

**Item 25-0716: Presentation by Pam Seidl, Executive Director of the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau (FCCVB), on recent visitor spending data and other FCCVB highlights
Community Development Committee**

Wed, Jun 25, 2025 4:30PM

Alderspersion Denise Fenton (District 6) 06:09

We have one information item, the presentation by—25-0716, presentation by Pam Seidl, Executive Director of the Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau on recent visitor spending data. And let me get that mic on for you.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 06:28

Good afternoon. Thank you. It's nice to see all of you again. For those of you—I've been here multiple times, but for those new I am Pam Seidl. I am the Executive Director of the Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau. We serve as the city of Appleton's tourism entity in the Fox Cities. We take a regional approach to tourism promoting—I have 19 and a half communities in parts of three counties. I'll get to that when I show you my map. And every year—really here to really share some great news about tourism in the Fox Cities and the economic impact and the business it's driving for our community.



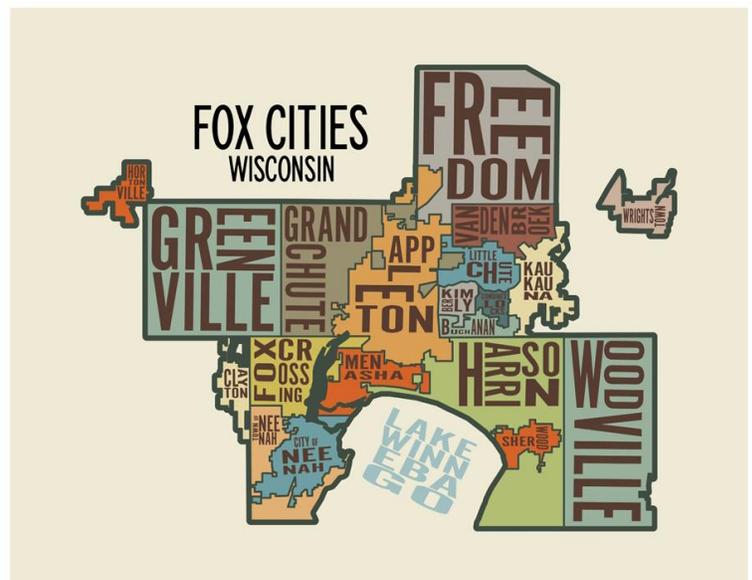
Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 07:07

So, if you want to go the next. So, as I mentioned, I served 19 and a half communities. I get the Outagamie County portion of Wrightstown, and their administrator is kind of genius when I thought about how he went about their room tax ordinance, he said, well, the Outagamie County portion, we'll send to the Fox Cities CVB, and the Brown County portion he sends to Discover Green Bay, so he gets double the promotion. So, he figured that out, pretty good.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 07:33

But for 35 years, we've been promoting the Fox Cities region north to Freedom, over to Hortonville, down the 76 corridor, Clayton, Neenah, around over to Harrison, High Cliff State Park, Woodville—Appleton obviously being in the heart and the core there. So those are kind of the communities we serve. As I said, it's 19 communities in parts of three counties.

Who We Serve



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 07:53

And the information I'm going to share today is part of a research project that's conducted by the state of Wisconsin Department of Tourism. They released the information by county. And because of the nature of this geography, and our geography here in the Fox Cities, it's difficult for me to use any one of those county data. You know, we roughly have at least the populated portion of Outagamie County, but we don't have all of Outagamie County, and New London has a chamber that serves as their destination marketing organization. So, they, you know, take that part of the rural part of Outagamie County. And then Discover Oshkosh serves the City of Oshkosh in the southern part of Winnebago County. So, we commission our own study that is just these 19 and a half municipalities. So, the data that I'm sharing, sharing with you today is generated in these municipalities.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 08:53

So, for the year 2024, calendar year 2024 direct visitor spending for tourism in the Fox Cities was \$603.2 million and a total economic impact of \$787.6 million. Those numbers, I think—you know we are—I wish people appreciated how much tourism happens here in the Fox Cities. I think because we have such a diverse economy and we're such an urban area, people don't necessarily think we have visitors, and our locals are the ones who sometimes think, "Well, we don't have any tourism here." We have \$603 million of spending going on here annually in tourism, and it's really works through our economy, creating almost 7000 jobs and over \$66 million in state and local taxes.

