

**Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board
Draft Minutes October 19, 2021**

I. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

Members Present: Linda Deck, Chair; Katie Bruell, Matthew Allen, and Julie Ruud, Members.

Council Liaison: David Reagor

Others Present: Kelly Stewart, Staff Liaison; Linda Matteson, CMO; Cory Styron, Director Community Services; Joannie Griffin, Sunny505; Melanie Pena, Discover Los Alamos; Dianne Marquez, PROS; Barbara Lai, Administrative Support; and Perry Rutherford, IT.

Call to Order

Chair Deck called the virtual meeting to order at 12:05 pm.

Approval of Today's Agenda

Ms. Deck made a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Ruud seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Bruell made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2021 meeting. Mr. Allen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Wren Propp, resident, commented on concerns regarding short term rental regulations.

II. NEW AND PENDING ITEMS/PROJECTS FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

Welcome

Chair Deck welcomed Julie Ruud, General Manager of the Comfort Inn and Suites to her first meeting as a new member of LTAB. Ms. Ruud updated the Board on the status of the improvements at the hotel.

Chair Deck and Ms. Stewart will work together to schedule field trips to the various lodging sites in the County.

Board Vacancy Status

Chair Deck said that there is still one vacancy for the community at-large representative. The board members were encouraged to recruit for this position. The member must be resident.

Hybrid Meetings Format

It was noted that all meeting attendees, excepting County employees, were participating via Zoom and that the Zoom option was essential to ensuring a quorum and attendance from the rest of the team. Technically, the meeting had a physical location (in this case, the Council Chambers) so that it could be streamed and recorded, however, it only allows for a static shot of the dais. The board conveyed a desire to see the individual County staff members when they presented.

Later in the meeting, Deputy County Manager Linda Matteson announced that, due to a rise in COVID cases, all Council and Boards and Commissions meetings would be held via Zoom only through December 31, 2021. County staff will explore hybrid remote and in-person options that provide all members to see each other while meeting the public streaming and recording requirements.

Annual LTAB Presentation to Council – October 26

Chair Deck thanked Ms. Stewart for preparing a power point update for the Council presentation on October 26. Ms. Stewart will send a PDF of the power point presentation to the LTAB team following the meeting.

FY22 Work Plan Goals Review

Ms. Stewart reviewed the status of the following goals/objectives presented in the FY22 LTAB Work Plan.

- **Short-Term Rentals.** Ms. Stewart reported that a short-term rental program study is budgeted for FY22 and that the Economic Development Division's Housing Manager, Margaret Ambrosino, will lead the solicitation for a consultant to conduct the study that will consider input from residents, including those who rent rooms or homes using short-term rental platforms like Airbnb, as well as the resources required to implement and manage a program to identify and collect Lodgers' Tax from short-term renters, as well as managing the compliance around licensing, permits and neighborhood impacts. Board members and Councilor Reagor made comments on the issues surrounding short-term rentals.
- **Data Audit.** Ms. Stewart explained the goal of developing a new tool to assess the effectiveness of Los Alamos County's tourism marketing efforts. Sunny505 (aka Griffin and Associates) was just approved as the tourism marketing services agency of record at the September 28 Council Meeting. Per the terms of the new contract, Sunny505 has contracted with a data firm called SeeSource to use geofencing around specific areas (e.g., the Lab, hotels, attractions) using cellular data to learn where visitors are coming from, where they are visiting and in which order. Ms. Griffin explained that this will allow us to distinguish between the Lab visitors and tourists.
- **Customer Service Training.** Ms. Stewart and the visitor centers contractor, Melanie Pena, director of LACDC's Discover Los Alamos program explained that the Visitor Journey A2D program, developed by LACDC several years ago is not currently available. LACDC is seeking to reestablish contact. Ms. Stewart stated that, under

the new visitor centers operations and management contract, the vendor will be required to provide a viable option to train visitor center staff and volunteers, docents at other attractions, hotel front desk staff and any other employees and residents that interact with visitors.

- **Outdoor Recreation Initiative.** Ms. Stewart explained the inclusion of outdoor recreation, trails, and the Historic Walking Tour in the Plan and their importance to generating tourism.

New Projects

No new projects to report.

III. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

Community Services Department (CSD)

CSD Director Cory Styron reported on the direction of new sports programming and the outdoor recreation movement. He also discussed bringing new businesses into the County that may support activities in which tourists would like to partake.

IV. MONTHLY REPORTS

Councilor Report

Councilor Reagor raised some concerns on the topic of short-term rentals. He mentioned parking issues in neighborhoods as a priority concern.

Tourism Metrics

Lodgers' Tax Revenues

Chair Deck reviewed the revenue situation with the Board and said that all payments are coming in on time in FY22 and is trending upward to match FY2019, pre-COVID.

Tourism Marketing Report

Ms. Griffin with Sunny505, addressed the tourism marketing activity highlights. She reported that Sunny505 staff attended the New Mexico State Fair on September 16 and the Albuquerque International Balloon Festival on October 2 and 9 to hand out Los Alamos-branded giveaways and encourage trips to and itineraries in Los Alamos, connecting with an estimated 500 people at the State Fair and nearly 7000 at Balloon Fiesta.

She, and Ms. Stewart, have been working very closely with the Tourism Department to apply for the annual FY22 New Mexico True Cooperative Marketing and Advertising grant for a variety of print and digital advertising, enhanced social media (including YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram), and video and photo content development for a total value of \$103,000. NMTD awarded Los Alamos the total amount of the grant in late July, as well as an economic hardship match due to the decrease in Lodgers' Tax during COVID resulting in a 1/3 (Los Alamos) to 2/3 (NMTD) match.

Ms. Griffin reported that one of the CoOp grant projects—a video/photo shoot at the Tsankawi section of Bandelier National Monument, Shipheh in the Canyon and Pajarito Mountain—was canceled due to weather conditions. The photo shoot will be rescheduled for May. However, seasonal advertorials have been placed in New Mexico Magazine and Albuquerque, The Magazine in November 2021 and April 2022 to entice the in-state drive market to make Los Alamos a recreational destination.

Visitation by Attraction/Visitors Center

Ms. Pena presented highlights of the monthly visitor trends report, pointing to Bandelier as the leader with highest attendance since 2015. Los Alamos visitor centers visitation is trending lower than in 2020,

Due to time constraints, Ms. Stewart summarized relevant information on the following items:

She said that Los Alamos County has taken over ownership and production of the visitor information kiosks, placing a total of 28 kiosks at attractions, the Lab and other key tourist stops throughout Los Alamos and White Rock. Each kiosk holds quantities of eight different rack card-size brochures designed to help visitors orient themselves upon arrival and to plan their visit.

Ms. Marquez reported that Parks, Recreation, & Open Space (PROS) facilities have been very busy with many visitors from out of town. She said that the Aquatic Center has hosted a full schedule of swim meets and that the Golf Course has hosted an unprecedented number of tournaments since other courses have been closed due to staffing shortages. The new locker rooms at the Ice Rink are completed and staff is busy getting the ice rink ready for opening in November.

Ms. Stewart encouraged everyone to read the County Manager's Monthly Report to stay updated on the many activities underway. She encouraged Board members to take the Mobile Food Vending survey issued in partnership with LACDC.

Chair Deck reminded the members to attend the October 26th Council meeting to hear the LTAB update and Ms. Ambrosino's presentation on short-term rentals.

The next meeting is scheduled in November 16 and will be held via Zoom.

Chair Deck adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.