

Lodgers Tax Strategic Planning Part 2: Tourism Infrastructure Meeting on February 26, 2019 at 1pm

Meeting called at 1:00pm

In attendance: Jeremy Boucher, Cindy Tanner, Yogash Kumar, Anna Connell.

Absent:

Motion to accept minutes from February 12, 2019 by Yogash Kumar, seconded by Anna Connell

Jennifer read the section from the previous minutes regarding tourism infrastructure/what is absent and missing, and then read the portion of today's agenda so everyone knows what we are covering.

Tourism infrastructure is something that makes us a destination, not something that is complimentary to being a destination that requires something else to bring people to town.

What is tourism infrastructure to you: right now what do we have?

RED ROCK PARK

- Needs more events
- Convention center- kitchen is dated, difficult to cook in there, it looks dated
- Is the park a tourism (someone coming from 75 miles away) asset or is it a quality of life asset for our community?
 - Cindy and Yogash- it is both, particularly for Ceremonial
 - RV Park- if you take a look at expectations around the country, how do we compare?
 - Yogash wants the City to lease it out. He doesn't like the idea of being in competition with private business that is doing a great job- Cindy and Anna agree.
- The Hiking Trails
 - Those should be continually maintained by the City and County

The reality is our hands are tied because it is a municipality and doesn't have the same options as private business.

Lodgers Tax committee is recommending exploring some kind of private contractors run: arena, rv park with trading post, convention center

- Within the agreement we would have to have something that says the park is open for trail usage all the time. How do you wrestle with parking would be an element to continue to discuss.
- In the previous leasing agreement: (early 2000's)- the park cost the city around 800K to run. The company was paid 400K to run everything, and if they couldn't make it work for that budget they would absorb the cost not the city. In the contract after a certain threshold of turning a profit then revenue sharing went back to the city (was about 50%) and the idea was that those revenues would be set aside to continue improving the park.
 - The first year the company lost 200K
 - The second year the company lost 70K
 - Year three the company broke even

- The forecast was that in year four they were going to have to revenue share with the city, but the administration changed and they cancelled the contract

If you could “polish the diamond” what would you spend money on:

- RV Park
 - Electrical updates
 - Not a full service hook up- there is water and electricity but no sewer
 - Upgraded bath houses
 - Reinforcing the RV spots with gravel instead of sand
 - When privatized- tourism display/visitors kiosk
- Convention Center
 - Needs to be gutted and completely reconceptualized
 - The building is well past its life expectancy
 - Move the convention center to downtown where the city has vacant land
 - The study to shade the park 18 years ago- cost more to shade the arena than it was to construct it in the first place

With the outdoor adventure initiatives at the state- what if we got rid of the convention center, amphitheater, etc., and looked at establishing a full-scale outdoor economy out there without all the buildings there- example of how the State Fair uses an indoor facility to have both rodeo and concerts

Question from guest: is this going to hurt those people who book because of the red rocks? Answer- we don't have people booking for the red rocks because of the conditions out there. The economic drive of being downtown would be substantial.

What is the best way forward knowing that Red Rock Park is still running for 10 plus years? (Jennifer asked for nods if the committee would like to proceed with the following recommendations)

Priority 1: RV Park – recommend contract out the management of the RV Park, and the city shouldn't spend the money on it until management options have been explored (all agree)

Priority 2: Convention Center/Arena- recommending exploring contracting that out as well. Eliminate the city's staffing and operations of the facility down the road. (all agree)

Email the committee copies of the MRA and the Downtown Redevelopment Plan

TRAIL SYSTEMS

What do they need:

- physical signage to get you from the interstate to the trails
- some kind of physical kiosk that has the information
- invest in making people more aware of where the trails are located

MAJOR ON AND OFF RAMPS

What do they need:

- Everything- they are not inviting in the least

- State conversation between Tourism dept and NMDOT to beautify on and off ramps.
- Yogash thinks this is something that should be discussed by City Council during strategic planning
- Plans were done several years ago for the redesign of the existing overpasses

Priority: If the tourism department/NMDOT open the avenues to fund overpass reconstruction that council pursue the reconstruction

ROUTE 66

What works: hotels, nostalgia, some of the signs still exist, it's the mother road

What do we need:

- Beautification project that is Route 66 themed throughout the City- creating East and West gateways from 16 to 26

DISCUSSION ON SPORTS TOURISM

Jennifer read the list of existing lodgers tax recipients and went through and named what properties everyone is using across Gallup. It was decided only two FY19 applicants currently use the athletic fields: Mario Estrada Softball Tournament, TDFL. The Manuelito Children's home 5k runs a loop around the sports complex but doesn't use the fields.

Bill: If we are going to get serious about promoting sports tourism- what are we lacking to do bring in teams from across the country: Airport.

There are three major tourism industries

- Consumer Tourism
- Sports Tourism- requires independent staff, consolidated event facility managed
- Convention and Meetings Tourism- we don't have the airport or facilities for this. We can do small regional things.

What are the next steps:

- Continue to fund events that coming to or existing in Gallup
- The Committee at this time does not recommend the funding of turfing additional fields. They recommend dedicating funding toward other outlined tourism infrastructure projects as discussed in the meeting.

Committee agrees to add a goal to our strategic plan for Jennifer: Signage

Priorities for City Council as discussed by the group for March 12:

1. Signage
 - a. On/off Ramps
 - b. All of Route 66

- c. Digital reader boards along the highway giving people event details
 - d. LED highway signs
 - e. Digital concierge
- 2. Curb appeal
 - a. Trail heads- do they look nice
 - b. On/off ramps- art/beautification pieces
 - c. Route 66 theming through the community
 - d. Maintenance plans for existing infrastructure
- 3. RV Park- explore options to privatize the operations

Updates:

Discussion on agenda item for March meeting – replacing Steve

Update on Keep America Beautiful clean up on May 4

Discussion of Travel and Adventure Show in Denver and future locations

Motion to adjourn- Jeremy Boucher

Second- Anna Connell