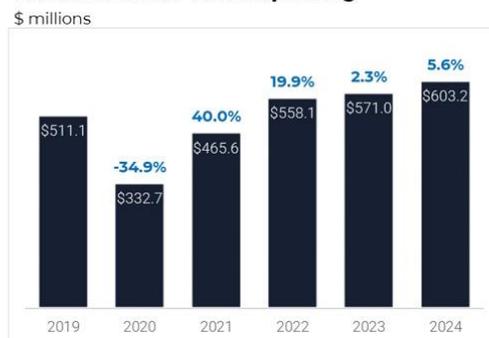


Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 09:43

So, flip to the next slide, David. So, our visitor spending—obviously you see the two years before 2020 finally drops off that slide, which will be a reason to have a celebration in itself. But if you look at 2019 which could be you know your pre COVID baseline, that was \$511 million. Skipping through that we recovered nicely in '21. By 2022 we were back over 2019 in visitor spending and have continued to increase. 2024 was a 5.6% increase over 2023 in visitor spending. So those are significant jumps in spending as we've kind of normalized and gotten back, and, you know, some of this due to inflation. If you've traveled recently, you probably know you're paying more for your hotel room, you're paying more for your plane ticket and rental cars. But we are also putting a lot more tourism through this community, partly due to the investments that we've made as a region in tourism infrastructure.

Direct Visitor Spending

Fox Cities Direct Visitor Spending



Source: Tourism Economics



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 10:47

Go to the next slide. So before—so first of all, there's a visitor spending by category. Most of this, I think, is self-evident. I always like to point out that the visitors actually spend more on food and beverage than they do on lodging, and we have always had a very strong retail base here. Our retail is larger—a larger percentage of our tourism spending pie than most destinations our size, and that has to do with really just several things obviously. We have a large regional mall. We have a number of thriving downtowns, including Appleton. We've always been seen as a good retail destination, and that kind of plays out here in the visitor spending. Recreation entertainment, things like PAC tickets, Wisconsin, Timber Rattlers tickets.

Visitor Spending by Category



Fox Cities Direct Visitor Spending
\$ millions

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024 Growth
Total visitor spending	\$511.1	\$332.7	\$465.6	\$558.1	\$571.0	\$603.2	5.6%
Food & beverage	\$155.7	\$105.5	\$143.2	\$165.3	\$171.5	\$180.5	5.3%
Lodging	\$116.4	\$50.0	\$91.1	\$122.5	\$122.4	\$131.6	7.5%
Retail	\$105.5	\$85.5	\$106.8	\$119.1	\$120.8	\$126.6	4.8%
Rec/Entertainment	\$73.7	\$48.2	\$68.6	\$82.6	\$86.6	\$91.6	5.8%
Transportation	\$59.8	\$43.4	\$55.9	\$68.6	\$69.6	\$72.8	4.6%

Source: Tourism Economics

Note: Lodging includes all accommodation types, and transportation includes both ground and air transportation.



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 11:35

And transportation—taxi, Uber, Lyft, all those things, not necessarily airline in this. The way they track transportation is, if the ticket was purchased here, they will track that spending. But if someone purchased a ticket in Dallas to fly here, that spending goes to Dallas. So, it's just kind of—so this is generally, you know, our people spending to go elsewhere, but and then also, like I said, public transportation. But in each of those categories, growing considerably. Recreation/entertainment, another nice jump in those areas. And it's nice to see a lot of those attractions, seeing that visitor spending in a significant increase.

