



**Tourism Advisory Board Meeting
May 8, 2017 | Noon**

Individuals Attending:

Tourism Advisory Board

Beverly Babb, Board Member
Ron Davis, Board Member
Lynn Horner, Board Member
Pat Jernberg, Board Member – *absent*
Rick Klein, Board Member
Larry Tucker, Board Member
John Yergert, Board Chair
Pam Denahy, Tourism & Events

Additional Attendees

Bette McFarren, LJTD
Ed Vela, City Council

Minutes & Financials

Minutes were distributed and approved. Revenue collected in April 2017 was \$14,473.³⁴, up from \$12,088.⁷⁰ in April 2016. It is important to note, a February non-payment from one hotel is reflected in the April numbers.

Visit La Junta Website

Pam presented the proposed Site Map and Wire Frames for the new website to the Board, as presented to Pam by Barnhart. The Board approved both with minor questions/edits that Pam will follow up with Barnhart. Next steps will be the Mock Ups which will be received within a couple weeks of Wire Frame approval.

Welcome Center

There was discussion concerning how to move forward with the Welcome Center, specifically from Ed Vela saying that the Tourism Board needed to report a specific plan back to City Council on. Minutes from the March 6 City Council meeting are attached to these minutes for clarification on City Council's recommendation.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of La Junta Tourism will be Tuesday, June 14, due to conflicts with schedule.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – March 6, 2017

NEW BUSINESS A. Should Tourism Board move forward on a Welcome Center/Temporary Welcome Center at the Chamber of Commerce?

Mayor Horner: At the last Tourism Board meeting, there was some concern about moving forward with the Welcome Center. I get the feeling among most of the Board members that they would like to move forward with something in the Chamber of Commerce, to work on something on a smaller scale and see what we can make happen. Before we would be going out to get bids to do some of the work, the Board felt the need to bring it back to Council and get input whether you are supportive of that arrangement. From Ed's letter, he is still in support of using the SECOM building. Or the other is, with the fact that they are in the process of working with a company on building a new website, maybe there's not a need for an actual Visitors Center. I would like Council to give some direction to the Tourism Board.

Council Member Pruyn: Who would be paying for the remodeling? Is it going to be Tourism, City Council or joint? (Rick: It would come out of Tourism.) Is there some kind of guarantee, would the Chamber be open to keeping it there for a certain amount of years because there will obviously be some funds. I think I would be okay with putting it in the Chamber, but I would like for there to be a cap of money. (Rick: The estimates are around \$5,000.)

City Attorney Malouff: It's easy to say that the Tourism Board is going to pay for it but that's not true. It's easy to say that we're going to cap it or we're going to create "this" and that's not consistent with the mechanism of Tourism tax dollars. Here's the process: the Board will present a proposal on it, I don't know if it's going to meet with your review, but if it exceeds that limit that you've created, you folks have to approve it. I just want to clarify that there is nothing that is done that says that Tourism is going to pay for it, maybe that's the idea, maybe that's what we're anticipating they're going to recommend. It starts with them and ends with you (Council). Regardless of the amount, I encourage you not to judge and allow them to do what is required of them by our rules.

Council Member Pruyn: I just wanted to know if the Board felt that City should pay from its funds, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

City Attorney Malouff: The City has established a process, that process governs everybody else.

Council Member Vela: Also in that cost factor, it's not factoring in the cost of in-kind services provided by the City. (Rick: About \$600.) As for me, I have always disliked the idea of using the Chamber office because of various negatives that it has in determining what a good Center is for. The only reason I've been told for that is because we want to start out small. Are you starting off small for numbers? If you're looking for numbers, let's get a good location. The SECOM building is a much better location, it's bigger, it's affordable, and it's already City property. The most we would pay for start-up is utilities and telephone. So, with that in mind, I did some rethinking and we're not after the numbers. With today's technology, nobody uses maps anymore, they Google it or you use the maps on your phone.

