



NEW MEXICO

TOURISM DEPARTMENT

New Mexico Tourism Commission

Q3 – FY24 Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 18, 2024, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

The Grant County Veterans Memorial Business and Conference Center
3031 Highway 1080 E, Silver City, New Mexico 88061

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 1:03pm by Chair Jennifer Kimball.

Roll Call:

Commissioners Present:

Jennifer L. Kimball (Chair)

Bill Lee

Tania Armenta

Emerson R. Vallo

Belia Alvarez

Commissioners not present:

Ben Abruzzo

Approval of Agenda: Commissioner Armenta moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Alvarez, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from previous meeting: Commissioner Alvarez moved to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Lee, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairwoman Kimball asks all members of the public to introduce themselves: *Jacqui Olea*, Silver City Community Development Director. *Mike Berry*, Grant County Lodgers Tax. *Sabrina Pack*, Skywest Media here in Silver City. *Ed Graves*, NMTD, NM Magazine. *Helene Holguin*, Grant County Lodgers Tax Committee. *Gabe Holguin*, owns the Historical Hanover Outpost. *Taylor Lawrence*, NMTD, Marketing Programs Manager. *Dan Monaghan*, NMTD, Video Services Manager. *Holly Kelley*, NMTD, Tourism Development Director. *Sharla Lefkovitz-Oberg*, Silver City Main Street project, which includes the Silver City Visitor Center and the Silco Theatre. *Jennifer Olsen*, I write semi regularly for NM Magazine, my editor told me to come by and I also work with Tour of the Gila. *Christie Ann Harvey*, I'm the executive director of the Greater Luna County Economic Opportunity Council. The DBA is the council. I'm the designated Edo for Luna County, so I'm representing them and I'm also a board member for the New Mexico Border Authority and I'm representing them here. *Laura Phelps*, Freeport-McMoRan, mining company here. I work closely with Priscilla and Christy and we're working on some projects in the mining district and in Silver City and across Grant County. *Christina Ortiz*, USDA under the Rural Partners Network. *Kevin Perez*, Regional Manager in training for Heritage Hotels and Resorts. *Priscilla Lucero*, Director SWNMCOG, represents Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna counties, representing all of the municipalities, counties, not only regionally but statewide. I really have made a point to advocate for the most rural and frontier in the state. Thank you for coming, fortunate to have you here today and I hope that you find your trip here rewarding. *Jennifer Saavedra*, Administrative Services Director for the NMTD and serving as legal counsel for this meeting. *Sonya Rivera*, Secretary Adam's assistant, NMTD. *Lancing Adams*, Acting Cabinet Secretary with the NMTD.

Tourism & Economic Development in Southwest New Mexico – Priscilla Lucero: Thank you for the opportunity. I always like to speak from the heart. I want to talk about what's happening regionally, what's happening in how we moved our region forward, but also some of the challenges that we're facing, and I think we have much more opportunity than anything. I want to just start by saying just a little bit about myself. I was born and raised here. I've been assisting local governments, school districts, water districts, acequias, you name it. I've done it in every field you can imagine, from

recreation to legislative to the water and wastewater facilities, anything that in my opinion could create that economic development. We are funded by the Economic Development Administration on the federal side. They've been a partner since the early 1970s, even before we became Council of the Governments in the state. We've been doing this work for a long time. I'm the third director in this organization, but I've been with the organization for 37 years. I've been there, seeing it all and really have appreciated it, not only in my region as a person who grew up in poverty, to really know all the amenities and the beautiful landscapes of New Mexico. It teaches us about how much our rural kids don't have an opportunity to stay in their own regions. This is something I just wanted to articulate to you because I think we need to know more about how we're engaging youth so they can come back and get back to work in our communities because so many times they don't know what is available to them. I'm a perfect example of that. Now for me to say that I am giving back to this community for as long as I have is something that I could take with me forever. It takes a lot to develop the trust of people to ensure that you really have their best interest at heart. I can say that and there's nothing more rewarding for me. I'm just going to go around the region a little bit and then I want to talk a little bit more about some of the things that we're seeing from these different avenues and trying to be more creative. We can't do anything without partnerships, and it takes every sense of partners, public and private partners, nonprofit partners, all partners because everything we do means economic development. When I first started with the Council of Governments a lot of my work was focused on water and wastewater, if we don't have our basic needs met, we can't help you with anything else, right? We've done a lot of it. In the process of doing that, I'm now at the point where I'm seeing that some of these systems now are coming back and needing rehabilitation again or we're seeing that they're to the point where there are more challenges around ensuring that we have adequate water. That's something that we're focusing on as well and how we do that. We're seeing more opportunities in regionalization to create those economic opportunities. We will continue to do that, and I'll speak about that in one of my projects.

