



PA House of Representatives Republican Policy Committee

414, Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
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Rep. Joshua D. Kail
Chairman

PA House Republican Policy Committee Hearing

“Discovering Pennsylvania”

August 9, 2023, at 10 a.m.

**ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks
Fowler Blast Furnace Room
101 Founders Way
Bethlehem, PA 18015**

10 a.m.	Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance
	Regional Tourism Development Panel
10:10 a.m.	Alex Michaels <i>President and CEO, Discover Lehigh Valley</i>
10:15 a.m.	Kassie Hilgert <i>President and CEO, ArtsQuest</i>
10:20 a.m.	Questions for Regional Tourism Development Panel
	Local Tourist Attractions Panel
10:50 a.m.	Jessica Naderman <i>Vice President and General Manager, Dorney Park</i>
10:55 a.m.	Amanda Shurr <i>President and CEO, Lehigh Valley Zoo</i>
11:00 a.m.	Kurt Landes <i>President and General Manager, IronPigs</i>
11:05 a.m.	Questions for Local Tourist Attractions Panel
11:35 a.m.	Closing Comments



Testifier Biographies

PA House of Representatives Policy Committee Hearing *"Discovering Pennsylvania"*



Alex Michaels **President and CEO, Discover Lehigh Valley**

Alex Michaels joined the Discover Lehigh Valley team in October 2018 and, as President and CEO, he is responsible for the overall operation of the organization.

Alex spent his high school years living in Whitehall Township before moving away, and now resides in Easton, Pa after moving back to LV four years ago.

In his free time, he enjoys doing anything active, hiking with his dogs Oliver & Owen, reading, and bingeing his favorite shows on Netflix.

Kassie Hilgert **President and CEO, ArtsQuest**

As President and CEO of ArtsQuest, Kassie Hilgert leads one of the largest nonprofit arts organizations in Pennsylvania. Founded in 1984, the organization is dedicated to providing unparalleled access to the arts, as well as using arts and culture as key tools for economic development in urban environments.

Each year, ArtsQuest presents 2,000 concerts, art and educational programs, with 65 percent of this programming available for free. Among the organization's most well-known offerings are Musikfest, the nation's largest free music festival; Christkindlmarkt Bethlehem, a holiday market that attracts 60,000 visitors annually to Bethlehem; and the Banana Factory, a former banana distribution warehouse that's now a thriving community visual arts center.

ArtsQuest has also partnered with the City of Bethlehem on a unique revitalization of the city's former Bethlehem Steel plant, transforming the mill into SteelStacks, a dynamic, new arts & entertainment district.

A graduate of Pennsylvania State University, Hilgert has two decades of experience in marketing, development, corporate communications and community relations. Prior to ArtsQuest, she served as Manager of Community Relations and Philanthropy at Fortune 500 company Air Products.





Jessica Naderman
Vice President and General Manager, Dorney Park

Jessica Naderman not only brings more than 20 years of experience in theme and water park management, but she holds the honor of being the first female General Manager in Dorney Park's 139 years of operation.

Naderman began her career in 1998 in ride operations at what was then called Paramount Kings Island in Cincinnati. She later spent nearly seven years as manager of operations at California's Great America. After working for Herschend Family Entertainment and

Palace Entertainment for seven years, she returned to Cedar Fair as director of park operations for Valleyfair in Minnesota. She was promoted to the assistant general manager role at Schlitterbahn Waterpark Galveston in March 2021, one of 13 properties in the United States and Canada owned by Cedar Fair.

Amanda Shurr
President and CEO, Lehigh Valley Zoo

Amanda started working at the Zoo in October 2018, as the Chief Financial Officer and accepted the role of President and Chief Executive Officer in September 2020. Amanda is a licensed CPA and has been working as an accountant for over 15 years.

Prior to working at the Zoo, she was the Controller for a publicly traded, international manufacturing company for five years. Prior to that, she worked for a regional public accounting firm as both an auditor and then in talent acquisition. Leading the Zoo has given her an awesome opportunity to be a part of one of the strongest educational, conservation and cultural institutions in the Lehigh Valley.

