

**Sierra Vista Tourism Commission  
Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
February 19, 2015  
Oscar Yrun Community Center, 3020 E. Tacoma St.**

**Call to Order:** Ms. Cobb called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

**Roll Call:** Members present: Sabra Albritton, Amanda Baillie, Glen Cobb, Diane Erwin, Bob Gent, and Mary Tieman. Absent: Barbara Ashley. Also present, Council Liaison Henrietta "Hank" Huisking. Staff present: Staff Liaison Judy Hector and Patrice Graber.

**Acceptance of the Agenda:** Ms. Cobb offered the February 19, 2015 meeting agenda for review and acceptance. Mr. Gent made a motion to accept the Agenda, Mr. Erwin seconded the motion.

The motion carried, the vote was unanimous.

**Acceptance of the Minutes from January 15, 2015:**

Ms. Cobb offered the minutes of the January 15, 2015 Regular Meeting for acceptance. Ms. Albritton made a motion to accept the minutes, Mr. Gent seconded the motion.

The motion carried, the vote was unanimous.

**Call to the Public:** Ken Cecil, from The Mall at Sierra Vista, was present. Mr. Cecil informed members that he has met with a television station from Hermosillo, Mexico, who is interested in working with the City for advertising in specific Sonoran markets. Mr. Cecil expressed he wanted to bring this information to City staff and the commission members, and requested they entertain the possibility of partnering in this advertisement opportunity. He advised members on the many possible benefits, including opportunities to partner with local lodging and restaurants, and the possibility of coordinating with sports events.

Discussion followed and included that the Hotel Association may be interested in this joint effort, and Ms. Cobb agreed that the commission will support efforts of bringing business into Sierra Vista.

Mr. Gent inquired about a city staff interpreter so that Patterson Observatory programs could be included in partnerships/tours. Suggestions included that the Cochise College Small Business Development Center, the Mexican Consulate Office, or contacts from The Mall at Sierra Vista may be able to help with providing translator services.

The Honorable Mayor Rick Mueller was present and expressed his appreciation for the work of the commission members.

**Fort Huachuca Liaison Update:** None, Ms. Camara was not present.

**Council Liaison Update:** Ms. Huisking's updated included:

She has invited members from the Environmental Affairs and Sister Cities Commissions and the Mayor and Council members to the next fam trip to the Patterson Observatory. Mr. Gent agreed to write a synopsis of the invitation for Ms. Huisking to forward.

She invited members to attend the upcoming Thunder Mountain Games, 7 a.m., April 18, at Veterans Memorial Park and advised the Games will benefit charities, including Habitat for Humanity, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Buena Boosters Club.

She advised that Simone McFarland has started in her new position, Economic Development Director.

She invited members to attend upcoming CAC meetings where discussion will include economic development and tourism.

She advised she will be attending the National League of Cities Conference and Strategic Planning meetings.

She advised the Tourism Commission Presentation to Council will be on April 13 at 5:30 p.m.

**Staff Liaison Update:** Ms. Hector's update included:

There has been a significant increase in the numbers of visitors at the Visitor Center, and there has been a great response to the literature/holder project.

She advised that at the Arizona Tourism Quarterly Roundtable Meeting she learned that AOT will be cutting approximately 4 1/2 million dollars per year, which is roughly one-third of their annual budget. She advised travel writer partnerships and group media tours will be among the programs eliminated.

She advised that other states saw an increase in budget and will increase their travel advertising.

Discussion included the significance and impact these budget cuts will have on local and statewide tourism.

She advised there is a full-time writer position open in her department.

**New Business:**

**Commission Presentation to City Council, April 13:** Ms. Cobb suggested and members agreed to schedule an additional meeting to work on their presentation.

Ms. Hector suggested that members refer back to their Strategic Planning Meeting goals when working on their presentation. Members discussed and agreed to stay with the top three recommendations that were determined at their Strategic Planning Meeting.

Ms. Baillie agreed to facilitate at the next meeting and Ms. Tieman agreed to help.

