

**CITY OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES
LODGERS TAX ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025**

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, March 24, 2025 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
Victoria Harrington, Member
Jessica MacKenzie, Member Absent

ALSO PRESENT:

Gary Whitehead, City Manager
Katy Martinez, Deputy City Clerk

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Member DeMarino made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Harrington seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- a. Regular Meeting Minutes of February 24, 2025

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

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

There were no comments from the public at this time.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Discussion/Update: Sierra County Arts Council Ongoing Marketing to Promote Sierra County and T or C as an Arts Destination. Chistine Auten

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: This is kind of a broader effort as you guys know the Arts Council is changing. We are shifting out members bringing in newer younger member. Short of changing our focus, more like heightening or focus to really bring the arts of Sierra County in to focus and make it an arts tourism destination. In that mission we are feeling like we need to really up our game in our marketing and our outward focus. Most of these have been funded before, there is only 3 items here. They are minor things but we are doing different things with these minor things. Southwest Contemporary New Mexico Field Guide that's a big deal and we had a listing last year with all of the galleries, we had a focus

on T or C along with other cities in New Mexico. This year I know MainStreet is doing an ad and I talked with Kyle a little bit about what they were doing. We wanted to do something different, the focus is something in concert with. I wanted to get with you guys as we are designing it to make sure we are doing different things but we are going to focus mostly on specific events that we know draw people in. So, the tour strangely enough the student art show brings people in, families bring in people from out of town and other events that bring people in. Pickamania which isn't specifically T or C but is Sierra County and other specific events that do bring people in from out of town. It's going to be very event focused and T or C and Sierra County as an arts destination. We also need a reprint of our very popular murals brochure. We will be updating of what we have now. This is something that people come here to see and something we can make ourselves even more known for. The other one is our email service this is something we are going to start changing. We are going to have a news letter that goes out twice a month that highlights not just what we are doing but everything else that is going on in Sierra County.

Chairman Foerstner: All this will be spent during this fiscal year?

Christine Auten SCAC Vice President: Yes, this is all immediate stuff. We will be back in May for the next stuff. If I'm understanding correctly that's a year now the fiscal year? You guys are going for a year now not just 6 months?

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Yes, it's best to do it for the year.

Christine Auten SCAC Vice President: Ok, and we are prepared to do that.

Member DeMarino: What percentage of your email subscribers are from out of town?

Christine Auten SCAC Vice President: Right now, there aren't very many.

Member DeMarino: How do you plan on tracking if they come to town for events?

Christine Auten SCAC Vice President: That is difficult, so there are certain measures that we are going to start taking, we can do sign in sheets, we can do questions with the email list right now its subscribers and most of those subscribers are here. I just redid our membership list and we have a handful that are out of towners that do come in that want to be members of the Arts Council. They support us from outside of town. Some of them have lived here, they moved away and they travel back or they still have family here. We want to expand that its just plans to expand. As far as tracking goes there is a lot of discussion on that. It's very difficult to track from an email click, constant contact is ok at sort of letting you know how much is clicked how much is followed through. Something that we don't do in our news letters now that we need to start implementing now that I'm going to start taking them over is call to actions that people specifically click on things and we can track if they click on them. We can start with surveys, and all kinds of different things but yes, it's very difficult to track. That's a very good question it's something we need to work on.

Member DeMarino: The brochures for the murals they are great and I see people with them walking around town. The purpose of lodger's tax is to get heads on beds. So, 5,000 brochures where will they be placed?

Christine Auten SCAC Vice President: Right now, a lot of them go to visitor's centers. Our visitor's center does send them out to other visitors centers in other cities around New Mexico.

Member DeMarino: You send them out?

Vice Chairman Kelley: Yes.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: We also have campaigns if any of us travel we distribute them out. The object is a bigger one it's not just a specific. It's to start to raise the profile and start to get people looking at T or C for what it has to offer and that's not happening as much as it should right now. We are trying to get T or C out there as much as we can. We have murals which a neat I have been to a lot other towns and they do have murals but not as much as we do. So, pushing this kind of stuff to make T or C the arts capital it needs to be and that is should be. That's something we learned when we did the tour was, we have a lot of artists here and they are really good artist and nobody knows about them. The more people that know about what we have to offer here the more people we can get here. It's more of a larger goal. These are minor steps as we go.

Chairman Foerstner: What is the call to action on the Contemporary Field Guide ad how do you plan on tracking that?

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: That's difficult to track as well. We have to rely on field guide for that. We are open to suggestions as how that can happen.