Catron County – Catron County has so much recreation just based on the number of square miles that we have in the Gila National Forest. One of the things we're seeing as kind of a booming economic driver in Catron County is the Cosmic Campgrounds and how many people flock to the area just to be able to gaze at the stars which we take for granted every day. We're seeing improvements of more lodging to these rural areas for people who are coming here for camping, hiking, biking, fishing and hunting. Artists coming down here and doing art specifically in there, there's a lot of money in that. The unincorporated areas as well as the incorporated areas are trying to improve their infrastructure; to be able to bring more forward regarding the history of the community, we're seeing that around Quemado. Then if you want to go to Pietown and have some of the best pies, they also now sell cookbooks to bring back home, and it just goes on. The Gila National Forest provides everything from fishing to camping, playing in the water to picking pinon or acorns and everything in between. When we look at that we don't realize the value, the greatest value for me from the forest service side is the mental health piece. So as the mom who had a mental health issue, that was the one thing the doctor recommended most was keep her outdoors, keep her outdoors as much as you can. That really brought us a lot of relief, to help build that mental state, to have a much more level parenting and family dynamic. I think about that when I think about kids and families and what we're going through, it's how do we do more around those things around nature. You have a Senator that really promotes outdoor classrooms. Just to learn from that, because I think if you go back during COVID times, you're going to find that most of our communities didn't feel the impact as much, #1 because we're resourceful and resilient, right. Also, because many people flocked here for the tourism of the Gila National Forest, hiking, biking and all of those things. We're seeing much more in Catron County in that regard and continue to put on the infrastructure side.

Hidalgo County – Major things happening in Hidalgo County, just recently there was a NM Department of Transportation award of about \$68 million to build South of Lordsburg, which is an electrical vehicle charging station for those big semis. That's going to be huge to Lordsburg because I also feel like that's a way to be able to create tourism within the community. Most people don't know we have a tilapia fish farm in Hidalgo County that is utilizing their geothermal waters to be able to create some economic development. They're grown to a specific size and then they're shipped out. But the other thing we're seeing specifically on the Highway 9 corridor, which is down in Animas, is again, a lot of universities and astronomers flocking to that area from the dark skies. I would have never known that there's university telescopes out there being monitored remotely and used remotely virtually so that their students could benefit from their activities. Those are amenities that as a local person never really knew existed. Again, we're seeing those kinds of things happening. Another thing I want to mention to you is what New Mexico Tech is doing. New Mexico Tech is a former Playas community with a copper mining company that was sold. It was bought by New Mexico Tech with assistance from Senator Bingaman providing some of that money to be able to purchase it. What is going on down there is pretty amazing, they have a huge grant from the Department of Defense to train military, every kind of training you can imagine from first responder training, slot training, some type of very high secret stuff as well paratrooper training. They're also doing training on vulnerabilities and what happens when we have an issue with somebody trying to crack into the water system through the Scala system or what

happens when someone tries to get into the electric grid, those kinds of things. What's important to take note, they have 4 Afghanistan villages out there where they're training these military personnel about what it's like to live in those environments. There is a lot also filmed there. They've done at least one superhero movie, which was I think Batman. What New Mexico Tech has done, and this is just one small thing that can happen in a rural community to make change. When they had 65 deployed National Guardsmen, they have homes that these National Guardsmen are living in. Every one of those homes had some tablets or pictures or something on the wall referring to some of our amenities in Southwest New Mexico. If they had a couple of days off, they could tour the catwalk, they could tour the Gila National Forest, they could go to City of Rock State Park, they could go hiking, they could go biking, they could go birding. Birding is a really big thing in Hidalgo County as well. Those are small little changes that New Mexico Tech in education has decided to change to create economic opportunities in our region, which I think is pretty creative because I don't think I would have thought of that. It's creating more tourism, bringing families back to New Mexico, most of the military personnel are not from New Mexico, they're coming back after realizing they've never seen such clean air and beautiful blue skies. They've hired an economic and community development person to foster those opportunities around the community because they have to be community supportive, and they have to build that trust with the community in order for them to move forward. They have 29 employees currently and we expect that to increase and we're going to start to see huge, I think increased levels of security as they get going on more research. But the one thing they do have is they have a lot of water. I think we're going to see ways that they can collaborate with the city and county to create those opportunities to visit.