Tourism = Quality of Life

• Each household in Fox Cities would need to be taxed an additional \$633 per year to replace the tourism taxes received by state and local governments.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 12:18

Go to the next slide. It's important, you know—I always say, why? You know, why? Why does tourism matter in an economy like ours? For our residents, each household in the Fox Cities would have to be taxed an additional \$633 per year to make up for the taxes that visitors spend here in the Fox Cities. And



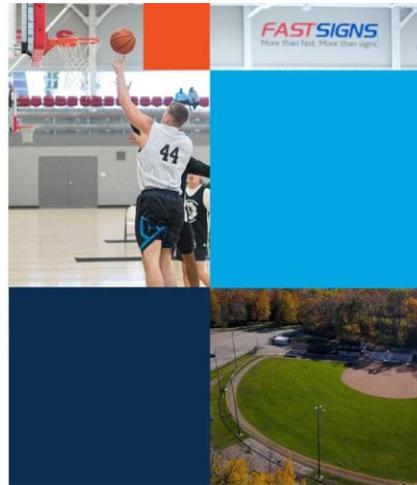
tourism is really the purest form of economic development. People come, they spend money, they use generally very little in the form of local services, and then they go home, which is for spending. So, this is, you know, they are investing in our community, and it does help our residents with quality of life.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 13:00

Go to the next slide. This one I apologize—a little bit out of—but I'll talk about—so Fox Cities Sports Development is a 501c3 aligned organization of the CVB and has a common board to the CVB. It is the entity that is tasked with managing the Community First champion Center, which we'll go to the next slide then.

Fox Cities Sports Development

- 501c3
- Separate but “aligned” organization with the CVB
- Common Board to CVB



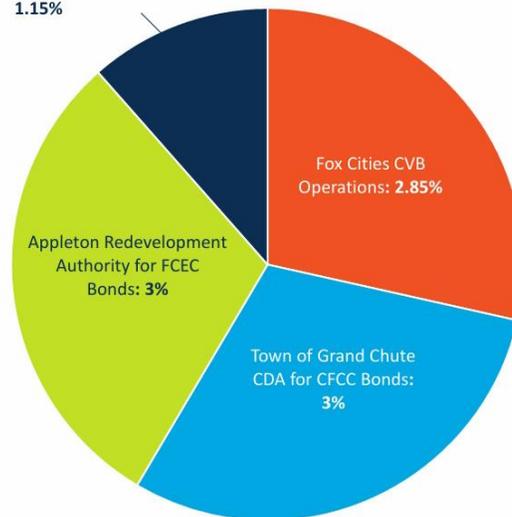
Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 13:21

We'll talk a little bit about the room tax allocations. So, room tax in the Fox Cities is 10%. If you ever stay at a hotel in the Fox Cities, you pay an additional 10% on your bill at the end, when you check out. Where do we put that money? Well, 3% funds the debt on the Fox Cities Exhibition Center; 3% funds the construction debt on the Community First Champion Center; I receive 2.85% for the CVB operations; and then the municipalities retain 1.15% of that.