**Commissioner Application, Susan Tawney:** Members discussed upcoming possible vacancies and agreed to advertise vacancies and seek additional applications. Ms. Cobb requested this item be put on the next regular meeting agenda. Ms. Huisiking suggested members consider requesting she put this item on the May 14 Council meeting agenda.

**Tourism Commission Information Booth, March 7:** Members discussed items the Visitor Center will supply including Official Visitor Guides, Spanish Official Visitor Guides, history booklets, birding guides, a visitor map pad, and copies of the City Commissioner Application

form. Ms. Graber advised she will deliver those items to Sabra at the Mall of Sierra Vista the week before the event. Mr. Gent advised he will bring photos. Ms. Tieman advised she will request the booth space be submitted for the Tourism Commission.

**Meeting Agendas: Establishing policies for agendas and item assignment:** Ms. Baillie advised she is not satisfied with the way the agenda is constructed and the way items are assigned.

Recorder, Ms. Graber, suggested that because there currently is no procedure that members have agreed on for agendas, that they discuss and agree on a procedure to follow.

Mayor Mueller suggested that a procedure that works well for other commissions is:

- 1) The recorder constructs a draft agenda according to information currently available.
- 2) The recorder emails the draft agenda to members, asking for agenda requests/changes to be forwarded by two weeks before the meeting date.
- 3) The recorder forwards the draft agenda, along with all agenda requests received, to the chairperson.
- 4) The chairperson edits, approves, and constructs the final agenda and emails it to the recorder.
- 5) The recorder emails the final agenda to members and to City Hall for posting.

Members agreed the procedure outlined by Mayor Mueller is acceptable, and that that will be the procedure for future agenda preparation.

#### **Old Business:**

**Recommendations to Council/Strategic Planning and Objectives:** Ms. Cobb referred back to the September 30 Strategic Planning list. Ms. Baillie reviewed the top three items on the list:  
1. Explore permanent funding mechanisms for investing in tourism programs, advertising, etc.  
2. Look at how to get convention facilities in the community. Share with Hotels? Joint, public, private partnership. Attract conventions that are regional.  
3. Relocate the Visitor Center to a better location. Maybe partner with the Chamber of Commerce.

Members discussed and agreed to continue with the top three objectives voted on at the September 30 meeting.

Members agreed that for each recommendation they will need to present reasons why it is an important objective, and identify ideas on how to meet the objectives.

Members agreed to schedule a Work Session for March 10 at 11:30 a.m. at the Chamber of Commerce to continue to work on their recommendations.

**Tourism Partners Meeting:** Ms. Erwin advised the next quarterly meeting will be February 24, 2 p.m., at the Holiday Inn Express. The guest speaker will be new Council Member Craig Mount, and the topic will be the importance of business tourism and the relationship to economic development. She reported she has received 17 responses for attendance.

Members also agreed if they have suggestions for guest speakers they will submit them to Ms. Erwin, and that members will attempt to determine a list of possible future speakers.

**Commissioners Fam Trip:** Ms. Albritton reviewed that members will meet at the Outback for dinner and then to the Patterson Observatory on February 25.

Ms. Huisking agreed to forward a head count to Mr. Gent for the other two commissions and Council.

Ms. Albritton inquired if members were interested in taking a fam trip to Ramsey Canyon Preserve. Members agreed that is a good idea, and Ms. Albritton advised she will contact the Director to inquire about the possibility of scheduling a special guided walk on Tuesday, April 14.

**Requests of Commission:** Ms. Erwin advised the billboard on I-10 for the Chrome Pony Rally is up, that she has been very successful in partnering with local businesses, and that the event will be advertised in two motorcycle magazines.

Mr. Gent expressed he is looking forward to the upcoming Patterson Observatory fam trip. He advised the next Public Night will be on February 26.

Ms. Baillie advised her next radio show, Friday Report, will host Mary Jacobs and Judy Hector and review the importance of branding.

Ms. Huisking thanked Mr. Cecil and Mayor Mueller for their input and attendance, and thanked the members for their work.