Vela continued: The fact of the matter is at the last Council meeting, we spent \$13,000 on a website, which could be, in today's world, be called a Welcome Center. Let's see how many hits we get on that. Let's see how long that works because that's the tool most everyone uses for finding sites to see and places to go in various towns. So, I decided, abandon the SECOM building, unless you're looking for numbers. If you're looking for numbers, I would say go with SECOM better because ample parking, good location, high visibility and all kinds of other things that don't have to do with the Chamber's location. So, if you want numbers, go there. If you're not looking that and just need a place for people to go to find places around our area, I would say we should just use the website. That's the best investment for the Tourism Board.

Council Member Pruyn: I think one other point about why a physical location is important we haven't mentioned and that's if you go into a place to use their restroom, you feel the need to buy something. There is a bonus where people can stop, use the restroom, fill a water bottle and maybe start talking about stuff we've got going on.

Council Member McKenzie: Did we not cover all of this in a work session? Did we not give them direction? It seems to me that the only thing that has not changed is that Ed won't give up on his point of view. (Vela: I just said I wouldn't go for SECOM, I'm for the website.) The thing is had a work session and went through all of this. (Vela: But the website wasn't part of that work session.) We discussed and gave the committee to go that direction. We're wasting our time here. We just keep coming back and going over and over and over and never make a decision. If that's what this Council is about, then it's a pretty fruitless cause here. We gave the Tourism Board direction; I would assume that we still do as a majority. (Vela: The Mayor said we had three options today.)

Mayor Horner: Those are the ones that are out there. What would be your response Rick? From the Tourism's response at the last meeting, I'm not sure that they got the sense that that was the direction. (Rick: We were getting that there's difference of opinion on Council. We want to make sure what we're doing before we make a decision. We had estimates done, but we will go out for bids if you guys say yes.) I agree Frank, that was my personal take, is that we said that's the direction we wanted to go but when we got into that Board meeting. A lot of the Tourism Board didn't necessarily know that that was the direction we needed to go. I said I'd come back and bring it up again. Is that the sense of most of you here on Council that during that workshop, that was the direction we said we'd encourage Tourism Board to go?

Marty McCune, 90 Circle Dr.: I recently came across some information that there is going to be a Regional Summit held May 17-19. It's supposed to be a collaboration of all the public entities and businesses in the entire Southeast Colorado region. I'm wondering if this decision should be held until June to allow participation by the Tourism Board and Council to see what efforts are going to be put forward and what potential grants or other money might be available to help support any decision with the Tourism. I would have loved a website, but it's also nice, when you're not familiar with an area, to have a spot you can walk into and have a friendly face to give you recommendations. (Vela: All the hotels in the area have various brochures about the sites to see around the La Junta area, the Barista has quite a few, and also the KOA Campground has tons of information about La Junta. That is where you would get your information if you're a visitor.) Not everyone who comes into town would know to go to those locations for the information. If you have a Welcome Center or Tourism Center available, that would be what people are looking for to find their information.

Cheryl Lindner, 16 E. 22nd St.: I understand and appreciate the comments about websites because that's a lot of comments out there regarding tourism, but, within my place of business I can give people options on hiking trails and how to get there and other things they can do along the way. You could find this information on a website or the internet if you go through them. You can get this information through interaction through personal conversation. This also allows people to feel a little more welcome in the community. I personally would encourage us to move along those lines of a Center. A decision needs to be made and move forward before another season goes by.

Council Member Pruyn: A prime example of this would be, if you're going to go and hike the Dinosaur Tracks in the middle of July in the middle of the day, you almost need a face to face with someone to say I wouldn't do that because you're going to get caught out there with no water or not enough water. (Vela: Part of the reason why they gravitate towards you Cheryl is because they can't find the Chamber.)