Luna County – Both in Hidalgo and Luna County, we have two ports of entry. I don't see those ports of entry slowing down. We have a brand-new port of entry on the Columbus side and one on the Palomas side as well. It's amazing how many tourists are coming through there just to visit New Mexico and some of our great amenities around the Gila National Forest. One of the things the Village of Columbus is trying to do is create a trail system for those individuals who are at Pancho Villa State Park or visiting. They can also take a trip down to Palomas to spend the day out there. If we move to Deming, I don't think it's any news to any of you about the creativity that has come about from the city of Deming, it's been amazing. Many people utilize the lake for the purposes of building community, whether it's community from within or if it's community from the Interstate. It's drawing a lot of people off the Interstate because they see it and they come back. Just this last year they added the water park and now we're attracting more people. They have a maximum number of people that can be in the water park, but nonetheless they're attracting people from Anthony all the way to Las Cruces. Luna County has adjacent property where they want to do batting cages and skate parks.

Grant County – There's been an initiative and you'll see the first one today, the Silver City Waterworks is an initiative started by the arts and cultural system. The water work site is the first which is really the original site of the original water source of the town of Silver City. You'll see their workhouse today, that's the first site and in order to create opportunities for the entire county, there are five sites. Silver City Waterworks is the first one that's going to be the trail head to the Continental Divide Trail and actually ties into other trails within the city. The second site is what we call in our Arenas Valley as you were coming in, which is an old facility and we've all been trying to figure out where it's originated, but it was moved there and they've made that a business which is called the Zocalo, which is the pizza place with beer and people flock there. The Village of Santa Clara purchased the old Bradley Hotel, they're going to remodel it so that it's another tourist site which is right in proximity to the Port Bayard state site. Right across the highway you have the Veterans Memorial, they continue to expand those efforts in that area by including some additional trails. Santa Clara is also a recipient of a NMDOT Grant. The fourth point is in the city of Bayard and that is taking the old union hall, revitalizing that, and trying to see if we can make it a museum. They already have a walking Museum of different machinery in Bayard. This would just enhance that. If you go to Hurley, I think you've all seen the depot as you come in. We're looking to see if there's a way, we can acquire the old depot. We've been using EPA brownfield monies to try to decide assessments before anyone takes over ownership. We've been partnering with Freeport McMoRan, on an initiative in the mining district that we call the Southwest New Mexico Collaborative. Those are all efforts that we're looking at, and the list goes on, we're working, we're talking housing opportunities, we're talking more recreation opportunities. Our little Village of Santa Clara created a splash pad, which is the only one in the county and everybody flocks to Santa Clara for that.

I think I'm very privileged in my region because they allow me to come in, provide guidance to be able to secure the funds to do it. They totally trust me. In the beginning it wasn't easy. I think one of our greatest challenges right now is the capacity. There are concerns about how we spend the money. They don't have enough contractors. They don't understand how the procurement pieces. My goal as the Council of Governments is to be able to provide that kind of technical assistance. I do the grant writing. I make sure that I am working with my community on the capital improvement plans for them so that when Lancing releases money, we're on it. I'm not going to be left behind. I want people to understand the region and what

I'm trying to grow. Lastly, I'll just say we're moving towards working with Lancing on Fort Bayard and I've been in this discussion since way back in the day and before you know even before they demolished that old hospital. We do know there's been some investment made and some things moving forward on Fort Bayard properties. This is the year of the 100th anniversary of the Gila National Forest and how many people don't even know the very first wilderness and it's right here. I think we need you to do more to market that. That's a quick overview of my region and I hope I didn't leave any part of my communities out. Thank you for advocating for additional dollars at the state level because they think that has been such a game changer in our world and participants even if they're small dollar amounts, they're big to these communities creating opportunities only for our residents within.

