

SUSTAINABLE GALLUP BOARD (SGB) MINUTES **Virtual Zoom Meeting, February 1, 2021**

Quorum - Members in Attendance: Bill Bright, Tracy Lassiter, Gerald O'Hara
Liaison - Elizabeth Barriga
Guests: Jeff Kiely and Pat Sheely

Items A-E were addressed; today, the Board had quorum of 3 members present. The 1/4/2021 SGB Minutes were unanimously approved.

Tracy asks to revisit the Board meeting with Maryann Ustick about the City of Gallup (COG) Environmental Surcharge Tax. Ideally, this meeting should occur prior to the March 1st, 2021 SGB meeting so the information learned could be included on the Agenda. Discussion arose among the attendees about the current legislation pending in the Roundhouse about capping lenders' interest rates at 36%. A related piece of legislation is the bill to require a mandatory high school financial literacy course. While the board and the local administration (e.g., county commissioners) have signaled support of the interest-cap legislation as an economic sustainability issue, *Tracy* mentioned she would like to see more support for the financial literacy classes.

Item F: Consultation on evolving the SGB into a SGC (Commission) (See the Flagstaff model):

Bill asks SGB members and guests what our position is regarding converting SGB into a more viable Sustainable Commission, modeled after Flagstaff's Sustainability Commission, which would not only commit Gallup more solidly to sustainability principles but would elevate the SGB's advisory role into something more influential. For example, the Flagstaff Sustainability Program offers "Neighborhood Sustainability Grants" which provide funding for *projects in food, waste, climate action, resilience, and water conservation projects, that could receive up to \$2,000 for a community project*. A similar Commission in Gallup could have people commit to sustainable principles and a variety sustainability topics. It would provide a way for neighborhoods to work together. It could include aspects like economic sustainability, addressing questions like, How do we build a tax base for sustainable programs? How can we involve Mayor and city Councilors so they embrace this project?

Jeff suggested that, if enacted/empowered, the Commission could host a forum that relates to sustainability using an internet Zoom-like platform and establish sub-committees similar to a small online Townhall. These meetings could include the rest of our town since they could be attended with a cell-phone. The Commission would need funding; perhaps the Excise Tax could be a source of possible funding. The Commission also could appoint an Oversight Group. In terms of developing the Commission, *Jeff* asked the current board members and attendees about the larger vision for any such body, asking, "Do we want to be part of a bureaucracy or a forum that discusses, researches, and brings solutions to the table, to connect citizens with Gallup? Is there value to maintain independence with City Hall, to bring forward plans and recommendations?" During the ensuing discussion, this question was raised: "If business people are included, would they have the values you want?"

Tracy stated she was excited about the Flagstaff model and sees it as an opportunity for the area to invest in Green Jobs. The SGB Board currently does not have a lot tooth with the city, and she wishes SGB members had greater influence. The City often views us as being out of our lane. For example, she said a recent concern is that we do not have a lot of say about how the Environmental Surcharge Funds are spent. Yet the board and some citizens wonder, Where does the money go? If we research plenty of environmental ideas, and involve more community members to meetings with good broadband access, there is a lot we can do. The discussion among the attendees also focused on how we can come up with a

forum. Maybe, the SGB needs to come up with a new mission? *Jeff* suggested – “Weaving a Vision for Our Community” as a theme/mission.

The SGB Board strongly recommends City Council members look and build upon sustainability issues. A Commission could serve like a hub and wheel: link people to places. We need comprehensive solutions. A Gallup Sustainability Commission could work like the think-tank “Think New Mexico” does, with bipartisan and popular support, recognition, and respect.