Fox Cities Room Tax Allocations

Total = 10% Tax

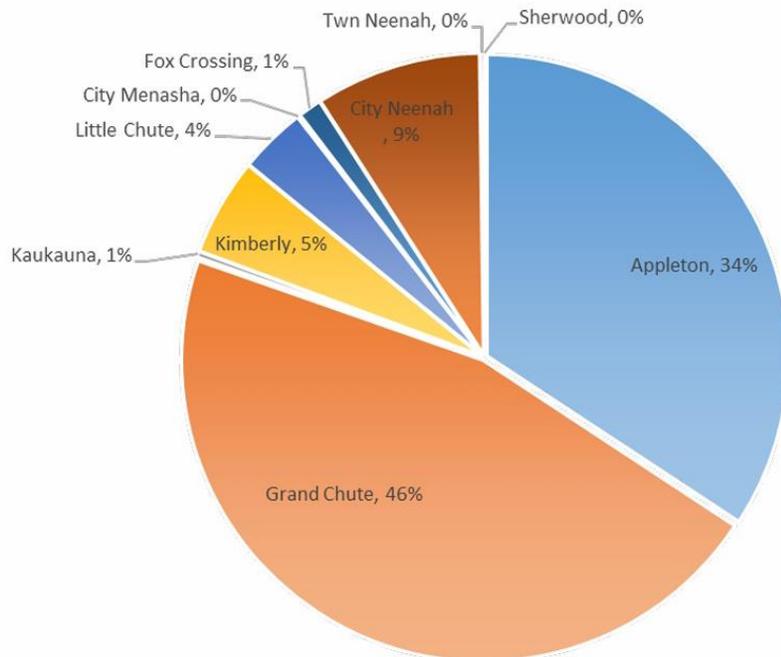
Retained by Municipalities:
1.15%



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 13:56

Go to the next slide. So here, of the 19 municipalities I serve, only about nine of them really generate room tax in any meaningful way. And you can see how this breaks too. And obviously two big chunks. Grand Chute generates the most room tax. Nearly half of all the room tax generating the Fox Cities is generated in Grand Chute, and then Appleton is about a little more than a third. And then the other communities that generate room tax kind of fall in that that smaller section. It's—we've seen a little bit more now coming out with a lot of short-term rentals. I'm getting room tax—small amounts—but I'm getting room tax from the town of Vandenbroek and the town of Clayton and so Harrison. Those are generally short-term rentals that are collecting room tax. But this—the biggest parts of the pie, you know, really comes over—two thirds of, you know, the room tax, actually probably more than three quarters of the room tax, comes from Grand Chute and Appleton. Grand Chute simply has the vast majority of our hotels, and Appleton has the largest hotel. So.

Fox Cities Room Tax Generation



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 15:05

Go the next one. So, in 2016-'17, if you were around—I know a few, at least one of you was here—we made the decision here in the Fox Cities to form a tourism zone, which means 10 communities came together, said, "We agree via state statute that we are a single destination in the eyes of the traveling public, and we're going to form the Fox Cities tourism zone." And that enabled them also to do some bonded room tax projects, and they pledged their money to two, really once in a generation, projects. And still, even five years, five, six years in, what we did here is still, you know, amazing. I can't tell you how many of my peers around the state and actually around the Midwest, people are just blown away that we were able to do this, to get 10 municipalities to come together. And it was very easy, wasn't it? It just simple. But so, we did this.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 16:06

We actually have a conference coming in September that we're hosting called the Upper Midwest Convention and Visitors Bureau conference. One of the reason we were able to get the conference is because we—so many

people are interested in what we did here. We're going to be doing a walking tour of downtown Appleton, the exhibition center, and talking about how we're reinvesting room tax into our infrastructure.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 16:26

So, both of these projects, roughly \$30 million projects, opened within about 18 months of each other. Obviously, the exhibition center owned by the city of Appleton, Community First Champion Center owned by the town of Grand Chute. The operators—the Hilton Appleton Paper Valley operates the exhibition center. Fox Cities Sports Development—this relates to that rule out of place slide and my apologies earlier. Fox Cities Sports Development operates the champion center. They have annual economic impacts around 6 and 8 million.

