



Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD)

Executive Committee

Regular Meeting

August 6, 2026 - 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:

Guests: Andrea Manning, David Jensen

1. Call to Order
 - a. Chair Jill St. Clair called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.
2. Approval of Minutes - 7/9/2026
 - a. Bruce Flax made a motion to approve the July 9, 2026 meeting minutes, seconded by Charlie Tracy. All in favor; the motion passed.
3. Board Chair Report
 - a. Chair St. Clair reported on outreach to newer Board members, including representatives from Brooklyn and Putnam, to encourage engagement and committee participation.
 - b. The Chair shared an update from a Northeast Connecticut Chamber legislative breakfast regarding anticipated workforce growth associated with a new Electric Boat contract. Members discussed the potential opportunity to introduce incoming workers and new residents to regional tourism assets.
 - c. The September Board meeting will be held in person at the Norwich Inn & Spa and extended to two hours, with time dedicated to strategic planning, goal setting, and breakout discussions.
 - d. The Chair also reported on a meeting with the Office of Policy and Management regarding new state compliance requirements and their potential impact on ERTD's subgrant program. Additional clarification is expected regarding whether the district's grants will be subject to the new requirements.
4. Treasurer Report
 - a. P&L
 - i. Bruce Flax made a motion to approve the Profit & Loss Statement, seconded by Angela Adams. All in favor; the motion passed.

- b. Balance Sheet
 - i. Bruce Flax made a motion to approve the Balance Sheet, seconded by Fran Kefalas. All in favor; the motion passed.
- 5. Committee Chair Updates
 - a. Finance
 - i. Shannon Fagan reported that work is underway to update authorized access to ERTD's financial accounts.
 - b. Marketing
 - i. Fran Kefalas reported that the Marketing Committee met with Quinn & Hary to begin preparing for the September strategic planning process. The agency is compiling historical marketing and audience data to help the committee evaluate past performance and identify future opportunities.
 - ii. Discussion has also included the effectiveness of current and potential platforms, including YouTube. Members agreed that future marketing decisions should follow review of the data and the broader strategic planning process.
 - c. Bylaws
 - i. The committee discussed bylaw language limiting representation by a single firm or organization in relation to Board members who may share an employer while serving as representatives of separate municipalities or industry sectors.
 - ii. Members generally agreed that municipal representatives serve on behalf of their appointing communities rather than their employers. The committee did not identify a current conflict with the proposed hotel industry appointment and agreed the issue could be revisited if concerns arise.
 - d. Nominating
 - i. Angela Adams reported receipt of municipal appointment letters from Groton and Columbia and continued outreach regarding remaining vacancies and reappointments.
 - ii. A current list of vacancies will be distributed to assist members with recruitment. Members were encouraged to recommend potential representatives and assist with outreach where they have existing municipal relationships.
 - e. Legislative Advocacy
 - i. No report.
 - f. Grants
 - i. Kathleen Paterson reported that the Grants Committee will convene to review final FY26 Regional Marketing Partnership Program narrative reports and begin evaluating the next grant cycle, including whether revisions to application materials may be beneficial.
 - ii. Additional committee members are being sought, particularly from the shoreline and New London/Norwich areas, to provide broader geographic representation.
- 6. Connecticut Office of Statewide Marketing and Tourism Update
 - a. Jill Larsen provided an update on the CT End of Summer Deals campaign, which will run through September 7 and highlight free, discounted, and special tourism experiences statewide. The initiative also includes a partnership with CT Kids

Passport, with opportunities for additional Eastern Connecticut businesses and attractions to participate.

- b. The state's strategic marketing plan is under development and is expected to incorporate input submitted by the three regional tourism districts. CTvisit will transition to fall content following Labor Day, followed by the Haunted History Trail launching September 16, the Big E beginning September 18, and the TV to Table Trail in October.
 - c. The Office of Statewide Marketing and Tourism will seek volunteers and regional literature for the Big E tourism booth. Discover New England was also noted for March 8–10 at Foxwoods.
 - d. Members requested updated Arrivallist reporting, which had not been populating as expected. Larsen will follow up with the state's vendor regarding access to the missing data.
 - e. Members also discussed opportunities to highlight additional Eastern Connecticut attractions and experiences through statewide campaigns and social media collaborations.
7. Quinn & Hary Update
- a. Quinn & Hary is compiling two years of marketing, platform, and Arrivallist data to support the district's upcoming strategic planning process, with both summarized findings and underlying data to be provided where possible.
 - b. Performance over the previous 30 days remained positive, including approximately 580 new Instagram followers and a 14% increase in views, 1.5 million Facebook views and approximately 1,700 new followers, and more than 1 million paid campaign impressions.
 - c. Upcoming content will feature Buttonwood Farm's sunflower fields, Burnett's Country Gardens, Thames River Heritage Park's water taxi tours, Main Street Niantic, and other seasonal experiences throughout the region. Quinn & Hary will also work with the state to obtain additional Arrivallist demographic information.
8. Administrator Report
- a. Andrea Manning reported that most outstanding FY26 Regional Marketing Partnership Program narrative reports had been received following the July 31 deadline. The Grants Committee will convene to review and accept the reports, which are included as part of the district's annual audit documentation.
 - b. FY26 grant reporting is complete and the annual audit is underway, pending the remaining grant reporting materials. The FY27 application for state funding is now available, with a training session scheduled and preparation of required application materials underway.
 - c. ERTD participated in Celebrate New London and Third Thursday in Willimantic, with strong visitor engagement. Preparations are underway for the Mystic Outdoor Art Festival, where ERTD distributed more than 2,000 brochures the previous year, and additional volunteers were requested.
 - d. Manning will also seek additional Board participation on committees, prepare for the September quarterly Board meeting, and begin addressing the upcoming renewal of the Chamber's administrative partnership agreement with ERTD.
9. Other Business

- a. Members discussed opportunities to provide QR-code materials promoting ERTD's social media channels to Airbnb and other lodging operators for inclusion with visitor information.
 - b. Jill Larsen reported that CTvisit recently changed its website header from orange to blue following an accessibility audit that identified insufficient contrast. The state has been addressing accessibility findings across the website and reported approximately 98% compliance following remediation work.
 - c. Discussion expanded to website accessibility, privacy and cookie-consent requirements, and the growing potential for litigation related to noncompliant websites. Members discussed the challenges these requirements may pose for municipalities, tourism organizations, and businesses, and the potential value of future educational resources or programming on website compliance.
10. Adjournment
- a. Bruce Flax made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Angela Adams. All in favor, the meeting adjourned at 9:48am.