Ms. Graber reviewed the draft agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. Gent expressed the importance of the reopening of Garden and Sawmill Canyons on Fort Huachuca and members agreed they would welcome an update on Fort Huachuca matters.

Ms. Hector updated on the branding surveys and encouraged members to pass that information on to others.

**Next Regular Meeting:** April 16, 2015.

**Adjournment:** 3:35 p.m. Ms. Albritton made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Erwin seconded the motion.

The motion carried, the vote was unanimous.

  
Glen Cobb, Chairperson

- Expand tourism marketing to Mexico and other international areas. (2)
- Develop a "Best of Sierra Vista" awards. Consider going beyond City boundaries to the entire region. (2)
- Establish a concierge service for prospective visitors. (2)
- Support the City hiring an event planner to coordinate big events. Bring events to Sierra Vista that are in other areas.(1)
- Support development of a rail line from Benson to Sierra Vista. (1)
- Support the existing plan to grow the Henry Hauser Museum, and insure it is an interpretative center. (1)
- Support more music events in the community. (1)
- Attract an affordable ground transportation service for visitors. (1)
- Develop pre-set tours with transportation, and then target international visitors.(1)
- Change perception for visitors and residents that it is difficult to get on Fort Huachuca. (1)
- Find ways to grow events that are already here, such as Southwest Wings, etc.
- Identify ways in which tour buses can come and stay in Sierra Vista, not just in outlying communities.
- Attract things to do in the community, such as theatre, nightclubs for dancing, etc.
- Advertise Sierra Vista more. Get the Sierra Vista name better known, in Arizona especially.
- Support the City's branding effort. From branding, establish new identity.
- New entry signs to Sierra Vista.
- Support future City Center.
- Attract a commercial airline service to the airport.
- Capitalize on Military history to attract visitors.
- Target Tucson and Phoenix residents more for tourism.
- More money for advertising.
- Consider a grant writer for City to grow money for tourism and related programs. Explore more grants.
- Add more shared use paths.
- Identify opportunities for multi-sports, multi-discipline events. Make the events annual so people come back. Mountain biking, swimming, marathon, etc.
- Consider permanent spectator seating for pavilion.
- Explore a Film Festival using Cinemark.
- Make the escort program for international visitors wanting to go on Fort Huachuca more formalized.
- Grow kids programs and activities so visitors with children have things to do.
- Encourage Hotels to have bikes for use or rent.

- Support establishment of a true community calendar so that events do not overlap each other.
- Theatre festival (not just Shakespeare).

## **OVERARCHING THEMES:**

The ideas generated by the Tourism Commission largely fit within the following categories:

- ➔ More advertising and promotion of Sierra Vista to potential visitors.
  - Pre-set tours for international visitors.
  - Attract more from Phoenix and Tucson.
  - Better image/brand/name recognition.
- ➔ Enhanced attractions, events, and opportunities to increase interest in Sierra Vista.
  - More events to draw visitors (wine festival; music; sports; theatre; film); expand existing events (SW Wings, etc.); hire an event coordinator.
  - Attract more businesses to provide services/activities visitors prefer (RV/camping; night clubs; outdoor dining and retail; children's activities; museums; theatre)
- ➔ Infrastructure improvements that would aid in making Sierra Vista more attractive to visitors, events, etc.
  - Convention facilities.
  - Visitor center relocation/improvement.
  - Sports fields for regional tournaments; Veterans Park improvements for large events.
  - Multi-use paths, "Rails to Trails," other hiking.
- ➔ Increase both public and private investment to achieve the goals.
  - Permanent, expanded public funding source.
  - Grants and corporate sponsorships.
  - Partnerships with other organizations.

The Commission should use their next meeting to review all of the ideas and themes, and begin to finalize a few objectives that the City Council can consider in their March, 2015 strategic planning process. Based upon what the Council decides to include in their plan, the Commission can then develop a work plan to appropriately assist the staff leader who will be assigned to work on any objectives that relate to tourism attraction.