Member DeMarino: We have suggestions websites are good.

Chairman Foerstner: Does the Arts Council have a website.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Yes, and I'm going to be revamping that this year.

Chairman Foerstner: So that's your call to action?

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Yes, it's the website specifically. We are going to try and up our social media presence. We are working on revamping our presence on all of them Facebook, Instagram I would love to do some Tick-Tok but we don't have anyone young enough to do that just yet.

Chairman Foerstner: So, you will have a call to action.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Yes, every ad should have a call to action.

Chairman Foerstner: Will I be something you can track separately maybe add something to the end.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: We can do that. We can do a landing page. Landing pages are easy to track.

Member DeMarino: Would you be using this money to promote Pickamania?

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Not this one no, we can but its not specific one. If its Pickamania it would be more of a music event that we do and is part of music events. So, like Camerata Del Sol is happening its coming in April. We have lots of music events that come here it would just be part of our grander music and live performance events. The Picamania is part of what we do, it wouldn't be specific in this ad but it could be if it is something you guys wanted.

Member DeMarino: The lodger's tax is to put heads in beds. I have no known people that go to Pickamania that stay in T or C that's my only concern.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Thats why I don't call it out specifically in any of our ads, I call it out as a part of our music program.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Does the county fund for social media.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: I don't now if they do or not.

Member DeMarino: Jakes on the County Lodgers Tax.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: It would be a natural for the county to fund.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Yes, it would be, I'm pretty sure Katherine would know that, I can ask her. But its not part of our specific listing. We have events that are T or C specific and then we have music general and live performance general. We are upping our dance a little as well we are going to have some dance performances this year some other performance art.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: I can see whole newsletters where you can do what's happening in music because Jake's got a new venue, The Love Shack host concerts, The Charles has even hosted some.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: We used The Lighthouse recently for Medioric and that was really great it was a fantastic venue. We can target poetry readings performances and sort of small music. I'm thinking specifically for Lighthouse like an acoustic trio's things of that nature. We did one there already that was really successful it's a great venue. I try to push people there when ever they ask me where venues are.

Member DeMarino: For next year since you said you are going to get your social media up and going more ask for social media money in your next year request, for boost and things like that.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: We do for the Studio Tour we really boosted social for that and we had that in our proposal for that. We will be doing our Studio Tour proposal separate from the rest of the stuff because it is its own entity.

Member DeMarino: Form the rest of?

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: Sierra County Arts Council stuff. It will be its on separate thing.

Member DeMarino: Request?

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: It's easier to do it that way because it's very specific and is siloed we don't cross contaminate the monies in our budget for those things this is it. this is the money for the Art Tour and then the rest of our budget.

Member DeMarino: I would recommend good tracking of these things, such as at the events fine our where people are coming from if they are staying over night because when you guys come back and report later on.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: It's a little tricky with people sign in sheets we are finding, the labor involved in translating the sign in sheets into spread sheets is difficult and handwriting is difficult. Im thinking of trying to look into some digital was of tracking.

Member DeMarino: Survey Monkey.

Chistine Auten SCAC Vice President: People don't so those. When they come to love events, they are not going to take a survey as they come in. They might, we are down to try anything we can do to try and track it and see what works. At this point anything better than nothing is good.

Member DeMarino: Incentivizing people is good, little things might be something you ask for in the next one.

Member DeMarino made a motion to approve a total of \$2890.00 to the Sierra County Arts Council for Ongoing Marketing to Promote Sierra County and T or C as an Arts Destination. Member Harrington seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD:

Chairman Foerstner: I was just curious about our 90 day follow up reports that we require. Are we keeping track of that. I know we are handing out a lot of money.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: I sent out emails asking for reports but it's kind of hard when the money is being spent at different times.

Chairman Foerstner: I feel like we don't get as many reports as we do awards.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Sometimes they come in. I'll send out emails again to everybody. Also, I think some reminders should go out that the next meeting is May and that's when we start looking at next fiscal year.

Chairman Foerstner: I just like the reports to be able to gauge the success of what they already did before they come back and ask for it again. If they are coming back and we have no report we don't know it's better to have some data.

Member DeMarino: Can we put on the next agenda a tracking template form. I have an idea I showed it to Gina a little bit on what we can suggest they use because a lot of them don't know, maybe we should write up a whole page on tracking, such as what are some ways to track effectively are I don't want to put that together but I would be happy to put together the tracking form because I have one started.

Member Harrington: I think that will be good so it's more uniformed and not everyone doing random things.

