

**Sierra Vista Tourism Commission  
Minutes of the Work Session  
March 10, 2015  
Sierra Vista Chamber of Commerce, 21 E. Wilcox Dr., Sierra Vista**

**Call to Order:** Ms. Cobb called the meeting to order at 11:43 a.m.

**Roll Call:** Members present: Sabra Albritton, Barbara Ashley, Amanda Baillie, Glen Cobb, Bob Gent, and Mary Tieman. Absent: Diane Erwin. Also present: Staff, Patrice Graber and public, Mr. Tom Reardon.

**Recommendations to Council/Strategic Planning and Objectives:**

Ms. Baillie opened discussion and reviewed the top three items determined at the September Strategic Planning Session. Members agreed it is important to submit their ideas to Council so that they will be included in future strategic planning.

Members discussed the three items, and agreed on specifics to include for each item. Ms. Baillie agreed to prepare a summary of the discussion and submit the summary to Ms. Cobb and Ms. Graber.

Ms. Baillie's summary is attached and is to be included in the recorded minutes.

Members agreed that other items that were discussed at the September Strategic Planning Session may be included on future meeting agendas to allow for further discussion.

Members also discussed the focus of the commission, and agreed it is important to determine and identify their future role.

Members discussed that their recommendations will be presented to Council on April 13, and that Ms. Baillie will inquire about how to format their recommendations.

**Adjournment:** Ms. Cobb adjourned the session at 12:24 p.m.

  
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Glen Cobb, Chairperson

Attachment: Tourism Commission Work Session Notes

Tourism Commission Work Session  
Tuesday, March 10, 2015

**Top 3 recommendations of the Tourism Commission re City of Sierra Vista Strategic Plan**

1. Explore funding options for investing in tourism programs, advertising etc.
2. Explore how to bring convention facilities to the community.
3. Relocate the Visitor Center to a more visible location.

**Recommendations on how to move forward:**

1. **Funding**
  - a) Seek out grants, including funds earmarked for specific areas of tourism, such as promoting dark skies, wildlife, outdoor pursuits etc. Utilize both in-house and outside expert grant writers.
  - b) Lodging tax – Utilize a larger portion of the lodging tax to specifically fund tourism marketing.
  - c) Explore co-operative advertising partnerships with local businesses and organizations, such as The Mall at Sierra Vista, Chamber of Commerce, Hotel Association, EDF, SEAGO, Cochise College, Cochise County, Tombstone, Bisbee, private sector.
2. **Convention Center**
  - a) The Commission believes bringing a convention facility capable of handling larger, regional events is a top priority for both tourism and economic development. As a community we are turning events, business and money away because we do not have the resources necessary to host conventions larger than 150-200 people. Rather than build a new, cost prohibitive facility from scratch, we recommend the City explore existing options within the community. The former Palms convention center is already set up to handle large events and could possibly be purchased as part of a public/private partnership. It could also be rented for local meetings, weddings, banquets etc. and could be a possible location for the Visitor Center as well. The Commission recognizes that parking is limited, but the vacant neighboring lot could be purchased for additional parking. Other funding options could include offering naming rights to the building (e.g. The Lawley Convention Center).
  - b) Additional locations: the former Sutherlands store (good location, large space, good parking), which would help generate traffic for surrounding businesses; the former Apache Middle School.
3. **Visitor Center**
  - a) The Commission feels the current location of the Visitor Center is not tourist friendly – it is poorly signed and “off the beaten track”. Many

visitors go to the Chamber first. We recommend the City explore other, more visible locations, such as on Fry Boulevard or along N. Garden Ave.

- b) The City could explore a possible joint relocation with the Chamber of Commerce. Many visitors are familiar with Chambers as local tourism offices and tend to go to the Sierra Vista Chamber first for information. A move for both entities to the same building would attract additional traffic for the City and the Chamber.
- c) The Commission recognizes that budget constraints currently prohibit such a move, and recommends that better signage be installed as a cheaper, short-term option. The City could explore leveraging private sector sponsorships of the signs to help cover costs, which would in turn promote local businesses.