Recent Room Tax Funded Projects

	Fox Cities Exhibition Center	Community First Champion Center
Cost	\$31 million	\$30 million
Opened	January 2018	November 2019
Building Owned By	City of Appleton	Town of Grand Chute
Operated By	Hilton Appleton Paper Valley	Fox Cities Sports Development
Annual Economic Impact (est.)	\$6 million	\$8 million
FCCVB Role	Sales/marketing support	Administrator Sales/marketing support



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 16:58

And the CVB really plays a supporting role in both. We sell and market, which is what we do for the region, the area. And in the community—in the Grand Chute's category, they wanted a middle man between the town which didn't feel they had the staff necessary to manage the management from the data—to make sure—to ensure the day-to-day operations. So, Fox Cities Sports Development plays that role of making sure the operations are done in the spirit to which the funding municipalities want, and that is that it should be operated as a tourism first facility, so that the goal with both of these projects is generate room tax, pay off the debt, and generate economic activity.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 17:46

And both of them have been doing that, even through the pandemic. And this comes out through our room tax commission and reports from Baird. There's mandatory calls of the bonds, and we've consistently had to do the mandatory calls because we are generating much more room tax than anticipated in the financing, and so we're paying down the debt faster than we had anticipated. In fact, I believe on the exhibition center, we might be five years ahead of schedule. Think between five and eight years ahead of schedule on those payments.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 18:18

Go to the next one. For the exhibition center for 2024 there were 51 groups and functions in the in the facility, but 56,000 total attendance, and over 8000 almost 9000 hotel room nights generated by the activity that went through the exhibition center.

Fox Cities Exhibition Center 2024 Year in Review*

- 51 Groups/ Functions
- 56,272 total attendance
- 8,702 hotel room nights

**Information provided by Hilton Appleton Paper Valley Hotel*



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 18:38

Go to the next slide, and then the Champion Center had 75 tournaments, generated more than 6.2 million in direct visitor spending, hosted 48,000 athletes, 82,000 spectators. Tournaments and games took place on 50 of 52 weekends. Roughly 98% of the participants are 18 years old or younger.

Community First Champion Center 2024 in Review

- 74 tournaments that generated more than \$6,256,640 million in direct visitor spending at businesses in the Fox Cities
 - 48,180 Athletes
 - 82,400 Spectators
- Tournaments and games took place on 50 of 52 weekends
- Roughly 98% of the participants are 18 years old or younger
- "Home Teams" = NHM Hockey, Valley Figure Skating, Lawrence University Women's Hockey
- Local Impact
 - 8,062 Practice hours
 - 59,000 Practice participants
 - 128 Sports camps



Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 19:00

It also serves—I often say that the Champion Center is a real great illustration of what tourism dollars can help to benefit your local quality of life. Without this facility—this facility is tourism first on the weekends, but during

the week, there's generally not a lot of tourism generating going on because it's not a common travel. So, during the week, local user groups are able to use this facility. We have this beautiful facility to use. It is the home ice rink for the Neenah/Hortonville/Menasha hockey team and in the fall, the Fox Cities Stars hockey team, which is kind of all the other schools, with the exception of Appleton United will be using that as well as their home rink. The Lawrence University women's hockey team is home there, as well as the Valley Figure Skating Club and probably 60 plus different club volleyball and basketball teams. So, for our local youth, they have an opportunity to have a state-of-the-art facility that was built with—solely with room tax dollars, with not a lot of local input into it. But over 8000 practice hours, 59,000 practice participants, and 128 sports camps. I was there at a meeting on Tuesday; the place was full with a basketball tournament on a Tuesday afternoon in June for some of the summer activities.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 20:26

So, both of the facilities driving that economic activity through the region. That's kind of the highlight of what I have for you. If you have any questions, certainly I'm willing to answer those. I know there was information in your packet, as well as a summary of the visitor spending study.

Alderson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 20:45

I just have one. Is there—sorry—is there is there—do we know who's coming here the most? Are we mostly attracting other people from Wisconsin or other states?

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 20:56

Yes, Wisconsin—our top destination markets are Milwaukee, Madison, and then what I'll call that northern tier, so up toward Wausau, Rhinelander, and then into Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Rounding out that though, are Minneapolis, and we're starting to see a significant amount of visitation out of the Dubuque and Iowa market as well.

