



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Lesley Kistner

Public Affairs Director

814 769-9490

LesleyK@happyvalley.com

HVAB announces the creation of the Happy Valley Sports and Entertainment Commission

Formalized effort will help elevate sports tourism in Centre County

State College, PA, Nov. 16, 2021 – The **Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB)**, joined by Penn State Intercollegiate Athletics, announced a formalized effort to elevate Happy Valley’s standing as a premier sports and entertainment destination through the creation of the **Happy Valley Sports and Entertainment Commission**. The Zoom announcement was made in the Beaver Stadium Media Center before an audience of nearly 100 business, community, university, and hospitality industry leaders.

“Over the years, there have been calls from various sectors of the community for a formal commission to seek out and attract larger national and international sports and entertainment events,” said Fritz Smith, HVAB President and CEO. “Buoyed by strong university and community support, we feel the time is now right to pursue the creation of a dedicated sports commission in order to capitalize on the tremendous opportunity we see for Happy Valley to grow into a sought-after destination for marquee events and tournaments.”

After casually exploring the idea in the past, Smith said a number of factors prompted the HVAB to pursue a formal commission, beginning with the increasingly competitive sports tourism landscape. While most large cities have sports commissions or authorities, there has been a proliferation of commissions in secondary and tertiary communities. More than one dozen Pennsylvania destination marketing organizations have already formed commissions.

In addition, Smith said Penn State University’s powerful athletics programs and traditions provide a strong foundation upon which to build.

-more-

“Knowing that we have university support and buy-in is critical to the long-term success of this effort, and one important factor in moving forward,” Smith said.

Echoed Scott Sidwell, Penn State Deputy Athletic Director for External and Vice Chair of the newly formed commission, “We are thrilled to partner with the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and the community on this great opportunity to continue to grow our regional economy through sports and entertainment.

“Penn State and the local community have a longstanding partnership supporting economic growth on many levels,” Sidwell continued. “The creation of this commission will formalize an already robust impact that sports and entertainment have on our region. The focus will be on making Happy Valley the premier destination for major sporting and entertainment events at all levels that range from youth to pro sports, with Penn State Athletics serving as a keystone component in enhancing our regional economy.”

Other recent developments are positioning Happy Valley to take steps to become a major player in the sports and entertainment tourism field. They include:

- The addition of new public athletic facilities that complement the university’s world-class venues
- The HVAB’s hiring of an experienced, dedicated sports sales professional to proactively pursue opportunities
- The increased interest from tournament and event organizers in bringing events to Happy Valley

Joe Battista, who is well-known in the athletic community, will chair the new entity.

A former Penn State Associate Athletic Director, Nittany Lion Club Director, Penn State Icers Hockey Head Coach, and a Director of Penn State Summer Hockey Camps, Battista said the formation of the Happy Valley Sports and Entertainment Commission will be a win-win for all stakeholders in the Happy Valley region.

“While there have been informal efforts in the past, the timing for this new, more coordinated initiative is perfect,” Battista said, adding that the commission will allow for higher-level management and coordination of tournaments and events being held or potentially being held in the area; better identify and resolve potential scheduling conflicts; and make the hosting of events in Happy Valley a positive experience for the community and visitors.

“This is a chance to showcase our beautiful county and our amazing sports history,” Battista said. “We are so excited to offer first-class athletic venues, and lodging and restaurant amenities in our area, and to share the passion and expertise we have for hosting major events. The positive impact on the county’s economy will be significant.”

Smith said a key first step in the formation of the new commission is the undertaking of a study by Huddle Up Group, a leading sports tourism consulting firm. Huddle Up Group will conduct a deeper analysis of the structure of more successful sports commissions across the country; assess and benchmark the county’s athletic facilities and events potential; and provide other key data points.

Based on Huddle Up Group's recommendations, the commission's structure, focus and expectations will be established. The results of the study are expected in Spring 2022.

A comprehensive economic impact study is also underway to document the extent to which athletic and entertainment events benefit the community and the broader region.

"Athletics is in our DNA in Happy Valley," Smith concluded. "We believe there is an opportunity to capitalize even more on our growing reputation as a sports and entertainment destination, and are taking the necessary steps that other communities have taken to achieve this goal. Today's announcement ushers in a new era of collaborative town and gown partnership to strengthen the economy through sports and leisure visitation."

###