Member DeMarino: We would be getting the data we want instead of just the data that they come up with.

Deputy Clerk Martinez: If you get it to us, we can include it in their contract.

Member DeMarino: It's going to depend on different things for tracking.

Chairman Foerstner: But the best practices one. You're talking about 2 different, a form for tracking and then best practices thing to tell them what things they can do.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: We did the whole thing where we did the guidelines, I think it's worth resharing.

Member DeMarino: We might want to look through the guidelines again because it's been a while since we have looked at them. We have different logos we have different things, so think we need to go through and make sure it's all still relevant.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: On thing that I keep hoping for is that we put the lodgers tax application and guidelines and reimbursement forms on the city website. That way people can just go to the city website and get them and apply. I have had people come to me and say I don't even know where to get these forms I don't know where to find it and I send them to people.

Chairman Foerstner: I also think it would be nice if we could pay lodgers tax online some kind of digital way to pay lodgers' tax.

City Manager Whitehead: The city has purchased a program called iWOQ it's a city management software and it looks like it would accommodate all that. I'm in the beginning stages of trying to understand what all the process are. You can pay for business licenses, everything online so as I'm looking for ways to stretch the staff that we have that's an avenue I think we need to move to. We can try and do that. Angela and Katy have been great, I have been pushing them pretty hard on the website and we are adding a lot. For example, you can go see the current leak list. We are trying to work with in that structure to put that information so potentially we can add some of them but its still going to be a manual process for a minute.

Member DeMarino: Thank you for going electronically. I think you are going to get things far more paid for then before by making it easy.

City Manager Whitehead: I agree with you I think it need to be and the staff take the clerk's office it's just Katy and Angela right now so if a lot of those things could be available online. I would save their time of getting up and handing a form. We think there is some savings there, we just have to get it figured out. We are

6. COMMENTS FROM STAFF

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Member DeMarino: Mainstreet is putting together a tourism website. We are putting together tourism for T or C, what we were asking the city to do was create a nice landing page for the city and then if they are tourist they click on visitor and that takes them to that website so you guys don't have to touch that and then all the city stuff would be you guys.

City Manager Whitehead: I spent some time looking at lots of communities' websites and ours. Sierra County has a good link and then the link that goes to all the events around the community it's a good site. When you hear you're not doing enough and then you go spend an hour looking at that website and you see your just not getting that out there enough somehow. That is where we are at. We are going through budget right now so we will have the budget all put together hopefully soon. On the 31st I have an all day with the staff to see and then April 3rd we are doing our full budget hearing. Again, I'm here primarily to support Katy and Angela, they are taking over and handling lodger's tax. I have committed to be a resource and help and understand as well so that they feel safe with what we need to do. Eventually I might not be coming to these meetings but it won't be right away.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: I do have a friend of mine who has an Airbnb and she has always been very good about paying her lodgers tax even before we had Airbnb collecting them. She has been asking for quit some time that the city make an arrangement with VRBO because a lot of these places are on both platforms most of them, I would even venture to guess. If they are booking through Airbnb, we are getting that lodgers tax if they are going through VRBO we are probably not getting. That's something I know she asked if she could come and talk in public comment.

Chairman Foerstner: I thought all it took was for the city attorney to send them a letter letting them know it was an ordinance.

Vice- Chairman Kelley: Airbnb is fine its VRBO.

Chairman Foerstner: That's why I'm saying so that all we should have to do is send that letter to them.

City Manager Whitehead: I'll follow up, we will make notes and together we will follow up. We are missing on some aspects with Airbnb, but it sounds like we are more successful than not. The money is coming in. It sounds similar to your recipients of lodger's tax, it's not unreasonable for us to require that they report to the city. It's in the grant application it should be required that they give you 6-month report. It would be timely for it to come in prebudget so that you guys would have that. It's not unreasonable and I brought that up because Airbnb we have the same thing, we are thinking about asking when you come to do your business license we would like to see if you can give us your Airbnb report to tell us how much you contributed. I had one send me their report so I can see how Airbnb breaks it down for them then we might know. I asked the staff. I don't know what is relevant about us knowing who pays that lodgers tax like if it came from provided it was sufficient I don't know what that answer to that is yet.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Then there is the additional 1% I guess the only way to do that is manually because Airbnb is not collecting that 1%.

Chairman Foerstner: They are not? Why is that?

Vice-Chairman Kelley: Its Airbnb on their end from what I understand.

Chairman Foerstner: Is that 1% going to stay. I thought that was to do the convention center when the Lee Belle Johnson Center went away.

