LODGER'S TAX ADVISORY BOARD
CITY OF TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NEW MEXICO

REGULAR MEETING

ACTION MINUTES

MONDAY MARCH 26, 2015

TIME & PLACE: The Lodger’s Tax Advisory Board of the City of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, met in Regular Session in full conformity with the law and ordinances of said Board, at the Commission Chambers, 400 West 3rd Street of said City on Thursday March 26, 2015 at 4:00pm

PRESIDING OFFICER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Julie Durham, and Christina Bruch acted as secretary.

ATTENDANCE: Upon Calling of the roll, the following members were reported present:

   Julie Durham, Chairperson
   Cydney Wilkes, Vice-Chair
   Janice Gray, Member
   Hans Townsend, Member

QUORUM: There being a quorum present, the Board proceeded with the business at hand.

Board Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Member Janice Grey moved to accept the agenda.
Seconded by Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes.
Motion Carried unanimously.
APPROVAL OF MINUTES FEBRUARY 26, 2015:

Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes stated that she had a comment on the minutes. She stated that there was something written about what she said and she wanted to clarify on the last page in the second to last paragraph, she meant last year.

Chairperson Julie Durham approved the amendment to the minutes.

Member Hans Townsend stated that he wanted to change a paragraph where it states he was talking about GRT. He wanted that paragraph omitted from the minutes.

Chairperson Julie Durham approved the amendment.

Member Hans Townsend moved to approve the minutes with changes.

Member Janice Gray Seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES MARCH 9, 2015:

Member Janice Gray mentioned that on the minutes, there is a sentence that is incomplete. She asked the secretary to correct that.

Member Hans Townsend wants to reword one of the paragraphs where he was talking about recipients projects being approved last year. Hans stated that he will reword it and let the secretary know the changes to be made.

Member Hans Townsend motioned to hold the approval of the minutes until next meeting so changes can be made.

Member Janice Gray Seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC: No Public Present

DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION-DATE FOR LODGER’S TAX WORKSHOP:

Member Janice Gray mentioned that while she was at the City Commission Meeting on Tuesday March 24, it was stated that City Manager Juan Fuentes is the one that sets the date for the
Lodger’s Tax Workshop. She stated that Juan has to be present at this workshop, so it has to fit into his schedule. She also mentioned that the board can set a date but it may be changed.

Chairperson Julie Durham suggested that they make a recommendation for the date of the workshop. She stated that it’s getting late and they need to have the workshop as soon as possible.

The board made a recommendation to have the workshop on Wednesday April 15 at 4:00 PM.

**DISCUSSION- ACTION FROM COMMISSION REGARDING 2016 GUIDELINES:**

Chairperson Julie Durham turned to floor over to Member Janice Gray to discuss what the Commissioners said about the guidelines.

Member Janice Gray stated that she was at the City Commission meeting and presented the guidelines to the Commissioners. She stated that there were several recommendations from the commissioners. She thinks they will like the idea of the point system because they would like to see some more reliable tracking as to how the money is spent. She said that Commissioner Green wants the Board to get away from giving Lodger’s Tax money for one day events that are only a couple hours long. He reminded her that the point of Lodger’s Tax is to “bring heads to beds”. She stated that an event lasting only a few hours is not going to make people stay the night or weekend here. She suggested that this should be something to bring up at the Workshop.

Member Janice Gray also stated that Commissioner Green wanted the recipients to be more responsible with their tracking system. She said that the Commissioner would like to see a two to three day event. She mentioned that she had told the Commissioner how difficult that could be especially since we often have a shortage of hotel rooms during big events.

She stated that the Commissioners passed the guidelines because they were on a short timeline. She also stated that the Commissioners increased the amount of money that has to be spent out of town for advertising to seventy-five percent, rather than sixty percent. She said that they mentioned again that the purpose of Lodger’s Tax was to bring people in to town.

Member Janice Gray said that the Commissioners unanimously agreed that they could not do away with the quarterly reports. She said that the quarterly reports are required and that they
want to see them. She said that they did amend the quarterly spending report and do away with the percentage status of tax active during reporting period. She said that she explained to them that it was difficult to come up with a percentage.

