

**CITY OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES
LODGERS TAX ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024**

REGULAR MEETING

Regular meeting of the Lodgers Tax Advisory Board of the City of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico to be held in the City Commission Chambers, 405 W. Third, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, on Monday, May 20, 2024 at 12:00 pm.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Foerstner.

ROLL CALL:

Jake Foerstner, Chairman
Gina Kelley, Vice-Chairman
Linda DeMarino, Member - **Absent**
Victoria Harrington, Member
Jessica MacKenzie, Member - **Absent**

ALSO PRESENT:

Luba Hoffman, Deputy City Clerk
Angie Gonzales, City Manager
Tammy Gardner, Executive Assistant

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Vice-Chairman Kelley made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Harrington seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 25, 2024

Vice-Chairman Kelley made a motion to approve the minutes. Member Harrington seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

3. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: (3 minute rule applies)

Destiny Mitchell, Fiesta Board Member: Provided brief update on 2024 Fiesta emphasized how busy this year was and so much bigger than recent years. Discussed amping up for next year's 75th anniversary Fiesta.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Mentioned that there should be more money invested in promoting the rodeo more next year.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Discussion/Update: LTAB Expenses. Tammy Gardner

Tammy Gardner reviewed the LTAB expense report provided in the packet. (Copy attached hereto and made a part hereof).

City Manager Gonzales: The cash balance was about \$889,000. Your lodger's tax fund is very healthy.

b. Discussion/Update: MainStreet T or C Grant Report - Second Saturday Art Hop.

Becca Eza, Executive Director Main Street: Presented and discussed the included report.

Member Harrington: Asked a question about adding a short questionnaire when people click on the website.

City Manager Gonzales: I was just talking to a company that does that. I'll send you their info.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Are you going to ask for funding for next fiscal year?

Becca Eza, Executive Director Main Street: I haven't approved that with our board yet. I would love to get some basic stickers with the 2nd Saturday Art Hop logo. I think that would be inexpensive, easy to give out, and those end up all over the place.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: I get people at the visitor center from Tucson every month, and we get a lot from Santa Fe who also come down in the winter time not summer.

Becca Eza, Executive Director Main Street: Next year, I'm thinking of asking for funding for a larger advertisement in the New Mexico Field Guide, which is the "art bible" of the state from what some of the downtown galleries have told me. It's really big in the northern part of the state and what big art collectors use to see what's going on. That might draw more of the serious crowd to town who might make purchases at some of our high-end galleries.

c. Discussion/Update: SCRAGS Grant Report - Truth or Consequences Rock & Gem Show.

Megan Holden, SCRAGS Representative: Discussed the included report. Thanked the board for the generous grant. They had a very successful show. She discussed the number of attendees and where they stayed. First year of selling advertising, which was successful, and they will do again next year. Facebook promotion was very successful.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Have you secured the fair barn for next year?

Megan Holden, SCRAGS Representative: That's what I wanted to talk to you guys about. One of the reasons I have such a great support team is we have taken one of your requests to move the dates seriously, and we'd like to talk to you about that. We are happy with the dates being at the end of March, but I spoke to you, Gina about what dates would be better, and you said January or February. I wanted to ask if the first weekend in March would be a satisfactory compromise.

Chairman Foerstner: How does it line up with the one in Tucson?

Megan Holden, SCRAGS Representative: The one in Tucson ends, for most people, the 2nd weekend in February. I have spoken to several vendors to make sure they'd be available the first week in March. They all said yes. Once said there's another show in Arizona that they normally do, but ours is better. I do have to verify with some other vendors that are essential to our balance or merchandise.

Chairman Foerstner: So the date you're considering is right after the one in Tucson or two weeks after?

Megan Holden, SCRAGS Representative: 3 weeks afterward.

Chairman Foerstner: Is that because it would conflict if you had it closer? Are there other shows that are already part of the circuit for everybody?

Megan Holden, SCRAGS Representative: Partly that, and also because it would put us in line with Deming & Albuquerque. Right now, we're after Deming & Albuquerque. Deming is 2nd weekend of March, Albuquerque is the 3rd weekend of March. We've been the 4th weekend of March, and we would be the 1st weekend of March, and that facilitates vendors being able to travel from one to the other. We have vendors from Massachusetts, Florida, Utah, and several from Arizona. Having them right in line with those two other shows is very important.