Brief discussion regarding the Cosmic Campground. Cosmic Campground is a certified dark sky campground, so it's one of the darkest places here in New Mexico and that's why we built a campground right there for all the astronomers to go and enjoy. Chair Kimball asked about the increase in Park fees. Secretary Adams noted that he did not know specifics, we could maybe get a report out of state parks. It's his understanding that they are going to be increasing some fees, but then there's also going to be some benefits for residents with respect to day-passes and things like that. We can make a note to report out or I could maybe get state parks to present. Chair Kimball noted that because there's been articles in the paper, and she does not know how it helps or hurts tourism. The money will then go back into the parks, for infrastructure, but it hurts tourism since we are charging at State Parks, which we never did. Some input would be helpful. Secretary Adams reiterated we can again try to at least see if we can get a report out from them and maybe even potentially have someone present. He'll see if there is anything they've done with respect to studies of how that's going to be done.

Tourism Department Update – Secretary Adams: Thank you, Priscilla, for really helping out, coordinating, working with us to bring folks here and just all that you've done. I've known you for I think it's been three years and a few months, it's just incredible the amount of work that you put in. I already know that there's one meeting you're missing because you're in this one. I know that for a fact. So just so you know, in terms of our partnerships with the COGS, this has been definitely one of those partnerships that I wish everyone was like this because it's just really been incredible. So, thank you.

I wanted to provide an update from the department about some of the things going on. The legislative session that we just went through and just some highlights of where we ended up, I feel it was really successful. Talk about the Route 66 Centennial may not be as germane to some of the folks in this room, but I think it's going to be a big deal for the state, and I think there will be a lot of spin off tourism that the whole state will benefit from. Also want to talk about our spring summer campaign which launched this week. We're really excited about New Mexico True certified, I want to give a report out on something that I think has worked and that's our holiday gift guide supporting local businesses, keeping money in the state and then a research update. This session, there's recurring and non-recurring dollars that we fought for. Recurring dollars are very, very hard to come by, we were able to work on a 4 1/2 percent increase to our base budget. That supports a lot of different things. It's important to us that we maintain our quality of service. Supporting some of our programs that are both legacy and new – from our Co-Op at a 2 to 1 match to our events program. It's these recurring dollars that contribute to making those programs recurring programs. To this point we kind of support them through a mixture of recurring and non-recurring dollars and additionally we will be standing up a travel trade program to really start to sell New Mexico tourism product domestically and internationally. We recently hired somebody that's going to be responsible for that working under our Communications PR team. So, the big dollars just for context here, I was looking at our old budget binder from 2011, our budget was \$9 million recurring. From that to 2025, these dollars on the non-recurring side, we are regionally competitive now with states like Arizona, Colorado, Texas and Utah and one of the most encouraging things that I saw during this session was that \$18,000,000 is the sum of a \$16,000,000 appropriation that came through the House and a \$2,000,000 addition that was in the Senate. In 2024 there was \$15,000,000 and that was all federal money. So that means this year they used state money to support tourism in the state. That's a huge signal and I think we really have to be successful in gathering these resources and really building up this robust marketing program. It's demonstrating success so that we can keep these dollars moving towards recurring so that we can make these things last. That \$18,000,000 there is a \$2,500,000 piece out of that that will go towards promotion of the Route 66 Centennial, which is in 2026. Another commitment we've made is to the Destination Forward program. This is something that supports infrastructure. I'm excited about it because this started as kind of just an idea. I remember driving around with one of Priscilla's counterparts Evan Williams from the Northwest Council of Governments when I first started years ago, just looking at different tourism sites and figuring out how much things cost. To go from that to working with the COGS on an assessment of all the infrastructure needs to creating a program and to have it. You know, we're doing it this year, but have it supported into the next year. I think it's a big deal. As Priscilla said, it's not a huge dollar amount when you look at, for example, the typical capital outlay system. But I think for a lot of communities, these are dollars, whether it's \$50,000 for a planning grant or you know or \$200,000 for grandstands and bleachers and a new rodeo building. These are things that we can make a difference with, so we're excited about that. There's \$2,000,000 that was provided for litter reduction and beautification.

The Governor's been very interested and motivated in cleaning up New Mexico. We're tasked with working with NMDOT and developing a campaign that we can launch so that it's not just picking up the trash, it's how do we change behaviors. So more to come on that, but those dollars, just for context, typically we have about \$250,000 through our Keep New Mexico True program, which is the marketing arm of our clean and beautiful program and that's all we have for marketing. So, this is going to allow for I think a bigger outreach effort. Any questions on budget?