Outside of work, Amanda is an avid runner who has run six marathons and twelve half marathons. She, her husband and two children enjoy spending time outdoors, typically with their rescue dog, as well as at the kids' sporting activities and on vacations.



Kurt Landes
President and General Manager, IronPigs

Kurt Landes, the only General Manager in franchise history, has helped steer the IronPigs to extraordinary success under his leadership since the club's inception.

The IronPigs have led all of Minor League Baseball in average attendance per game since their debut season in 2008 and have received numerous industry honors under Landes' guidance. Those include the prestigious Bob Freitas award (honoring sustained excellence in Minor League Baseball), the Larry MacPhail Award (recognizing baseball's best promotional success) and in winning 5

Kurt Landes,
President and General Manager, IronPigs (cont.)

'Golden Bobblehead' awards - the most of any team in Minor League Baseball - recognizing the industry's best promotions.

An extremely active member of the Lehigh Valley community and the 2019 winner of the LifePath Community Service Award, Landes can be seen at dozens of local community events each year. Landes previously served as the Board Chair of Discover Lehigh Valley and currently sits on the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber's Board of Governors. He has chaired or co-chaired numerous nonprofit fundraisers helping to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for local agencies.

Landes is also President of IronPigs Charities, a non-profit organization that strives to provide educational and recreational opportunities for children in the Greater Lehigh Valley area and awards tens of thousands of dollars annually to other local non-profit organizations through their grants-based programs. IronPigs Charities has distributed more than \$1.9 million in cash grants to local non-profits since debuting in 2007.

A two-time League Executive of the Year, Landes was introduced as the first General Manager in IronPigs history on October 4, 2006, after spending the previous five years as General Manager of the Hagerstown Suns. Previous to that, Landes was the General Manager in Daytona Beach, FL. During his tenure with both teams, average attendance increased each year. Landes has also directed franchises in Erie, Pa., and Staten Island, N.Y., and has worked within Minor League Baseball in Akron, Ohio (1996-2000), and Toledo, Ohio (1994-1995).

Originally from Ohio, Landes graduated as the sole recipient of the distinguished Outstanding Senior Award from Bowling Green State University. He is also a member of the Northwestern (Ohio) High School Alumni Hall of Fame. The 2023 season is his 30th in Minor League Baseball.



Alex Michaels, President & CEO, Discover Lehigh Valley
Republican Policy Committee Hearing
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Discover Lehigh Valley is the official destination marketing organization (DMO) for Lehigh and Northampton county. Its primary mission is to attract visitors, promote tourism, and enhance the quality of life in the region. Discover Lehigh Valley focuses on showcasing the diverse attractions, events, dining, entertainment, and outdoor activities available in the region. This includes historic sites, museums, parks, shopping centers, restaurants, and more. Our organization works to create awareness and generate interest in the region as a premier destination for tourists, businesses, and skilled talent.

Lehigh Valley Tourism and Hospitality:

The tourism and hospitality industry in the Lehigh Valley is an undeniable force, attracting millions of visitors and providing thousands of jobs.

With over 26,000 jobs in this sector, it plays a crucial role in driving the region's employment and economic growth. These jobs encompass various roles, such as hotel and restaurant operations, event planners, entertainment professionals, and many others, supporting a wide range of skill sets and interests. Gone are the days when hospitality jobs were solely considered entry-level, low-paying positions. The industry has transformed into a dynamic and competitive sector that offers rewarding and lucrative career opportunities, on par with other industries.

With over 16 million visitors annually, the Lehigh Valley has become a sought-after destination for travelers from all over the country and beyond. The region's diverse attractions and activities cater to a wide range of interests, making it an ideal spot for family vacations, weekend getaways, and even business travelers looking for a memorable experience.

One of the highlights of the Lehigh Valley's tourism industry is its rich history and cultural heritage. The region is home to numerous historic sites, museums, and landmarks that offer visitors a glimpse into its past and contribute to the area's unique charm. From colonial-era buildings to industrial landmarks. In 2017, the Moravian Settlement in Bethlehem, was included in the United States' World Heritage Nomination tentative list. Being on this prestigious list is a significant recognition of the site's cultural and historical importance, indicating its potential to be considered for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the near future.