She then continued by stating that the Commissioners want more detail on the reimbursement requests and wants to see where and how they spent the money. She stated that it is something that needs to be addressed at the workshop.

Member Hans Townsend stated that they can see that information on the invoices.

Member Janice Gray said that the Commissioners don’t get to see the invoices and that is why they are requesting more information. Member Janice Gray suggested writing a note on the reimbursement form about needing more detailed information.

Chairperson Julie Durham suggested that this should be an item to look at for next year’s guidelines since the Commissioners didn’t actually change it this year.

Member Janice Gray restated that it would be a good idea to mention this at the workshop so that the applicants could have it in mind and know what is expected.

Member Hand Townsend asked if the Commissioners mentioned anything about relief on having to pay a bill up front.

Member Janice Gray said that they did discuss it but did not make a decision. She stated that she did not have a suggestion for this topic and she realizes it’s a burden on the volunteers. She said that she has heard of vendors working with the organizations for payment.

Member Hans Townsend stated that bigger organizations have large amounts of money set aside for certain projects because they have that kind of income. He said that the smaller organizations that don’t have a lot of income don’t have that ability.

Member Janice Gray stated that the Commissioners were in agreement with the other changes that have been made to the guidelines like the electronic tear sheet, the rejected payments being able to be re-submitted. For recommendation.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she thinks that procedure could be expanded to large payments and make it so that someone from the public could come forward with a project idea and the board could recommend that the City Commission
address that idea and could possibly be approved. She stated that this would be expanding our ability to respond to specific situations without having negative feedback and that would give another buffer zone so that issues could be addressed.

Member Janice Gray agreed and stated that this could always be a possibility.

Member Hans Townsend stated that it would be a way to curb frustrations.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that it would be more of a procedural thing to be used to help the volunteers and the public.

Member Janice Gray stated that Commissioner Green also pointed out that if an organization had a huge advertising campaign, they might want to partner with New Mexico True rather than come to the City for a small amount since the City doesn’t have a bunch of money. She stated that the Commissioners were very specific about the advertising needing to be outside of New Mexico. Member Janice Gray mentioned that they mainly work with non-profits in the City and that there is not a lot of money to give them.

Member Hans Townsend stated that part of the problem with that is the timing of things because New Mexico True requires all their applications before Lodger’s Tax is distributed. He said that it means when they can’t get the money from Lodger’s Tax, its already too late for them to try with New Mexico True for that year. He stated that this is not their fault; it’s just how the timing falls.

Member Janice Gray stated that once they get the workshop done, things will be done way before June.

DISCUSSION/ACTION- PROCEDURE FOR RESCHEDULING MEETINGS:

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she has been getting a vibe from for the last year is that the ordinance states that they are to have quarterly meetings. She said that quarterly meetings would be the least burden upon the Clerk’s office. She stated that meeting quarterly would force them to be more organized.

Vice-chair Cydney Wilkes stated that she sees the benefits but she also did see that with the monthly meetings that they had a continuum with ideas, but had trouble remembering what happened at the last meeting when they were quarterly. She stated that it seemed to be more helpful when they were trying to change the guidelines and allocating Lodger’s Tax to be meeting monthly. She stated that there was a visible change
between the two meeting times.

Member Hand Townsend suggested meeting every two months.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that where they run into a problem is in the ordinance it does say quarterly meetings. She stated that the proper procedure would be to have quarterly meetings and then call special meetings when needed. She also stated that when they were working on the guidelines, they did not meet regularly; they just discussed it on their own. She stated that she sees where everyone is coming from with the different meeting times.

Member Hans Townsend stated that the gap between their August and February meetings was too long.

Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes said that she did not want to make a change, she just wanted to note what she observed.

Chairperson Julie Durham suggested that by next meeting to set up the four quarterly meetings. She said that way they can give notice to everyone to have the meetings scheduled. She did note that it worked well not having so many meetings to talk about the guidelines because she was able to meet with certain members separately to discuss them. She also suggested that the board could have committees of two people to discuss certain things and then present them at the meetings.