Bill suggests including a forum between a diverse group of citizens who make decisions. This way, despite city staff turnovers, the people will be engaged in issues, including whoever is in office. The Commission could serve as a hub for those who want to get involved, and they would know where to go. *Bill* worked with the McKinley County Commission in the past. County Commissioners complained about junk cars, but they keep the status quo. *Bill* says he is running out of things to do with the SGG; maybe a future topic could be to build upon Smart Clean Growth? Also, housing is a huge issue, as is crime and rent control. The SGB as a body - needs to recruit more people to come up with ideas and help address these issues. *Bill* is interested in learning more about the new Downtown Commons project and evidence for trends the COG needs. Such research would give the SGB the legitimacy it needs with the city, for example with respect to a mobility transportation hub.

Gerald stated that if SGB becomes an SGC, elected officials and others likely will be concerned with their loss of power/influence. He suggested additional areas where constituents could be represented on a Commission committee: education, business, and community health, to mention a few. He suggested the new body could have a companion effort, finding constituents who support sustainability topics, and invite them to come on board and be supportive, vocal, and active. He shared that MCRC assists with funded lunches for RMCH staff once per week. Glenn’s Bakery matches donated funds. He said - we need more thinking along these ideas.

Jeff mentioned that the most successful Gallup Townhall that the NMCOG held was the Water Town Hall. People shared their thoughts, discussed, and acted upon proposals, which were written into the Gallup Townhall Report. Similarly, with sustainability issues, we need to encourage people to participate and share their own thoughts. *Elizabeth* and *Bill* asks *Jeff* for a copy of the Water Townhall Report.

Tracy suggests green tech for future jobs, and create more bike trails to encourage future tourism. She also suggested contacting Martina Greybear to help establish the education component, initiating projects like creating educational student videos. The board/commission would have to find a production company to assist with such projects. She asks if we received information from Mr. John Wheeler about electric cars’ recharging stations for downtown. He had already gathered a lot of data on the costs to install these lots and had information on demand, and it could be helpful for the city to have this information as it discusses the Downtown Commons plans.

One attendee asked about how we would initiate the health aspect of the Commission.

Finally, with respect to other discussion related to the Commission’s potential funding, one idea was to apply for grant funds. For example, there is a new bill for state-based grant assistance grant funding which is hard to get awarded, and Tree City grants if the city wants to commit to it. But the idea is, there are grants to apply for to support sustainability projects.

The Commission would focus on answering basic questions about the greater Gallup area:

Who are we? and, Where do we want to go from here?

Jeff is an advisor for “Endeavor New Mexico,” a collaborative outdoor recreational model, which wants to find out what people are excited about. Then, it puts people to work on those issues. Currently, Endeavor New Mexico has about a 100 members who work together. A similar idea could work with the proposed Commission.

To help the Board grapple with all these ideas, *Jeff* recommends contacting Mr. Brandon Howe of the NWNMCOG; and, in a supportive role, Mr. Bruce Armstrong with the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation.

Tracy and *Jeff* will collaborate to create a proactive proposal to go to Mayor and City Council, with a clear statement, to encompass a range of things we would like to promote.

Item G: **Recycling Issues Update / Report:** *Tracy* and *Gerald* said there wasn't a lot of new information about recycling; the focus largely has been on the RMCH support project. The next meeting is Feb. 13.

Item H: **Clean & Beautiful Grant Report:** *Elizabeth* mentioned she is working on the current FY21 NM Clean & Beautiful grant. Because of COVID, a couple of originally approved grant budget funding items need to be re-allocated, and she is asking KGCB Board Members for ideas and quotes to be emailed to her by the end of February 2021. *Elizabeth* will include *Jeff* on future KGCB Meeting invitations.

Item I: **Annual Meeting Notice:** *Elizabeth* will email last year's SGB Annual Meeting Notice - MS Word document, to be emailed to the COG Clerk.

Item J: **Annual SGB Meeting Report:** *Bill* will compile an annual 2020 SGB Accomplishments report and share with Mayor and City Councilors. It was agreed this is an important document to create and advise Mayor and Councilor about SGB accomplishments.

Adjournment at 5:00pm.

Date Approved March 10, 2021

W. Bright
William Bright, Chairperson

ATTEST: Tracy Lassiter
Tracy Lassiter, Secretary 03/10/2021