Member DeMarino: It was established by Juan Fuentes and Steve Green as a tax that would pay for a tourism director. That was the original intent, that's how it was pitched to us verbally. When I went back and read through it was much more vague than that and could be used for running the convention center. But that was the intention of it. It's nice to get it cause its money coming in from out of town. Nobody is complaining about it, people aren't complaining about paying for it. The only real issue is it's not a pain to pay the city because you have to go in and figure it all out.

Chairman Foerstner: It does come out on a bill as a line item and people ask what that is, I get that a lot. But they see it as a loophole around the 5% state maximum. That's what it is, it's a loophole to charge more tax and what they big picture is that T or C has the highest tax, GRT and lodgers not that we have the 6%. I just thought it wasn't supposed to be a permanent thing. I thought it was supposed to be a temporary thing to pay for the convention center and not go on forever. Is it kept separately and spent separately.

City Manager Whitehead: According to the budget there is a line item for it.

Chairman Foerstner: Spent separately so its not part of the general fund.

City Manager Whitehead: That's correct. All the lodger's tax is in one fund, and it's separated out. We don't blend it, it's all in its own cash account. I have looked at all those accounts to see what is in there. I have not dug into the language on what that was for.

Chairman Foerstner: The hotels don't mind paying it. If we collect it, we pay it, but it does make an impact on the guest. The higher the taxes are the bigger the final price is and that can impact how many nights they stay, and what size room they rent. I'm just passing on as a hotelier that people do complain about our taxes.

City Manager Whitehead: The applicants that are looking for funding for projects is that done annually.

Chairman Foerstner: No, we stopped doing the whole annual budget thing where they come once a year. They come by project, so they come through out the year.

City Manager Whitehead: So, the one before us today was for the next fiscal year.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: No, this one they are going to spend it by the end of May.

Chairman Foerstner: These projects they will spend with in the fiscal year.

City Manager Whitehead: So, it works better for these programs to come through the year not just at the beginning?

Member DeMarino: Yes, it is working better and the reason being when we did the thing in the beginning of the year all the money got allocated. Then people would come up with amazing ideas after and there was nothing lodgers' tax could do to help them because they didn't ask at the beginning of the year. This is better because it comes about and what was happening with all the money in the beginning of the year it was being spent was well. This is really much more focused and effective than doing the whole blow at the beginning of the year.

Chairman Foerstner: Yes, we can be more scrutinizing with the applications, instead when we had them all in one meeting so they where super vague applications. Now we can really drill down and nitpick things if we need to. It was really tough the first couple years when we did them all at once.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: They only thing that we ask for funding for the whole year is for things like website hosting and billboards because that continuous month by month. I can think of anything else that we ask for that's annual. Maybe we won't have that many. I know the arts council and the veteran's museum will come back for the year.

City Manager Whitehead: I also want to extend to meet with either the chairman of the board or member one on one and tell me what we are doing what you would like to do or what I need to do. I

have asked all the chairs to meet with me before I change things that may or may not need to be changed.

Chairman Foerstner: One thing I would like to see that we get is a report each time of what lodgers' tax we have to give and what has been awarded some kind of report.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: We haven't seen a financial report in a long time.

Member DeMarino: We haven't seen one since Tammy left.

Chairman Foerstner: We know we have a lot of money, so we have been awarding but we don't really know how much.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: The way it used to be was that these organizations would get awarded and they would bring the invoices to the city then the city would pay them out of the lodger's tax fund it wasn't reimbursable, then they did away with that for procurement reasons. The issue that we run into the most is that these organizations have great big ideas, and they have no cash to spend the money to get reimbursed.

Member DeMarino: Especially new ones, they have never done it before they want to do but they don't have any money.

Vice-Chairman Kelley: That is an issue that we run into a lot. We would love for people to come in and ask for funds but when it comes down to it, they don't have the cash to put out to get reimbursed.

City Manager Whitehead: If we could set up something soon for us to meet one on one so we can go over all your ideas and we can figure out how to be more resourceful.

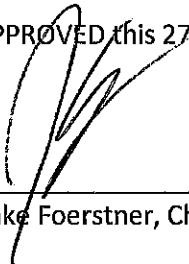
Chairman Foerstner: I good with it, I think Gina would great for that she is well knowledge with lodger's tax.

City Manager Whitehead: If after 5pm works best for you guys, I'm ok with that. Just give Johanna a call at the office and set up a time that works best for you so we can meet.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Foerstner adjourned the meeting.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 27th day of May 2025.



Jake Foerstner, Chairman

