

Minutes from the March 09, 2021 Special Commission Meeting

March 09, 2021
9:45 A.M.
Esmeralda County Courthouse
Commission Chambers
233 Crook Ave., 2nd Floor
Goldfield, Nevada

DRAFT
Approved
4/20/21

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL.**

Delon "De" Winsor -	Chairman
Timothy Hipp -	Vice-Commissioner
Ralph Keyes -	Commissioner
Robert Glennen -	District Attorney
Cheri Bickham -	Clerk of the Board

2. ****DISCUSSION ONLY:** Diversifying the Local Economy and Generating Additional Tax Revenues through Tourism. Presentation by Kat Galli. (Tim Hipp)

Kat Galli came up and stated she is the Tourism and Events Coordinator for the Town of Tonopah. She said Commissioner Hipp invited her to come in and give an overview of what they've been up to there for the last six years that she's been working for the town.

She said in 2015 she attended the Annual Rural Roundup, which is an extremely informative and vital tourism conference. She said that after the conference she was approached and asked why they don't ask for grants for tourism. She didn't know those were available.

Since then, they have been doing more and more for tourism and measuring how effective it is. She said they also had a promotional video produced and brochures for the town done.

Mrs. Galli said her position was created in 2017 because the town board understands the importance of tourism for the Tonopah economy and that you have to spend money to make money.

On her website, they had 140,000 visits, and 100,000 were about the Clown Motel.

She said Tonopah has increased its room tax collections by 39 percent in only 4 fiscal years.

Mrs. Galli also handed out copies of her job description for the commissioners' review.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT.** (Discussion only. Action may not be taken on any matter brought up under this agenda item. It must be placed on an agenda, at a later meeting for action.)

None

4. ***ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Keyes made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Hipp seconded the motion. All in favor: Motion carried.

Esmeralda County Commission Tourism Presentation
Kat Galli, Tonopah Tourism & Events Coordinator

Good morning! My name is Kat Galli and I am the Tourism & Events Coordinator for the Town of Tonopah. I was invited to give the commission an overview of what Tonopah has done in recent years to increase tourism and stimulate economic growth.

In the past, tourism was not a focus for the Town of Tonopah. In 2015, I attended the annual Rural Roundup. For those of you who do not know what the Rural Roundup is, it is an extremely informative and absolutely vital tourism conference. I was impressed by the information that was presented and realized that the Travel Nevada staff is very approachable and helpful. Shortly after the Rural Roundup, a Travel Nevada staff member reached out to me to ask why Tonopah had not applied for grant funds in many years. Quite frankly, we did not even know we could.

Tonopah started our very modest approach at advertising during fiscal year 2015/2016 with quarter page ads in the Nevada Magazine. The Town Board at the time questioned why this was needed, whether it would really make a difference, and how we would measure that it did. So, we started a visitor survey to collect data to prove our advertising was working.

Fast forward a few years. We have increased our advertising, not only by size and frequency, but also in all different avenues from print to radio to social media, always using measurable data to decide what works and what does not work. I constantly monitor website and social media statistics.

In the past years, we had a promotional video produced, brochures developed for the Town, Old Cemetery, and Mining Park, and assisted the Central Nevada Museum in their new brochure development, we had banners printed, and our website completely updated. Our website once was the example at a Rural Roundup of how not to do it and is now described as a “superbly executed website in Rural Nevada” by Chuck Nozicka Consulting based in Sacramento, California.

My position of Tourism & Events Coordinator was created in 2017 because the Tonopah Town Board understands the importance of tourism for our economy and that you “have to spend money to make money”. Between 2017 and 2018, the position was held by Shari Bombard. She now works for Travel Nevada.

Tonopah has received over \$130,000 in grant funding from Travel Nevada since fiscal year 15/16. Because the Town was able to save this money on our marketing cost, we were able to use our funds for other important projects such as renovating our Convention Center and having a state-of-the-art AV system installed. We have built a stargazing park as well as a visitor center on Main Street. We are also updating the fairgrounds and arena.

Tonopah has increased its room tax collections by 39% in only four fiscal years. We even exceeded the collections we had during the SolarReserve construction when all rooms were booked by construction workers.

Local investment has increased in recent years as well. Business owners are seeing Tonopah's success and are willing to start their business here. A list of businesses that have opened since we have started actively marketing Tonopah as a tourism destination: Hometown Pizza, Rejuve Health and Wellness, Belvada Hotel, Brewery Hostel, Comfort Inn, Vanwood Variety Store, Sagebrush Dreams Flowers and More, Mike's Bikes, Mike's Rubbish, Tonopah Trading Company, and Sweet Poppy. Many existing businesses have updated their properties or made other investments. It is a ripple effect that keeps going.

Tonopah has also been accepted into the Nevada Main Street Program and is investing \$25,000 annually into the Tonopah Main Street Program. Tonopah Main Street assists local businesses with business development, grants, and financing. They assist property owners in finding potential renters or buyers. They beautified downtown with new, self-watering planters and additional benches.

What do you think Tonopah's number 1 attraction is?

We had 140,000 visits to our website last year. Of that, 100,000 clicked on the Clown Motel "sub-page". In tourism, you need a unique draw, something that a traveler cannot get closer to home. Where can they find a Clown Motel? Only in Tonopah. Where can they find a car forest? Only in Goldfield! The only other such attraction I am aware of is in Texas. Whether you like the quirky attractions or not, they are the draw, your "anchor tenant". So, I promote "the heck out of them".

You have amazing small shops and restaurants in Goldfield, you have an historic district, you have haunted buildings, and very dedicated volunteers who want to ensure that Goldfield stays alive. You need to tap into that. You also have RV parks and hot springs in your county. Promote them. RV'ing and outdoor recreation are big drivers in tourism and especially right now due to Covid. The Goldfield Chamber has done a fantastic job creating a website and establishing an active social media presence. But a Chamber is always limited by their resources, whether it be membership payments or the time that volunteers can commit to the organization. I do not have a lot of information about the Goldfield Chamber, but I cannot imagine they have enough funding to do regular marketing campaigns. A little goes a long way. Goldfield already has all the assets you need as a tourism destination. You just need to make sure travelers are aware of them.

According to NDOT, Goldfield has 2,400 cars coming through every day. If you can get even a small portion to stop, spend time and money, you are helping all your small businesses, and in that, the County, as you will increase sales tax. The next step is to increase room tax collections. But you can only do that if travelers do not see you as a "short bathroom break" as they used to view Tonopah. The longer you can keep them in your County, the more money you will generate. And I have only really talked about Goldfield so far and not even mentioned any other assets in the County. Tonopah will continue to promote our town as a destination, you are on the way to Tonopah. All you need to do is ensure they know about your assets. Travel Nevada and Nevada Silver Trails, our tourism territory, are great partners who will share your message and help you be successful.

Why involve the County and not just let the Chamber "do its thing"? You want to have a say in the message. You want to "control" what is being done, what is promoted in which way. You want to be sure that you have one designated contact that partners like me, the State, the Territory, but also journalists can reach out to and get the necessary answers from. The more difficult it is for a journalist to write about you, the less likely that you will get that free exposure.

I hope this information about “how we did it in Tonopah” can give you some food for thought about potential opportunities for your County. I have brought copies of my current job description to give you an overview of all the other responsibilities I have. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time!