Route 66 Centennial Program - So, moving on, this has been this has been fun. No really this is a labor to love, but I'm excited with what we're doing here. So, everyone knows just in context of Route 66 again 2026, we have the Centennial there. I'm so thankful that there's money appropriated towards projects. We will be working on standing up a program, a Route 66 Centennial program that can support infrastructure that could support marketing like cooperative marketing that could support events that could support some product development commemorative, we'll go through that. But you know I'm excited that those dollars are there because in parallel to that, we have an executive order that the Governor had signed that established a statewide Coordination Group to work with the National Commission of the eight states making up the Route 66. This is the group, there's designees, I'm on this group, chairman (*Commissioner Bill Lee), obviously he's the Chairman of this group. We have other partners, it's a 12-member group and we had, we've had two Coordination Group meetings, but we had our first stakeholder meeting in Tucumcari a couple weeks ago and we had over 70 people which was probably one of the biggest things that happened. You know I mean that was that was a really big deal and just a lot of excitement. So that's moving forward. I wanted to provide a little bit of a framework as to this was not adopted to be cleared by the Coordination Group. This was for discussion, but this was kind of our last idea of how we're going to be thinking about scoring and kind of recommending projects. So, at the at this these five boxes at the top represent sort of these five working groups that we're establishing in every single stakeholder meeting. So, we're looking at consumer experiences, special events, read bees. So, at these stakeholder meetings we have tables, and then our staff as you can see here, they all you know each one has kind of a table. We have been cycling folks through and better understanding projects we need to adopt a way to score these projects. These circles here are kind of our draft considerations for different dimensions that we'll be scoring projects on. And then ultimately as it relates to the National Commission, there's four different buckets that they that they are looking to move those recommendations into. why do we have 5 and they have four? Well to be honest because we, I think we need to control our own destiny. I think we can you know appropriately move things within their buckets. But I want to make sure that since we have these dollars that we can better, you know, separate what these buckets of money are going to be. Ultimately, that Coordination Group endorses a project and then that project is featured by the National Commission in their advertising. So, it's a big opportunity for us I think to market Route 66 to give everyone the kind of schedule. So again, we had our first meeting and then we had our second meeting and our first stakeholder meeting at Tucumcari a couple weeks ago. Our next stakeholder meeting will be May 21st in Santa Rosa. Then we're going to be looking at doing a joint stakeholder and Coordination Group meeting in June just like we did in February. We're going to be hiring on a facilitator because it's administratively attached to our department and that is it's a lot of work to corral everything, but we're excited about that opportunity. Just wanted to show, here's Route 66, the National Commission and you see this call for ideas. This tracks back to those four buckets at the bottom of that that diagram because those are kind of the pieces that they're going to be looking for endorsements on the federal side or on the national side. Additionally, with the National Commission, we're also starting to work with Brand USA on what their strategy is going to be for marketing Route 66. We had a meeting with them I think it was a month ago around then. Then they came in and they kind of gave us a little bit of a sneak peek as to how they're looking at marketing Route 66. Really, they're going to be doing a big piece about just pitching road trips. Trips in the United States and that sort of that experience, and then integrating all of all the different assets that the different states have. Obviously gluing it all together in a storytelling format, which puts us in a real good spot because so much of our advertising is story based, so we want to make sure we're tracked with them. And then just lastly on Route 66, this is kind of their draft schedule as to you know, pumping out advertising to generate that iconic road trip. Then 2026, you know really starting to pepper the direct, you know, directed Route 66 marketing. I'm sure this is still in draft form with them, so I was appreciated that they provided this with us, but I think we just have to make sure we're all working again.

Are there any questions from the from the group or Madam Chair?

Yes, Commissioner, Secretary Adams. How many members on the National Commission? – Commissioner Alvarez

- There are eight States and so each one has, you know, their representative. Jen Schroer, my predecessor is actually ours for New Mexico, so I'm in communication with her.

Madam Chair, Secretary Adams, could you give us an idea of what the timeline is? Having attended the Tucumcari meeting, what is the ultimate goal of trying to identify those projects? It sounded like it was a process of kind of the state then

identifies what they think the highest and best priorities are and then it gets signaled to the Commission. What is that? What does that timeline look like? – Commissioner Armenta