The board expressed agreement with the new dates.

Megan Holden, SCRAGS Representative: I need to verify that it's okay with a couple of our essential vendors, but that sounds great. I did double check with the Albuquerque show to make sure we wouldn't be stepping on their toes by going before them.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: We don't mean to be difficult, but we have to think about the potential to put even more heads in beds this way.

d. Discussion/Action: Sierra County Arts Council Application – Artists of Sierra County Studio Tour.

Otto Rigan & Stacy Hay, representing SCACA: Provided a presentation on the attached application. We're 2 of a 6 member committee working on setting up a studio tour concept. Mentioned other cities in the state that offer studio tours as well as the popularity of it. The principal attraction is to see artists working in their working environment as opposed to the formality of a gallery. We've chosen not to do this during a 2nd Saturday event. We've also moved to November 2nd & 3rd, which we understand to be a better date than we assumed we would use. We're pretty flexible on that. We also see this becoming an annual event, and whatever weekend we choose, hopefully, we establish a time that works for everybody. We see the open studio tour rounding out what is offered to highlight our vibrant art community. This would also give visitors more access to artists that are not represented by galleries.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: There's been an artist studio going on in Ruidoso for over 20 years, and it's super successful.

Chairman Foerstner: High level, a studio tour, is it virtual? You're basically going to promote the locations of the studios at a time then people go themselves to all of those? It's not a guided tour?

Otto Rigan: Essentially there will be hard-printed materials and virtual materials. In terms of the map, there will be several locations. We assume there will be between 30-40 artists. Some artists are doubled up in studios. They'll have a virtual guide how to get to the studios and a paper guide. It will be self-guided and free.

Chairman Foerstner: What's the timing of it? Is it all day? All weekend?

Otto Rigan: All day Saturday and Sunday. All day means probably 10am – 5pm both days.

Chairman Foerstner: Will the timing coincide with Art Hop, so it coincides with the gallery tours?

Stacy Hay: The weekend before.

Chairman Foerstner: How much of this budget is going to be eliminated next time since this is your first time doing it? Are you looking for this amount every year, do you think or is a lot of this going to be establishing it?

Stacy Hay: This will cover the banners, sandwich boards, stands and stuff at different locations indicating the stops. They'll have numbers on them.

Otto Rigan: A lot of those can be repeated. Being the first annual, I think you can all empathize with this. The budget, although we think it's pretty refined, it's the first annual. We're going to learn from this one. Some things may be redundant or not useful. On the other hand, others may be expanded upon. One of the members of our group, Christine Auten, is also new to town. I'm going to brag on her for a moment because she's our organizer. I wish she was here, but she's in Houston on a project. She is available to call her if you have questions.

The board responded that if there was something they couldn't answer, they would call Christine.

Otto Rigan: Described Christine's experience and abilities in relation to the project.

Chairman Foerstner: Do you have an idea of how you're going to track heads in beds?

Stacy Hay: Even though event is free, they will register for a ticket with a questionnaire to track.

Otto Rigan: We'll do some sort of ticket or passport with a reward for someone who goes to the most locations. We'll be looking for donors for some prizes. That's another way to track. We want to know where people are coming from and how many have attended then analyze the dynamics and see where we are.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Then you're charging the artist a participation fee. It's not very much. It's pretty low.

Stacy Hay: Someone actually said they would help sponsor a couple of people in case they can't pay that.

Otto Rigan: That's why we kept it low to begin with. However, we think there should be some buy in for each participant, so there's a certain level of ownership.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: I need to ask you about the incentives because that's something that's tricky. Are you asking for funding to buy things to give people for the incentive?

Otto Rigan: No. That would be on the donor side.

Chairman Foerstner: What is it then? What is that \$900?

Cross discussion concerning the use of the incentives funds request. Vice-Chairman Kelley called Christine Auten to get more info.

