



# MINUTES

**Date/Time: February 20, 2025**

**Location: Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives (87 Monroe Center St NW)**

## **MISSION**

*Our mission is to provide Kent County hospitality related businesses an opportunity to meet professionally with a common interest to better serve our industry and community while furthering the overall tourism landscape of our region.*

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Welcome & Introductions: Kristy Jack, KCHA Vice President

Approval of January 2025 minutes

Treasurer's Report & Membership Report – David Jibson, KCHA Treasurer

- Starting Balance: \$5500
- Ending Balance: \$5200

## Featured Speakers

- Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives (George, Theresa and Summer)
  - Starting as an ArtPrize project. City of GR asked if they'd like to keep the building. 8<sup>th</sup> year in this building, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Feb 15). Started with an Underground Railroad RoadShow experience.
  - Gathering stories and living histories and artifacts.
  - 1976 – Gerald R. Ford, from Grand Rapids, was the first to proclaim Black History Month.
  - Big fight right now to keep Black History alive in schools (DEI).
  - Never to be Erased tour (GRAAMA visiting similar museums around the country).
  - One of the top attractions in the city. Looking to move to a larger space (10x) in downtown. More exhibits, high tech displays, more story telling options.
  - New Jim Crow Museum being built at FSU.
  - 12-5, Tuesday through Saturday (plus special hours)
- Jordoun Eatman - Vice President of Engagement & Inclusion
  - Executive Order impact on the hospitality industry.
  - Jordoun is the only person in the state with his inclusion job/title.
  - EOs vs laws (EO has the force of the law, but is not a law. Laws only written/approved by congress).
    - EO can't overturn an existing law.
    - Courts can stop EO.
    - Must be followed by federal agencies getting federal funding.
  - Marginalized groups will be looking for safe places to travel, especially now.
  - GR and Kent County are not changing their existing guidelines on DEI.
  - Experience Grand Rapids – very intentional to be inclusive and representation in marketing. Aligns with city/county. Continue community engagement – welcomes all and partners with all with similar mission and putting theories into practice.
  - Workforce development through community partners, even at the high school level (programs at 4 schools around the area). Making options attractive to the next generation. Transferrable skillsets that add value to a variety of jobs/careers.
  - Cultural enrichment. Pockets of ethnic communities with art, music, food and culture.
  - GR schools has over 70 countries represented (Kentwood over 90).
  - Hospitality has an opportunity to be a leader in the DEI world as a welcoming place for all.
  - Visitors with good experiences are more likely to become residents down the line.
  - Advocacy groups who may be affected by EO will need to look to other revenue chains to maintain humanity focused programs.

- Things you can do in your business
  - Make sure DEI and inclusive marketing
  - Offer cultural training to your staff (handshakes, customs)
  - Multi-lingual signage, braille
  - Accessible spaces for guests
  - Strengthen Workforce without labeling it DEI. Just make it common practice.
  - Don't use politically charged language in communications
  - Mentorship programs
  - Look at diversity for supplier/services to support your business
  - Support our cultural heritage (multiple festivals in GR celebrating various cultures). There are also many groups representing different cultures in GR.
  - Align DEI with business priorities as a guest experience enhancement. You don't have to ADVERTISE it – but it should be obvious you EMBRACE it. (Show don't tell).
  - Using data to support decisions.
  - Create a sense of belonging.
  - Recognize people for their differences, but don't discriminate against them for it.
  - Be proactive and not reactive to keep focused beyond this political term.
- Deportation issues – concerns about hospitality staff who may be diverse groups.
  - Urban League, Cultural/Ethnic Groups – connect them to organizations that can help

#### Call for Committee to Review KCHA Bylaws (Last Reviewed in 2020)

- Email members to see who wants to review/discuss. Focus on more inclusiveness from various hospitality sectors. Possibly expand the number of board positions. If anyone is interested, please reach out to Dianna, Lisa or Kristy.

#### Monthly Reports

- Experience Grand Rapids – Kate Lieto
  - Grand Rapids Magazine is creating a visitor's guide. Distributing at the airport at the Visitor Center.
  - Tourism Forum – March 5 @ FMG (3:30pm)
  - Two Interns (Student) – Social Media & Editorial
- Grand Rapids Diversity & Inclusion – Jordoun Eatman
  - Discover Tourism Grant - placemaking grants (\$500-\$5000) to help further diversity of projects. See ExperienceGR.com for details. Can be paired with other grants. Application deadline is in March.
- West Michigan Sports Commission – Connor Hicks
  - Mike Guswiler was named Chief Executor of the Year from the Sports Events & Tourism Association.
  - Hosted World Ice Fishing Championships were held on Lake Tamarack in Lakeview in Feb.
  - Broke ground in Rockford for the pickleball courts at the Sports Complex (15-20, with 2 championship courts). Will put GR on the map nationally for this growing sport.
- West Michigan Tourist Association (WMTA)
  - NA
- Women in Hospitality Leadership-Grand Rapids
  - NA
- Grand Valley State University - Kristy
  - March 20 – Michigan Works Career Quest for Middle and High School students. GRCC will be there representing their culinary offerings.
  - March 24 Networking Event
- Ferris State University – Kaky
  - One of faculty took 10 students to the X Games in Colorado.
  - Networking event was cancelled due to weather.
  - Career fair hosted about 15 businesses.
  - Bachelor's degree online for those with current associates degree.
- Grand Rapids Community College - Jordoun
  - Partnering with one of the academies for hospitality instruction for culinary and culinary entrepreneurship. Will take in their first students in fall 2025. Partnering with Ferris with a 2-year hospitality program.
- Pure Michigan (MEDC) – Nick's notes read by Dianna Stampfler
  - The Pure Michigan campaign was honored with seven HSMAI Adrian Awards this week, the largest and most prestigious competition in global travel marketing.

- We're loving the tremendous winter season we've had thus far and are looking ahead to spring and summer. A reminder to add your spring/summer events to Michigan.org.
- The 2025 Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism is happening April 15-17 at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi. We'd love to see you there!
- Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association
  - Effective February 21, 2025:
    - Michigan's minimum wage is \$12.48 per hour.
    - The 85% rate for minors aged 16 and 17 is \$10.61 per hour.
    - The rate for tipped employees is \$4.74 per hour.
    - The training wage of \$4.25 an hour for newly hired employees ages 16 to 19 for their first 90 days of employment remains unchanged.
    - For more: <https://www.mrla.org/minimum-wage.html> (also see attached)
- Michigan Cares for Tourism (MC4T)
  - Tuesday, April 15 (AM) @ Detroit Zoo - a half-day cleanup up prior to the Pure Michigan Tourism Conference.
  - The main annual event will be September 14-15 in Tawas. Registration will open in April

#### Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Thursday, March 20 – Monthly Membership Meeting – Focus on Millennial / Gen Z Recruitment & Retention.
- Tuesday, April 15 to Thursday, April 17 – Pure Michigan Tourism Conference, Novi (No Monthly Meeting)
- Thursday, May 15 – Monthly Membership Meeting – Focus on AI in the Hospitality Industry (w/ Amy Dorey, FSU)
- Thursday, June 19 – Social Networking at BattleGR (a kick-off to summer...bring your staff. Note 4pm start time).

Note: No membership meetings in July, August or September (the latter due to overlapping with MC4T which is 9/14-15).

Round Table Discussion

Adjournment

**Kent County Hospitality Association**  
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**[www.KentCountyHospitality.org](http://www.KentCountyHospitality.org)**  
*[www.facebook.com/groups/KentCountyHospitality](https://www.facebook.com/groups/KentCountyHospitality)*