts were a collaborative effort amongst the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, statewide emergency management, and law enforcement. The Department is responsible for handling drownings that occur in public waters, and the approximate number of drownings reported was 33. Commissioner Storm and Jenny Gilbert, the Department's legislative liaison, discussed their own personal accounts and told stories of Department personnel aiding flood victims.

In response to Representative Frazier Gordon, Commissioner Storm commented about the robust and huntable bear population in the Commonwealth.

Representative Freeland made remarks about the invasive carp and thanked the Department for their assistance during the Western Kentucky tornado outbreak.

Addressing questions from Senator Wheeler, the Commissioner said he would like to see some type of trading post in the future for the Elk Hunt Drawing.

Representative Wesley thanked the Department and the Commissioner for the Eastern Kentucky flood response.

Replying to questions from Representative Kirk-McCormick, Commissioner Storm stated that there is no way to determine when or how CWD will cross state lines into the Commonwealth. There is no treatment or live test for CWD. Five counties in Western Kentucky remain under special regulations for disease monitoring for 2022-2023 seasons. CWD differs from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) and effects are seen over a comparably long period of time. Answering a follow up question, Major McQuary confirmed that a college degree is no longer required for an individual to become a conservation officer. An applicant must be 21 years of age and have a high school diploma or GED.

Answering questions from Representative Hale, Commissioner Storm explained that the subsidized market of invasive carp is strong and will continue to grow. Commercial fishers harvested over 10 million pounds of invasive carp in the last year. Replying to a follow up question, the Commissioner said a possible CWD case was detected in a Tennessee county less than 10 miles from Bell County. Representative Hale also discussed the state's bear population.

Representative Tackett Laferty discussed the Eastern Kentucky flood response and Jenny Wiley State Resort Park.

Eastern Kentucky Tourism Update

Representative Tackett Laferty introduced guests who provided an update on Eastern Kentucky tourism including the effects of the Eastern Kentucky floods on the 95th district.

Prestonsburg

Samantha Johnson, Executive Director of Prestonsburg Tourism, provided an update on Prestonsburg tourism. In 2021, the tourism industry in Floyd County had a total economic impact of over \$53 million, supported 352 jobs, and generated over \$9 million in income and wages. Ms. Johnson discussed types of travelers that visit Prestonsburg including family travelers, outdoor adventurers, and motor coach travelers. In addition, she detailed events that take place at the Mountain Arts Center, the creation of the Appalachian Arts and Entertainment Awards, and sport tourism events hosted at the Sugarcamp Mountain Trails, and the Prestonsburg Passage Rail Trail, in partnership with Jenny Wiley State Resort Park.

In response to a question from Representative King, Prestonsburg Mayor, Les Stapleton, spoke about the Prestonsburg Passage Rail Trail and the process of debris removal due to inclement weather.

Answering questions from Representative Kirk-McCormick, Mayor Stapleton said the pool that was located at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park is damaged beyond repair, but there are plans to place a splash pad at the park.

Replying to an inquiry from Representative Stevenson, Mayor Stapleton and Ms. Johnson spoke about the Jenny Wiley Amphitheater and transitioning the location to an entertainment venue.

Pikeville

Jimmy Carter, Mayor of Pikeville, Paul Bowles, Director of Pikeville Tourism, and Lauren McCoart, Assistant Director of Pikeville Tourism, discussed the outdoor recreation, Appalachian heritage, arts and culture, and entertainment offered by the city of Pikeville. Ms. McCoart highlighted the creation of the Story Trail, the five mile long Real McCoy Trail, the Pikeville Cut-Through, the Hillbilly Days Festival, the Big Sandy Heritage

Center Museum, the Appalachian Moonshine, Music, and Makers Festival, the Appalachian Center for the Arts, the Hoptoberfest KY, and events held at Appalachian Wireless Arena.

Senator Wheeler made comments about the economy and tourism industry in the eastern region of the state.

Representative Kirk-McCormick commended the speakers for their work in the tourism industry and discussed the progress of the economy in Eastern Kentucky.

Representative Fister thanked the speakers for their efforts and made remarks about the beauty of the region.

Representative Pollock made comments about several upcoming events taking place in Eastern Kentucky.

Representative Tackett Laferty made closing remarks regarding infrastructure, economic development, and tourism in Eastern Kentucky.

Representative King conveyed her appreciation for Senator C.B. Embry and thanked him for his years of service to the Commonwealth.

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.