Alderson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 21:18

Oh, that's awesome.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 21:19

And a lot of those, you know, really generated through either sports tournaments or events at the exhibition center where someone might have come here for an event and thought, "Hey, that's a really cool area. I want to go back." So, we're starting to see more of that. But most of our visitors, most of our conventions, are in state, but we're starting to see a little bit more on those kind of neighboring—the UP and northern Wisconsin has always been a great market for us, but we're starting to see more of that Minnesota and Iowa traffic come in.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 21:51

Alder Meltzer.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 21:53

Thank you. I was glad to hear that you're starting to collect room tax from—what's the phrase again?

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 22:02

Short term rentals.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 22:03

Short term rentals in the other Fox Cities, the smaller ones. I was just curious, how has that been going? Do you feel like you're capturing more because there are more short-term rentals, or do you feel like you're getting

more room tax because the short-term rentals are more known, or do you think that there are maybe more short-term rentals out there that we're not collecting room tax from?

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 22:30

There are definitely more short-term rentals now. I get some data called Air DNA which kind of scrapes the Airbnb and the VRBO websites. There are definitely more short-term rentals in this market than there were five years ago. I would say a majority of those are what I call opportunity rentals—right?—the NFL draft, EAA week, Packer home games. Where—but more and more, you know, you we're seeing those that are rented all year round, run like a business. And there—it is a challenge, and I'm giving you kudos to your municipal staff and others who have taken the time to try to educate homeowners about the rules and regulations. There is—state law in Wisconsin is that those third-party rental companies need to collect and remit room tax, but they don't willingly do it. And there's—it's very difficult to identify when that room tax comes in. Those third-party companies will just—they'll send a check that says this is for the city of Appleton, but we can't identify which house in the city of Appleton, and I know the city has been working with one of the vendors to kind of try to identify and more from a licensing and health and safety type aspect. But the third-party companies won't identify "It's this house I'm paying for," so you just kind of have to trust it.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 23:59

And I think we have more and more educated homeowners who are trying to do the right things. If I'm getting room tax from Vandebroek, somebody's trying to do the right thing, and it's—I think it's frustrating that the big companies aren't helping these homeowners do that. It's very easy for them, I would say, to, you know, put in a room tax line for fees and services. They charge cleaning fees and other types of fees. So, they have—they collect fees. They should be able to collect these fees, but we are getting more and more room tax from third party rentals. Director Homan is your—one of your appointees to the room tax commission, and their financial report gives a summary of the, you know, the third-party rental room tax collected by municipality. And it's not insignificant for the City of Appleton. I don't have the number off the top my head, but it is, you know, a substantial amount of money on an annual basis.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 24:56

Thank you.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 24:57

Um, alder Heffernan again.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 25:03

Another question that I thought of is are there certain events that bring in more revenue than others? Like, basically, I'm asking, what's our coolest event that brings people in?

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 25:12

Mile of Music.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 25:14

Is it?

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 25:14

Yes. And we—we're working. We have a—again, we have some third-party research vendors that it's kind of all the, you know, like this research—a little creepy Big Brother. It's credit card swipes and cell phone data tracking, but they're actually going to do a study on the Mile of Music weekend for me this this year and they can—they'll

look for points of origin of the people coming into the market during that weekend, and so it's interesting. Mile of Music, we definitely see a spike, Oktoberfest as well. I think Oktoberfest tends to be the event a lot of people who grew up here come home for. We don't necessarily see the huge spike in hotel stays, because they're probably staying with family and friends, but we do see a significant amount of visitation on that weekend, and then Mile of Music weekend as well.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 26:11

I just have—obviously, we're talking about 2024. I'm assuming that—I'm hearing mixed—so I'm asking you to predict the near past. I'm seeing mixed numbers about the Draft and how far out the reach was. Can you give us a little prediction on that before you get your official numbers?