Member Hans Townsend made a motion to arrange a quarterly meeting schedule at their next meeting.

Member Janice Gray seconded.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she had another topic to talk about with this regarding rescheduling meetings and the procedure to do so. She stated that they needed to have a more orderly way of letting people know that the meeting needed to be canceled. She gave an example saying that after they scheduled the quarterly meetings and if something came up in Juan’s schedule and they needed to cancel the meeting, then notifications needed to be sent out to reschedule. She noted that she thinks it can be done in a more orderly manner once they set up the four quarterly meetings. She also noted that there hasn’t really been a time where they had to cancel a meeting for lack of board members.

Member Janice Gray mentioned that Juan had said at one of the previous meetings that as chairperson, she has the right to call a
meeting. She suggested that as chairperson, if there is something that comes up she can contact Juan or Linda and reschedule.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that this is something that needs to be worked on and to keep it on the agenda. She also stated that they will definitely schedule their four quarterly meetings at the next meeting.

**DISCUSSION- UPDATE OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS THAT MAY IMPACT THE BOARD:**

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she added this item to the agenda because she was talking to the City Clerk, Judy, and wanted to get a comparative list of lodger's tax paid for the year. She stated that Judy had told her that the State no longer gives out that information. She also stated that she was directed to the State website to find that information and she could not find it anywhere. She stated that she would like to see either the reports of Lodger's Tax paid or the regulations stating that they cannot disclose this information. She said that she wanted to see what kind of impact Lodger's Tax is having on the City.

Member Hans Townsend also stated that he doesn’t see how you can work if you don’t know how much money is there.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that this information should be public record since it is a tax and taxes are public record. She also stated that since it is public money there should be accountability for it.

Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes stated that it must have been a misunderstanding because Juan stated at the meeting the day before that all this is public record.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that this needs to be included in their next meeting agenda packet.

**DISCUSSION- PERFORMANCE OF PR FIRM CURRENTLY RECEIVING FUNDS:**

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she had seen Griffin & Associates reports and she had understood that there was supposedly a two percent increase. She stated that she was disappointed in the report because it was not very specific. She said that she wasn’t sure if was a good move to have voted for half the Lodger’s tax to go to the PR Firm. She also stated that she wasn’t really sure what Griffin & Associates has done since they haven’t really had any specific reporting about the money they had appropriated for that. She stated that she understands that the money has been given to Griffin & associates. She also stated that something important that Janice keeps reminding her is that they want people from out of state to come here. She said that she thinks it would be better if they target the audience to get
results. She stated that she’s not a professional, but that is her understanding of how it works. She stated that two percent is not much of an increase.

Member Hans Townsend stated that they are not the only people trying to improve the visitors. He said that the reports don’t include the visitor’s guide that they ship out, and they go out of state. He said they can’t tell what is working to bring in people. He stated that the two percent can’t be pinned down to a certain thing that brought those people in. He stated that the PR Firm can’t claim the whole two percent increase because it might have been another group that brought in part of it.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that it means almost things were flat in her book. She stated that they would have to get up to five percent before she would be impressed. She stated that she feels they should have an out of state PR person come in and use that money. She stated that she thinks the City is underserved by Texas; they get people from in state just fine to come to town. She stated that it would be really good to get a marketer that specializes in military bases because she thinks there is a lot of things in this area that could bring people in from Fort Bliss and other military bases in Arizona. She stated it would be really good to be marketing in their local papers and things like that. She stated it would also be for tourism only. She said that she thinks we are also underserving El Paso because she would run into people that said they didn’t know anything about T or C from El Paso. She thinks maybe a marketing firm in El Paso would be good.

Member Hans Townsend Stated that a friend of his worked at Fort Bliss, and she would take the business directory to them to advertise. Hans stated that they have to market to places where people have time and money, so they decided to pitch to Midland Odessa because all the oilfield workers have lots of money and get a big break between work weeks.

Chairperson Julie Durham said that she feels that is what the PR person should be doing and she didn’t really see anything in her report. She also stated that the report was not sent to the Lodger’s Tax Board which was a big omission on her part.