Outdoor enthusiasts also find themselves drawn to the Lehigh Valley's stunning landscapes. The region is blessed with picturesque parks, scenic trails, and beautiful riverside areas that provide ample opportunities for outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking, and fishing. The abundance of natural beauty makes it a magnet for eco-tourists seeking to explore and connect with nature.

Statewide initiative possibilities that would assist in boosting the regional and state economy:

Statewide Marketing Campaign: Well-executed statewide marketing campaigns can bring numerous benefits to Pennsylvania, ranging from economic growth and tourism development to community pride

and enhanced quality of life. By strategically showcasing its strengths, Pennsylvania can attract more visitors, businesses, and talent, positioning itself for a prosperous future.

Talent attraction campaign: Pennsylvania could launch targeted marketing campaigns to showcase the state's attractive job opportunities, quality of life, and cultural amenities. This could include promoting the state's vibrant cities, affordable living costs, and diverse recreational options through traditional advertising, digital, and social media.

Infrastructure: Improved transportation and connectivity, investment in the region's infrastructure such as trolley systems and bike lanes, which would make it easier for visitors to explore the area's many attractions. Additionally, wayfinding signage and free WiFi compatibilities would make it easier for visitors to navigate and stay connected while in the region.

Road Cleanups: specifically highways, would help to keep the state looking beautiful and welcoming to visitors. Assisting in developing community cleanups and incentivizing local businesses to participate in beautification projects will help to ensure that the State is welcoming for tourists and residents.

An example of a successful statewide marketing and talent attraction campaign:

Pure Michigan is a successful state marketing campaign that has greatly contributed to Michigan's economic development, talent attraction, and tourism growth. Launched by the state of Michigan in 2006, Pure Michigan has become one of the most recognized and acclaimed tourism campaigns in the United States.

The Pure Michigan campaign not only targeted tourists but also appealed to potential residents and skilled workers. By showcasing Michigan's vibrant cities, cultural scene, and diverse employment opportunities, the campaign has attracted people from other states and regions. The increased influx of talent has been beneficial for Michigan's workforce and overall economic growth.

The success of the Pure Michigan campaign has indirectly supported economic development in the state. As more tourists visit and spend money in Michigan, local businesses experience growth and create job opportunities. The campaign's positive reputation has also improved Michigan's image as a place for businesses to invest and grow.



History

Dorney Park has been an iconic entertainment venue for Pennsylvania families since 1884. Solomon Dorney built a trout hatchery on his property and soon after converted it into a public attraction. He built games, rides, refreshment stands, picnic groves, and a restaurant. When the Allentown-Kutztown Traction Company completed its trolley line from Allentown to Kutztown in 1899, the company added a stop at Dorney Park. Two years later, the Traction Company purchased the park, operating it until 1923. The park changed ownership two additional times before eventually being purchased by Cedar Fair in 1992.

About Cedar Fair

Cedar Fair is a world leader in owning and operating regional amusement parks and water parks, complemented with resort, hotel and recreational properties dispersed throughout the states and one property in Canada. In total, Cedar Fair operates 13 parks from coast to coast. Annually our parks welcome approximately 28 million guests and our company generates revenues of more than \$1.3 billion. Cedar Fair is a publicly traded company on the NYSE under the ticker FUN.

Dorney Park Current

Dorney Park is a vital part of the valley's economy. Dorney Park attracts over a million guests each season to the area. We view ourselves as good stewards of the community and do our best to represent Lehigh Valley well. Cedar Fair has invested frequently since purchasing the park in 1992 and continues to invest in the property today. Most recently, the company is planning a multimillion-dollar rollercoaster, set to open in 2024. The investment ensures we will continue to bring guests back to the Lehigh Valley for years to come. With this investment we hope to return to pre-pandemic attendance

levels. We realize the traffic that we generate in the community creates pressure on public resources. To help alleviate that pressure, Dorney Park pays a 5% amusement tax to South Whitehall Township.