Beverly Babb, 1120 W. 12th St.: I agree with the two ladies comments, a physical location would be great. (rest of comment was inaudible, mic not being used)

Joe Ayala, 1514 San Juan Ave.: Originally I was against this whole Welcome Center idea; however, I think you do need a physical location as well as the internet. The Chamber is a place where you can get brochures, but that's not a Welcome Center. A Welcome Center is a place where you can talk to someone where you can find out things about your town. An idea might be to do something at the Otero Museum.

Robert Fowler, Coalition: We've done that tourist thing. We did a lot of research on the internet, but the best information we got was from their Welcome Center. We found out interesting things. Places the locals go to. A physical place with a physical human being is very important.

Council Member Goodwin: The lady from the state was here and this would be a private tourist stop, so there's no state funds available. I believe that we have directed the Tourism Board to start small, get started up and get going. Let's quit playing around. I'm tired of hearing the back and forth here at Council.

MOTION TO REQUEST THE TOURISM BOARD TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE CHAMBER, SET UP A LITTLE SPOT, WHICH WILL BE MANNED BY VOLUNTEERS: Goodwin

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: Vela asked how do you define small? Velasquez said that that should be their decision. We don't need to micromanage them. Malouff said the Tourism Board has to develop a concept and a plan. They have to approve that plan. Anything from Council, other than for them to start developing a plan for a Tourism Center is the beginning of micro-managing. Vela said that he didn't see it in the minutes. Also, if the Tourism gets with the Chamber, they have had several meetings before and there has been an uncomfortable level of the dynamics that are going to be involved in staffing that facility. Pruyn said that it was voted to allow the staffing to come in.

WITHDRAWAL OF MOTION: Goodwin WITHDRAWAL OF SECOND: Velasquez

MOTION TO LIMIT DISUCSSION AMONGST COUNCIL AND LET THE TOURISM BOARD DEVELOP A PLAN FOR A TOURISM CENTER WITH THE CHAMBER AND COME BACK TO PRESENT: Velasquez

SECOND: Goodwin

DISCUSSION: There was no further discussion.

VOTE: Those voting YES: Velasquez, Goodwin, McKenzie, Horner, Pruyn

Those voting NO: Vela The motion carried 5-1 (Eckhart absent)

CITY COUNCIL MEETING -- May 15, 2017

B. Tourism Board – Chamber of Commerce. Rick Klein reported that the Tourism Board went back out and got bids for the La Junta Chamber of Commerce building from Valley Plumbing, Cummins Carpet and Valerio Painting coming to a grand total of \$5,162.00. We were instructed to go out and get the bids, finalize them and come back to Council. What's the Board's pleasure?

Council Member Vela: Do you have any documentation that the Chamber is acceptable of this?

Pam Denahy: We have spoken with the new President but we have not signed a contract yet.

Council Member Pruyn: I have a question about the restrooms, even after we do all of these improvements, it's still not going to be handicap accessible, which becomes an issue when we're inviting the public.

Council Member Vela: Also, because of new technology, and we have that wonderful website that we paid \$14,000.00. I really don't think we need a Visitor Center. Even if we start small, the important thing in my estimation is to start with location, location, location. That's a poor location. The only good thing about locating down there is we have \$5,000 of local employment here. The SECOM building, which I used to advocate before the website came on, if you want a trial and start small that would be a great place to start because of it's location. There's no expenditure outside of making signs. That would be a great place to start because there's ample parking and its right behind the big engine on the hill. That's the only way I would support a Visitors Center. I would stick with the technology because we can do better with our money.

Council Member Velasquez: Mr. Mayor, I think we need to adhere to the recommendation of the Tourism Board. I think the cost is relatively low and its doable.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THIS BID AND MOVE FORWARD WITH THE TOURISM BOARDS RECOMMENDATION FOR THIS PROJECT: Velasquez

SECOND: Goodwin

DISCUSSION: There was no further discussion.

VOTE: Those voting YES (Velasquez, Goodwin, McKenzie, Horner, Pruyn, Eckhart)

Those voting NO (Vela) The motion carried 6-1