



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

Thursday, September 10, 2026
9:00am-11:00am

Location

The Spa At Norwich Inn

607 West Thames St., Norwich, CT 06360, USA

In-Person Only / No Zoom or Hybrid Video

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: Jill St. Clair, Chris Regan, Jordan Lumpkins, Shannon Fagan, Bruce Flax, Angela Adams, Tracey Hanson, Robert Ignatowicz, Fran Kefalas, Patti Larrow-George, Gail MacDonald, Amy Monahan, Kerry Morse-Sacchi, Mark Olivo, Kathleen Paterson, Tyra Penn-Gesek, David Quinn, Charlie Tracy, Paul Whitescarver

Guests: Andrea Manning, Tony Sheridan, Rachel Lenda, David Jensen, Jillian Lozier, Phyllis Tracy

1. Call to Order
 - a. Jill St. Clair called the meeting to order at 9:12am.
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes 06/11/2026
 - a. Bruce Flax made a motion to approve the 6/11 Meeting Minutes, seconded by Charlie Tracy. One abstention, all else in favor the motion passed.
3. Board Chair Report
 - a. Jill St. Clair reported on the goals and focus for the board in the coming year, which will include board development, and expanding committee engagement, seeking sustainable and expanded funding for the districts, and to continue the great relationship with the state, and strengthen the open flow of communication that's been established.
4. Treasurer Report
 - a. P&L
 - i. Bruce Flax made a motion to approve the P&L, seconded by Charlie Tracy. All in favor the motion passed.
 - b. Balance Sheet
 - i. Charlie Tracy made a motion to approve the Balance Sheet, seconded by Jordan Lumpkins. All in favor the motion passed.
 - c. FY2027 Budget Revision
 - i. Fran Kefalas made a motion to approve the revised budget, seconded by Tyra Penn-Gesek. All in favor the motion passed.
5. Committee Chair Reports



- a. Finance
 - i. No further report.
- b. Marketing
 - i. Fran Kefalas reported on the recent work of the Marketing Committee, which has centered around asking Quinn Hary & Gellar to look more deeply into the data of past campaigns. The results challenged some assumptions, and will likely translate to a pivot in marketing strategies. More details to follow in the QH&G report.
- c. Bylaws
 - i. Charlie Tracy recapped a recent discussion regarding industry appointments, and representative organizational affiliation that was resolved with no need to update the bylaws at this time.
- d. Nominating
 - i. Angela Adams reported on her ongoing work with the administrator to fill vacancies. At present, there are 9 municipal vacancies. She welcomed new industry and municipal reps to the group.
- e. Legislative Advocacy
 - i. Patti Larrow George reported on recent work and upcoming focus to build on advocacy work for expanded tourism funding. She alerted the group to an upcoming letter writing campaign.
- f. Grants
 - i. Kathleen Paterson reported that the committee will meet in the coming weeks to review reports, develop the FY27 grant materials, and determine the timeline for application launch.
- 6. 2027 Schedule of Meetings Approval
 - a. Jordan Lumpkins made a motion to approve the 2027 Schedule of Meetings, seconded by Fran kefalas. All in favor, the motion passed.
- 7. Administrative Partner Contract Extension
 - a. Jill St. Clair reported that, in alignment with state contract, and ERTD's September 2025 vote to contract for two years, the Board must vote to extend the administrative partnership with the Chamber for a second year.
 - i. Patti Larrow-George made a motion to extend the administrative partner contract with the Chamber of Commerce for Eastern Connecticut for FY2027, seconded by Fran Kefalas. All in favor, the motion passed.
- 8. Media Agency Report - Quinn Hary & Gellar
 - a. David Jensen presented an analysis of three years of marketing performance, audience demographics, visitor trends, and advertising effectiveness across ERTD's marketing channels.
 - i. The review highlighted significant growth in organic social media engagement, particularly with event-specific, family-oriented content, as well as differences in audience demographics and engagement across platforms.



- ii. The presentation also examined visitor origin markets, travel patterns, and length of stay, identifying opportunities to better align marketing efforts with existing and potential visitor audiences.
 - iii. Recommendations were presented for strategic adjustments to media spending, audience targeting, and content development to maximize the effectiveness of ERTD's marketing budget.
 - b. Board discussion focused on interpreting the findings, reaching underserved visitor audiences, and balancing marketing priorities within the District's available resources.
- 9. Office of Statewide Marketing & Tourism Update
 - a. Rachel Lenda reported updates from SWMT
 - i. The Big E is in need of volunteers and collateral from our region.
 - ii. The Haunted History Trail will launch next week, and is receiving some national and international coverage.
 - iii. The TV to Table trail launches 10/5.
 - iv. A preview of potential funding opportunity was shared.
- 10. Administrator Report
 - a. Andrea Manning reported on recent and upcoming administrative efforts
 - i. The FY27 application for \$400,000 in state funding is being prepared for submission following budget approval. The FY26 audit is underway, with supporting documentation being compiled.
 - ii. FY26 Regional Marketing Partnership financial and narrative reporting has been collected and is being finalized for Grants Committee review. Preparations for the FY27 program cycle are underway, with an anticipated late-fall launch.
 - iii. The Chamber is working with Electric Boat on an updated relocation toolkit highlighting Eastern Connecticut as a place to live and work. ERTD tourism assets will be requested to support the project.
 - iv. Planning is beginning for the Chamber's 2027 Tourism Conference, with input from ERTD Directors welcomed on potential topics and industry priorities.
- 11. Tourism Envisioning Workshop
 - a. The board broke into small groups to generate ideas and discussion driving visitation, building itineraries, capturing missed opportunities, engaging the tourism community.
- 12. Adjournment
 - a. The meeting adjourned by consensus at 11:34am.