Dorney Park employees roughly 3000 seasonal associates from the community each year. As one of the employers of choice in the valley, we offer competitive pay (some entry level jobs starting at \$18 per hour) and of course provide the perks that come along with being in the business of FUN. Our employees receive free entrance to all Cedar Fair parks and complimentary tickets to bring their family and friends. In addition to our seasonal staff, our park employs about 150 full-time personnel. These positions vary widely, including chefs, electricians, welders, mechanics, landscapers, accountants, retail professionals, and entertainment managers. If you can think of a profession, we most likely have it at Dorney Park. Interestingly enough, most of our full-time staff started as a seasonal employee.

Challenges and Opportunities

Inflation, increasing costs of goods and services (utilities), and minimum wage mandates can be a challenge for an industry like ours. We employ individuals of all ages, from 14- and 15-year-olds to retirees 65 plus. As such, having a sliding pay scale is critical to our financial model. We offer a substantial number of entry level positions and provide job training to develop skills within the workforce. In addition, professional development opportunities are available at all levels.

We are always in need of skilled trade workers. Currently, as most of our trade workforce has retired it has become increasingly difficult to back-fill those positions. Additionally, there are challenges finding people to work in the hospitality industry. In an effort to address this issue, Cedar Fair has worked to create a pipeline by partnering with Bowling Green State University (in Ohio) to create a hospitality degree program in resort and attraction management. We should all continue to look for opportunities to promote trades and hospitality as career choices.

Infrastructure is a challenge for Dorney Park. The Hamilton Blvd corridor needs improvements to alleviate traffic throughout the community and on the interstate system. To address this challenge, collaboration between local, state, and business leaders will be necessary to plan, design, and fund the improvements.

Dorney Park is invested in the Lehigh Valley. It is our intention to continue to invest in the park and the community. Often, there are incentives for developers when selecting a location or area to establish their business. Ideally, there would be opportunities for incentives like this for established businesses that would enable more impactful investments for the community's economy.

Travel & Tourism Policy Notes

Lehigh Valley Zoo – President & CEO – Amanda Shurr

- Lehigh Valley Zoo History
- Lehigh Valley Zoo Today
 - Jobs – current and growth
 - Attendance – year round
- AZA accreditation
 - Conservation
- Education programs – attendance and visitor profiles
- Multifaceted - The Lehigh Valley Zoo contributes to the economic health of the region in a host of ways – tourism, education, conservation and employment. We are a nonprofit that gives back to the community we live in and wants to see it, like us, grow and thrive.
- How we can continue to do that or do that better?
- **Increase operational budget** – marketing funds
 - % of budget to salaries and related costs
 - Current - PA Zoo Council – 6 accredited non-profit zoo in PA – Participate in the Tourism Promotion for Accredited Zoo Program – DCED funding – annually, more than 3 million people visit our Zoos
- Marketing to attract tourists program - DCED primary goal is to promote overnight stays – daily recreational tourism is a \$15B industry (account to the 2021 Economic Impact Study) and should be supported through grantmaking.
- **Invest in tourism to support education and conservation**
 - Current investment in education – EITC Funding as an Educational Improvement Organization.
 - Creation of careers, not just jobs – investment in nonprofits as career paths
 - Career and technical education – LCTI – animal sciences program
- Workforce Development – strong educational opportunities will help to attract a strong workforce. Marketing these things can be very similar



IRONPIGS ATTENDANCE:

**Over 8.5 million
fans since inception**

**Average over 600,000
fans annually for
IronPigs games**

Nearly 9,000/game average



ENTERTAINMENT, NOT JUST BASEBALL



NON-GAME EVENTS

- **119 events on average/year in ADDITION to IronPigs games**

- **Food Festivals**
- **Concerts**
- **Nitro Circus**
- **Bingo Nights**
- **High School games**
- **Disc Golf**
- **Celebrity Softball**
- **Corporate events**