The other Board members agreed.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that the PR person has never been to a Lodger’s Tax meeting. She stated that she had to go to a meeting that the PR person was at just to meet her. She stated that she’s not really impressed with her work last year. Julie stated that the first project they had was to put banners up on light poles and the PR person got the wrong size.
Member Hans Townsend stated that she's not even advertising out of town by doing that.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she's just not been impressed with her work, or reporting. She thinks that since half the Lodger's Tax budget is going into the PR person's pocket they should at least be getting the reports. Julie stated that she received the PR person's reports from Sophie. She thinks that this is something that needs to be addressed with Juan. She also stated that this should be an item kept on the agenda until it can be addressed with Juan and see what the PR firm has done, if anything. Julie also stated that if they were more organized, they could have brought that up in the workshop to advertise in out of state newspapers.

Member Hans Townsend stated that the PR firm is not using everything to get a better target.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that the PR Firm did not have a good list of targeting areas.

Member Hans Townsend stated that when the PR person started, they showed her the business guide, and showed her the digital copy and told her that she could use it and it's never been used.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she thinks it's a total waste of time to have your PR person go up to some symposium and have a little booth and travel fair. She feels that's the way of the past.

Member Hans Townsend stated that online is where people search for stuff and get information. He stated if someone needs to buy a washing machine, they go online and do research, if they want to go boating, they do research to find the best places to go. He stated that he thinks they need to be chasing the online presence and getting more information out there.

Chairperson Julie Durham stated that she thinks they put a section in the guidelines that said they will be paying for maintenance and updating of our websites.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD: Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes stated that there was a meeting the night before in the Commission Chambers with the City staff and Lodging folks in town to talk about the new Convention Center tax, which is one percent. She said that this has been passed as an ordinance and will take effect April 1st, 2015. She stated that she just wanted to mention that and make sure that they all know
what it is. She stated it is not a Lodger’s Tax; it’s to benefit the Civic Center on Third. She stated it’s to benefit the brick and mortar, as well as the operations and administration of the tax and try to refurbish the Civic Center. She stated that what she understood was that the Convention Center fund has been shifted to be applied to the Lee Belle Johnson Center to make repairs to that and prepare it for the visitor’s center. She also stated that which in turn would leave the Convention Center Tax fund empty, so therefore they need to be replaced.

Member Hans Townsend stated that is not what was said.

Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes agreed and stated that it is something that she heard from a very reliable source. She stated that Juan did say something of that nature at the meeting yesterday. She also stated that it is not a onetime tax, it will continual thing and has been added and it is not a Lodger’s Tax. She stated that it is only for Lodger’s but will not be part of the funds that the Board allocates every year.

Member Hans Townsend stated that it is purely for the Convention Center.

Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes stated that it is call the Convention Center Tax and it is something that Cities can do and is allowed by the State.

Member Hans Townsend stated that his only objection is that they don’t get any reports now on what’s spent for brick and mortar. He also stated that the Golf Course and the Civic Center are the two places that they are always spending money on but he never sees the improvements. He thinks that he should have someone be able to explain what happened with the Lodger’s tax share.

Vice-Chair Cydney Wilkes stated that Juan said that all of this is public record and you can request it. She also stated that John Hendry was talking about one of the times he went to a Commission meeting and someone had a long list of things that he wanted to be addressed. She stated that this could be a way of dealing with the complaints about the Golf Course and other places of interest. She also stated that the public was questioning what needed to be done at the Civic Center. She thinks that the board as public members should state what they think the funds could be used for.

Member Janice Gray stated that she knows they are trying to come up with the money to do the area behind Lee Belle Johnson Center. She thinks that some of this money will be allocated for that. She feels that it really needs to be done. She stated that will
be the center of the City. She mentioned the proposed plans for it and said that they are beautiful.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the Board,

"Member Janice Gray moved to adjourn"

Vice-Chair Cydney Wiles Seconded.

Meeting was adjourned.

APPROVAL: Passed and approved this 30th day of April, 2015, on a motion duly made by Janice. And seconded by Cydney, and carried.

Julie Durham, Chairperson