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THE SILVER CITY LODGERS' TAX ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Newly appointed members present are: Larry Sullivan, community representative; and Sandra Hicks, lodging industry representative. Also present: Lisa Brand and Glenn Griffin, tourist industry representatives; Nancy Johnson, lodging industry representative.

Board members met at the Palace Hotel, reviewed nineteen requests, up eight from the previous year, and made recommendations for disbursing the \$185,000 available for letting. All funding was voted on and was unanimous. That amount is up from the Council's awarding last year of \$180,000. This was the current Lodgers' Tax Committee's eighth meeting since 2002. The committee strongly believes in accountability and wants to know how last year's recipients spent their Lodgers' Tax funds. Few groups complied with last year's request from the committee and City Councillors to account for how the funds were spent. And even fewer gave credit to Silver City Lodgers' Tax and the Town of Silver City for the \$180,000 received last year.

New this year was Gila Regional Medical Center's request for \$4,500 for a certified athletic trainer's supplies to support the Tour, Rodeo and baseball. The committee felt that GRMC should look for support and donations for contributions of supplies through its network and area stores. Lodgers' tax currently pays for EMTs and police for events in Silver City. A unanimous vote, five no votes, with no funding recommended.

The Mimbres Region Arts Council requested \$25,000 for promotion of their year-round events. They do a lot of regional print promotion leading to heads in beds and a good turn-out. Coordination is good with the Chamber of Commerce. No credit was given to Lodgers' Tax for previous funding on any of MRAC's literature or promotion. Nor was there any accounting of how previous funds were spent. They should be awarded \$15,500.

The Silver City USSSA (Baseball) is asking for \$12,000. This is their fourth request. Since their first request, fast and slow-pitch baseball has grown tremendously. They fill a majority of the 530 motel rooms available in Silver City, and also the surrounding area, five times a year. 20 teams with 15 players each with four in the family means 1,200 people at each tournament. The board recommends \$6,000. Ron Parra will give credit to the Lodgers' Tax (LT) on his web site, promotion and t-shirts. He is coordinating well with the Chamber as they too see sports tourism as a growing market. He will also account for LT funds received.

Tour of the Gila, Inc. is requesting \$15,860. Once again board members had trouble with paying for race staff salaries and racers' entries. No credit was given anywhere to the LT for funds received even when asked to credit LT, nor were spent LT funds accounted for by the Tour. The board recommends awarding \$10,500 as they do fill heads in beds.

Silver City MainStreet Project requested \$15,200. With their niche marketing almost everyone wants to check out historic downtown Silver City. The board suggests awarding \$10,000. While they do get co-funding they did not mention LT in their promotion, gave no examples of their promotion and did not account for last year's LT funding.

New to LT is the Red Paint Powwow requesting \$5,000. This event is packing the hotels. They have a good presentation with accounting and coverage received. While this event brings tourists in January, could it expand to more year-round events? They will give credit to LT and will account how LT funds were spent. \$3,500 was recommended as this group has a good track record.

Also new is Music n Parks promotions requesting \$8,000. While it is a good idea, the committee is asking them to re-apply next year so we can see their advertising and promotion skills first. LT already pays for downtown park use, security, and sanitation. Management fees, which we don't pay for, were not broken out as there was no accounting of how funds were to be used. They would have to coordinate with the Chamber and groups on scheduling. \$0 recommended.

New is the Silver City Farmers' Market, requesting \$3,000 for advertising the more than 20 Farmers' Markets and promotion of four special events held from May until October. The market brings a lot of people downtown with half their visitors from out of town. They are also considering a Sunday market with non-perishable items for tourists. The committee recommends \$1,500 for advertising and suggests they create a web site with links to the Chamber.

Another new application is from the La Capilla Project with \$25,000 requested. LT recommends \$500 for a brochure promoting La Capilla with a usable map including how to get to the walking trail from area motels. The brochure should be stocked at the Chamber and area motels. In the future a web site with links to the Chamber should be considered.

Southwestern New Mexico Tourism Initiative is requesting \$25,000 to expand regional tourism. While the LT Committee feels this is beyond the scope of LT, we ask that the Chamber is coordinated within this kind of broad effort. With no budget spelled out, LT recommends \$0.