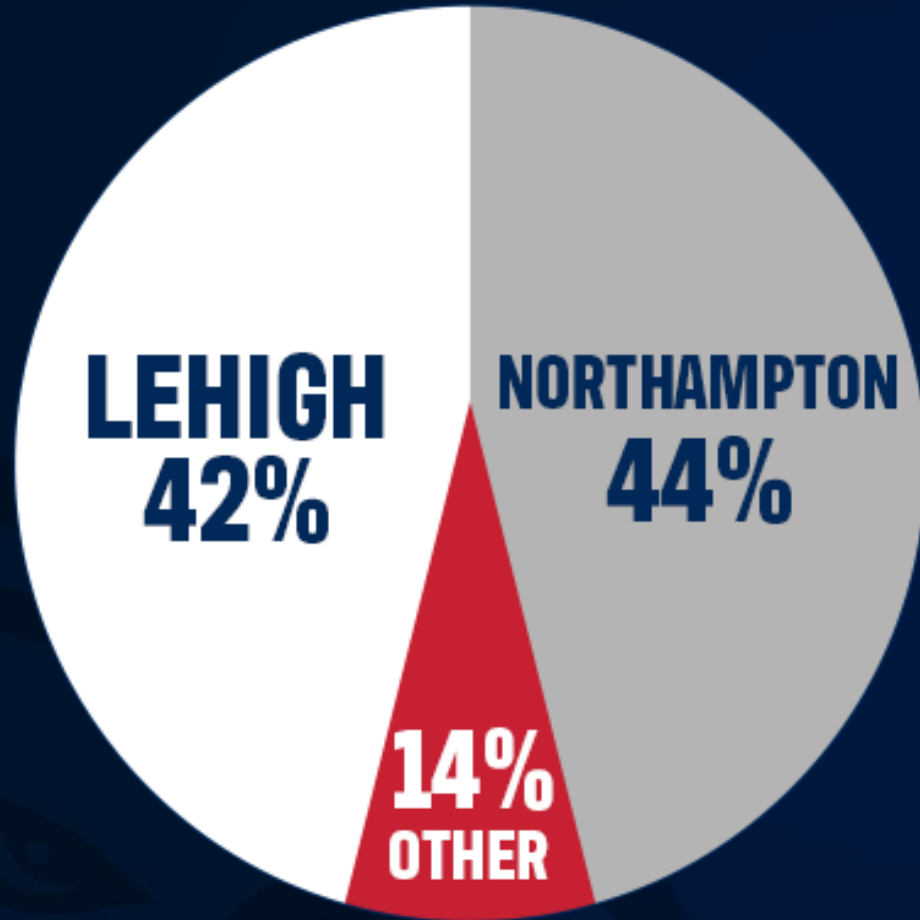


EMPLOYEES

- **On average, the IronPigs employ 691 individuals annually**
- **The IronPigs employ 48 full-time salary employees year-round**



EMPLOYEE LOCALITY (2019)



691 EMPLOYEES



IronPigs Charities – 501c3

- **Mission – Providing educational and recreational opportunities for youth of all abilities**
- **Support local non-profits via Fall and Spring grant programs**
- **Youth programming:**
 - **Suites-N-Treats**
 - **"Game On!" Lehigh Valley**
 - **Youth Field Renovations**



GIVING BACK

- **\$1,955,205** in cash grants provided to 276 local nonprofits since 2008 via IronPigs Charities.
- Over **1,500** in-kind donations provided **annually** to community organizations.
- Nearly **\$950,000** in additional funds have been provided to local community organizations from the IronPigs directly – just over **\$2.9 million** overall back to the community from the IronPigs and IronPigs Charities combined.

Average Family of 4 Cost



***Despite being one of the top drawing teams in Minor League Baseball, only four of thirty total Triple-A teams have a smaller Average Family of Four Cost.**

AWARDS



- **5 Golden Bobbleheads, more than any other MiLB team**
 - **MiLB's Bob Freitas Award**
- **MiLB's Larry MacPhail Promotional Award**
 - **LV Chamber's Business of the Year**
 - **Discover Lehigh Valley's Tourism Award**
 - **The Morning Call's Top Workplace Award**
 - **NCC's Community Fabric Award**
- **Numerous Non-Profit Awards, Recognitions**

Thank you

