

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF SILVER CITY SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Grant County Administration Center, 1400 Hwy 180, Silver City, NM
May 6, 2011, 10:00 a.m.

Present:

James R. Marshall, Mayor
Cynthia Ann Bettison, District 1
Jamie K. Thomson, District 2
Jose A. Ray, Jr., District 3
Michael S. Morones, District 4

Also Present:

Alex C. Brown, Town Manager - Finance Director
Anita Norero, Purchasing Agent
Ann L. Mackie, Town Clerk
Lodgers Tax Advisory Board

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor Marshall called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and Councilor Morones read the Mission Statement.

2. Discussion only on issues relating to lodgers tax promotions. No action taken by the Town Council.

Mayor Marshall said it would be an informative meeting. He said that they were reporting back on the evaluation of the process, and would see if they could make some improvements to the process and reinforce what was very good. He said that he understood that the Lodgers Tax Advisory Board would like to make comments regarding the study from the Garryity Group. He stated that he went through the Garryity Report and pulled out some of the highlights. He said the Garryity Group had interviewed almost every applicant that had historically applied for lodgers tax and identified some key findings. He stated the objective of the meeting was to provide an overview of the Garryity Report and also to make recommendations to the Town staff. He presented a slide show that provided an overview of the Garryity Group's Town of Silver City Lodgers Tax Analysis and their recommendations. Mayor Marshall concluded the slide show by saying the Town had historically done well and had seen the highs and lows as other communities had. He said they had an opportunity to refine the application qualifications, guidance, process and review. He said the next steps were the following: to provide guidance to the Town Manager; set firm dates for awards; how much to reserve for the advertising of the whole area; how much for fulfillment; how much for events; measurable goals; agency and key members in good standing with Town and incorporation; how the Council would ensure they would make informed decisions; and other issues.

Mayor Marshall asked the Lodgers Tax Advisory Board if they would like to address any of the points in the Garryity Report, and he received comments from Sandra Hicks, Chair of the Lodgers Tax Advisory Board, and Board members Michelle Carrillo, Mitchell Hellman, and Lisa Brand. Some of the comments and discussion by the Council, the Board members, and members of the audience included: how they should support only non-profits and not businesses; how they should not just focus on events, but should be looking at things to make visitors visit here and go back and talk about Silver City; how they had only scratched the surface regarding heritage / cultural and outdoor promotions; how the wild west and mining were not well developed or promoted; how there was too much emphasis in the Garryity Report on recommendations on events; how a criteria list would be very helpful to the Board; how it was unclear what questions would be part of an exit interview and who would perform the interview; how matching funds would be tough on people, but could be encouraged, but not required; whether universal intake forms for hotels were feasible; how 75% of the funds to a convention center was unreasonable with such a small budget; how Silver City was not being seen anymore in advertising; how they should look at having a tourism committee consisting of local residents rather than spending money on a marketing firm from Albuquerque; the possibility of partnering with the County in terms of area advertising, etc.; a summary of how the Visitors Center handled fulfillment, what their expenses were, their hours of operation, etc.; how locals knew how to market the town better than anybody else, but needed to market the town year round; how the Mayor met and talked with happy tourists; how the downtown merchants were getting together to clean up downtown; an idea to have a friendly police officer walking downtown; how the Town needed a public relations plan to attract people to be part of the community; promoting the area's wild west history; how the spaceport near Las Cruces will have a major impact in this part of the state; how marketing during the shoulder and off season was key to keep cash flowing; how being on a top 10 list was good; how restricting the funding to non-profits was possibly good, but it was best to spend money per guidelines and intent; how advertising should repeat the message week after week and could be done with private money and lodgers tax funds; and a suggestion to have a paid

staff position work with a tourism citizen committee to give input to decide where money should go and to put events on national calendars of events.

Councilor Bettison made a motion to recess at 11:05 a.m. Councilor Ray seconded the motion. All were in favor, motion passed. Mayor Marshall called the meeting back to order at 11:16 a.m. Mayor Marshall said they wanted to make sure that the staff had a good idea of what to put in the Request for Proposal (RFP) so they had several issues to discuss. There was discussion of each page of the draft RFP by the Mayor and Council, the Board members, members of the audience, and staff.

Mayor Marshall asked if anyone would like to express an interest in marketing something that had not been marketed in the past. Councilor Bettison commented that they needed to look at area-wide marketing year round, to look at things broader than just events, and she encouraged people and organizations to apply to market the Town and the area. Mayor Marshall agreed. Councilor Thomson commented that he would like to see more considerations in the proposals for eco-tourism which was a type of tourism where tourists would participate with the locals for an authentic experience and an unexpected surprise. He said that the Garrity Group failed to look at the Town's Comprehensive Plan. He said that he wanted them to look at things that were important to the Town, such as Safe Routes to School, walking, and biking with particular events. Councilor Morones commented that he was more interested in the empirical evidence that showed they were doing a great job. He said that based on the discussion during the meeting that he would like to see if it was plausible to have a paid position out of lodgers tax to coordinate the efforts and ensure that fulfillment was being met, to help the Lodgers Tax Advisory Board and the recipients of lodgers tax funds, to talk with staff, and to ensure that everything was being done correctly. Manager Brown said it could not come out of lodgers tax, but the Council would have an opportunity to give him direction regarding the budget at the next Council meeting. Councilor Ray commented that he liked the discussions and he commented on a bike run event that would be at the same time as the upcoming Blues Festival. Mayor Marshall said that Councilor Ray's comments supported Councilor Thomson's comments because the bike run was a part of eco-tourism, and he gave other examples. He said they should take advantage of the natural environment and the history of the Town so there were a lot of opportunities that could be marketed. He said that he hoped to see some creative proposals and some good proposals that would continue the great events that they already had.

3. Adjournment – Councilor Bettison made a motion to adjourn at 12:48 p.m. Councilor Ray seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed.

/s/

James R. Marshall, Mayor

Attest:

/s/

Ann L. Mackie, Town Clerk