Christine: We're not completely settled on what those incentives would be, but it would be something like a 2-night hotel stay at a spa, a restaurant meal at Bigfoot or another restaurant in town, or something along the lines of a piece of artwork or a flight of beer at the brewery or something along the lines of a price package or a raffle win.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: We can't pay for that with lodger's tax, but I understand that it's something you can get with donations. I don't think you'll have any problem with that.

Member Harrington: My only suggestion and it's not a thing I would request, but I think the incentives like the night stay to get them to come back rather than just offer a hat. That's something to think about.

Christine: We're absolutely open to any ideas any of you might have if you're free to reach out to us at any time, and give us your thoughts. We are excited to be doing this and bringing more attention to Sierra County in general. Anything you guys think would be appropriate, we are open to looking into. We want to promote as much as we can of the entire county experience.

Member Harrington made a motion to approve a modified amount of \$6,600 for the Sierra County Arts Council Artist of Sierra County Studio Tour. Vice-Chairman Kelley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: You do need to include the Truth or Consequences brand on any of your promotional advertisings. Make sure you do that.

e. Discussion/Update: Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Grant Report - Feather Flag.

Gina Kelley: Provided an update on new flag and thanked the board.

f. Discussion/Action: Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway – Update/Reprint Hot Springs Brochures.

Gina Kelley: Discussed changes and updates she'd like to make to the brochures.

Chairman Foerstner: And all these are open? La Paloma and the Artesian?

Gina Kelley: Well, they're open to people that know them, which is kind of weird.

Chairman Foerstner: We might need an updated picture for the Charles too or no? We might ask them.

Discussion about La Paloma's limited access, minimum night stay, and soaking available only to lodgers.

Chairman Foerstner: One thing about this brochure is this was for soaking by the hour.

Gina Kelley: It doesn't mean that they're not going to open that though. It's a staffing issue. Even at the Pelican, they're not taking walk-in soaks.

Chairman Foerstner: Oh they're not? You have to stay?

Gina Kelley: Yeah because Sid's pressure got all messed up when they tore up McAdoo.

City Manager Gonzales: They'll be finishing that up next week. They finish the movie this week, and the contractor will be there next week.

Gina Kelley: That will make Sid very happy.

Member Harrington made a motion to approve \$1,800 for Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Update/Reprint Hot Springs Brochures. Chairman Foerstner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

g. Discussion/Action: Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway – Website Hosting & Maintenance.

Gina Kelley: I don't think we've ever come to the Lodger's Tax Board for website hosting. I thought I better do that because our donations are down since we moved. I would just like some help on that. I attached all the analytics. I'm going to go to the county and ask for some money for social media advertising I think this summer, Jake. Just an FYI. That way I can drag some more traffic to the website. Every time we do that, we drive more traffic. We get more Facebook followers, and we get more website users. We're not going to make any major changes to the website because it's all about the trail, the routes, and things to do on the trail.

Chairman Foerstner: So you're saying the website hosting, what you're asking for, how was it paid for before?

Gina Kelley: We paid it out of pocket with donations and sales. Our cash flow has been so impacted especially with the movie this month. That's why I came asking for a little help.

Member Harrington made a motion to approve \$600 for Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Website Hosting & Maintenance. Chairman Foerstner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD:

Chairman Foerstner: Eddington has probably actually kind of hurt you guys. Are you getting less visitors?

Gina Kelley: We're getting less because the Spaceport Visitor Center doesn't really exist anymore. We grabbed everything we could carry and brought it with us. All the big built-in displays are still there. There's been less interest in the Spaceport tours. I don't know why that is other than Virgin's bad press. Right now, he's only running one tour a week instead of two. Sometimes not at all. The day he was busiest was the Fiesta. We had them meet out at the Spaceport. During the filming it's been nothing because they took all our signs down. Our sales are doing pretty good when the people are in, and I take credit cards now. That's helped. We have the new i-brochures and they're updated and the new cover. The restaurant list is current. I need to bring some to you.

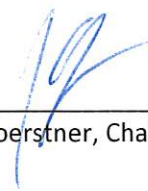
6. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

There were no comments from staff.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Foerstner adjourned the meeting at 12:39pm.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 22nd day of July 2024.



Jake Foerstner, Chairman