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 26:34

I can just from looking at the room—so yes, it was a mixed bag, and it wasn't what we all maybe hoped and expected, but hotel rates were extremely high, which, quite frankly, could have had a negative effect on the amount of people that stayed here when they saw those rates. But because rates were so high, and I looked, I just looked today on both our short-term rentals in August, which spiked and their what they call their average daily rate. The average daily rate in our market in April increased by like 15%. It was—so when we're talking about these projects and help funding and paying those bonds, it was a great month because we brought in a lot of room tax, because the average stay was high.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 27:29

The hotels were not full. I had—there were probably six or seven who were sold out the Thursday night, and then Friday night, solid good. By Saturday, most of the hotels had plenty of occupancy. I think, you know, if anything, it was a learning curve for all of our businesses. And I think we worked really, really closely and tried to manage expectations for our local businesses with the understanding that this is a big, big signature event, but people are going to want to want to be at the event if they traveled, and that's, that's what happened.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 28:04

So, what—next time I think our hotels, what they learned is, for instance, we didn't do a tournament at the champion center that weekend because we thought all the hotels would be full and we would be able to find hotel rooms for travelers. Now we realize we could have probably done that and really just capitalized on, you know—if we could have worked with the hotels and brought those rates down for the weekend, we could have had a really great Thursday, Friday, and then a really great weekend and still have the tournaments. Some of our hotels didn't take weddings for the weekend, again, thinking—and they would have, then they would have had that wedding on Saturday night. So, lesson learned. If, you know, would really be supportive if Green Bay wants to do this again, because we learned some things, and we could probably even do it, you know, better and generate a real significant amount of visitor spending, you know, for a four- or five-day period in the Fox Cities area.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 28:58

Thank you. And I—just one more. As I said before, I really appreciate you giving us the numbers, because, as some of the folks who were have been here, I know that there was some historical pushback against the Exhibition Center, and so I was very pleased to pass along in my newsletter particularly that 633 per person and some of the numbers. And just an aside, I'm fairly certain that your front picture was the mural on the side of the bagel shop in my district, and I thank you for that.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 29:32

It is. It is we love that picture. It's an—we actually—so during—and fun fact, during the draft, we made that into a billboard. That image in the back with FoxCities.org and visit and we put it on here on 41 between here and Green Bay. So.



Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 29:48

It's one of my very favorite places in District Six. So, I appreciate your using it. Anything else? Alder Meltzer.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 29:55

So, the Fox Cities Exhibition Center here in review with the 51 groups or functions. So that comes out to approximately one every week. Is that on target? Or are we still trying to reach a higher threshold? Or just to kind of put that 51 groups in context.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 30:17

And but I also think from the exhibition center, it's looking at, how do we capitalize on some of the even—there's the tourism generating events, obviously number one, but the cha—the exhibition center presents a little bit more of a challenge, unlike the champion center, of, how do we capitalize a little bit more of that local dollar and make it available for local things after you get in those tourism generating events? So, you know, working together with the Hilton staff, I think, we've tried to say, Okay, how do we layer in some other things that might make the facility—it's, you know, I—every year they have License to Cruise in there and they display the cars. I think that's a wonderful local use of that facility and really can show the facility off, but obviously getting all the tourism generating events we can in there first is primary.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 30:17

I think it's—I think it's a good number. I think we can do more. It's—you know, sometimes it's about layering the right groups at the right time. And some groups need three days to load in. And, you know, right now we have a

group in there that there's school nutritionists who needed a day to load in with their visitors. And so, it's kind of playing that Jenga game of, okay, they this is a two-day load, and then we can do three days of event, and then take one day off. You know, it, so it's—there's always more you can do, I think too. But I do think that's was a really good and healthy year. And this year we're having a really nice year in that facility as well.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 31:48

Thank you.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 31:53

Well again, thank you for coming and for the presentation and speaking for myself and I'm sure a lot of people, keep up the good work.

Pam Seidl (Executive Director - Fox Cities Convention And Visitors Bureau) 32:02

Right. Thank you. Thank you for having me. Have a wonderful evening.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 32:05

Thank you.