Also new is The Mimbres Paquime Connection, requesting \$15,000 partly for a quarterly magazine bringing awareness of the problems of border crossing, cultural and national resource preservation, and improved cross-border infrastructure. Unfortunately, no magazine sample was supplied and there was no budget. LT recommends \$500 for the development of a website with links to the Chamber promoting The Mimbres Paquime Connection to Mexico as a side trip to tourism in Silver City/Grant County area. Also, coordination with the chamber is a must.

New is the Bakshi School of Animation and Cartooning's request for \$22,000 to equip their private business. More like a small business loan, this request is not appropriate for LT funding, with the committee recommending \$0.

The Mining District Historical and Tourism Committee is asking for \$5,000. Though a new group, they already have a brochure and have scheduled tours. They need a website with links to the Chamber and tours on a regular basis as visitors do want to see the "Old West" and our mining history. Better coordination and cooperation with Phelps Dodge is needed before all the old mines are removed. Underground mine tours in Bisbee, Arizona are a tourist draw. LT suggests \$1,500 to also print more requested brochures.

Copper Country Cruisers' Club is asking for \$2,000 to promote their August car show. \$1,000 is recommended for brochures, advertising and a car show website with links to the Chamber. We also would like them to put on more than one show a year to help them grow and fill more beds.

The Southwest Activities Network Society (SWAN) request is for \$5,000. They were awarded \$300 last year for out-of-town advertising but no examples were received. We need to see a budget and past ads. Once again a website tied to the Chamber and all other Lodgers' Tax recipients is recommended. The events did fill up area rooms. This will be the last year LT will fund SWAN until the events grow, accounting is done, credit to LT, recommendations are followed and examples of advertising are received. \$500 is recommended.

The request for \$9,200 from San Vicente Artists of Silver City was for printing and distribution of their 2007-2008, 20,000 color Artist Guides. It is widely distributed and well received. Percentage wise this group raises the most money internally and then uses that money to fund its artists' brochure. We would like to match their fund raising with \$7,500 recommended by the board to help them continue their collaborative work. Tourists come with their guide in hand, looking for a particular style of art. We need accounting and credit to LT. Example of coverage received was included. This is local artist economic development through tourism.

Fort Bayard Historic Preservation Society is asking for \$3,000. They should include examples of past LT funded advertising, copy and coverage received. Credit should be given to Silver City Lodgers' Tax. They are co-funded and have multiple event and tours. The committee supports historical tourism, as visitors do come for the "Old West." \$1,500 is suggested.

The Gila Conservation Coalition is requesting \$5,200 for the Gila River Festival. This used to be the Gila Bird and Nature Festival. This May they brought in 1,200 participants, with 20% staying several nights. This is a good environmental connection to our great outdoors. The committee wants to encourage more eco-tourism. Last year's recommendations for print advertising in El Paso, Albuquerque and Tucson and a website connected to the Chamber were followed with great results, with coverage received provided. This groups is filling rooms with out-of-towners. Good presentation with accounting, and even credit given to Silver City Lodgers' Tax. They co-partnered with Main Street and did an in-town art event. Recommend \$4,000 to continue expanding the good work. This group should be our poster child for doing things correctly. Perhaps year-round eco-tours on the Gila?

The Silver City Grant County Chamber of Commerce requested \$145,000 of the \$185,000 allocated for Lodgers Tax. The Chamber is seeing record-setting months, every month. Regional magazine advertising is bringing in tourists. Marketing and consulting at \$1,500 a month, \$18,000 a year still seems high. But \$4,500 for graphics work spread throughout town does makes good economic sense. We did get accounting of how LT funds were spent. We are still asking for credit for LT funds in promotion. \$121,000 is recommended, but if the \$9,450 LT funding rolled-over from last year's LT funds are left, we would like to see them go out as part of a second letting or be given to the Chamber. They are our regional network on tourism and they are making a difference. The Chamber is working directly with many of our LT recipients to find co-funding, to expand cooperative advertising, and to attend trade-shows for greater economic impact with our funded groups.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Griffin, Chair.