- Tanya, I think what we're looking at here is this schedule here gets us to our last stakeholder meeting in quarter four this calendar. The idea is to at least get everything, all the input in by then. We're going to be working with our facilitation group that we're going to be putting on contract as to how the best we're going to synthesize this; because the challenge that we run into is we thought that, you know, there was going to be projects, right? Like I'm from this association, I have this road project or this lighting project or this signage project and this is the cost. And what we found is a lot of it is "we should do cowboy poetry," and then you're just like, "hey, like you should," but then you know what does that mean in terms of an actual? I think consumer experiences is really going to be a challenge because if it's an event and it's already established or if it's an event that the chamber is going to build out, it's more of a real thing. I think consumer experience is going to be a challenge. We want to get all the input wrapped up by the end of this year, but we're still working out the details about exactly how we're going to yet. Like I said, the Coordination Group still hasn't approved the scoring yet. We're going to go back to the drawing board a little bit and try to figure out a way to get everyone around that because ultimately, we'd like to be able to run projects through that scoring criterion and then endorse them and then provide that information to the national.

Tania, you know, I think the timeline is critical obviously moving this forward and initially we weren't going to get through the stakeholder meetings until we got into the first quarter and even maybe the second quarter of 2025 and think all the [group] members decided no, that's not acceptable. We need to be done by 2025. And then during the stakeholders meeting we got lots of great input. There were so many good ideas that day, you were there. We learned a lot about how this is going to be going forward. But like for instance, one of the things that came up is how do you handle an education piece which, you know, I think it's probably a good idea, but what bucket does that fall into and how do we put that into a rating scale to make it qualify for the same thing as a big event. So, there's still a lot for us to think through and that's why we're doing the stakeholder meetings so that we can get these ideas. It's my hope that soon after that quarter 4, we will be able to roll out based on all the input we've received in the first quarter of 2025 what the application looks like and what the scoring process looks like. Does that help? – Commissioner Lee

Yes, I have some concerns about that being so close to us from an international tourism standpoint, us just losing the opportunity to capitalize on that. I don't know if there's things that can happen in tandem where that we just tried to move things. When you have this person hired, they get in front of the communities in advance, some of the community leader's so they know how to capitalize on that day, so the ideas are a little further along. But I am just expressing concern on behalf of the state that that gives us under 25 when I think the international marketing opportunity is really at that point in time, we need to be telling our story. I think and I will share that concern hearing Brand USA's when I heard what Brand USA's potential was that it sounds like they're starting the promotion of Route 66 a little late as well. So hopefully things will just start to take shape and there and people will understand that we have an opportunity here. The larger projects will kind of rise to the surface, and we can make headway. – Commissioner Armenta

Wouldn't that be great if New Mexico gets more than its share of Brand USA and international marketing? Yes. So, Bill and Lancing, it's on you too. – Madam Chair Kimble

We're not, done asking for money at the legislature for support. – Commissioner Lee

- Madam Chair, Tanya, to that to that point, it's super fair about the timeline. I just wanted to raise a couple things for context here. I think we're deliberately trying to decouple the, you know what will be NMTD's grant program from the Coordination Group... I think they need to share themes, but I don't want to put that Coordination Group business in front of the grant because we only have a year and so, just one piece on that. I think the grant we're going to be working on standing up ASAP so that won't be a onetime application. We're going to have to do it more of a rolling application throughout the year. So we're assessing, but that's just that's one piece of it. I think you know the other piece is that I really appreciate that feedback about the giving them some direction prior to, so that people know coming in like how things maybe should be communicated so that it can be more efficient. I actually think that's something that makes a lot of sense and I appreciate it.

Madam Chair and Commissioner. I meant that is great, and you know we all just took our toes in the water here and I, I do want to do a big a big thank you to the, to the department and kudos to them for putting together something that I think worked extremely well in its first iteration. We're going to have some changes made. We kind of debriefed afterwards and thought about ways we could make it better. That is a great in great input and when I say 2025, I don't think we can go

beyond that. I think if we can get it that sooner, you know we were hoping that we're going to kind of finalize that at that stakeholder meeting. But then these good ideas came to, so we kind of slow rolled things and took a step back but I think I think it will come fairly. Thank you. – Commissioner Lee

Any other questions on Route 66? – Madam Chair

Question from the Audience: Was there talk at that meeting post of staggering this and doing like a macro thing earlier, especially like on the international market, something that says New Mexico is Route 66 or something along those lines, without the grit of what exactly events are. So we could get that word going out before 2025 hits or it gets too late for the international market. Is there any chance or was there talk of staggering something much earlier?

- So, I don't know specifically you know at the round tables how that was brought up. What I will say is I don't want to have a situation in which we feel like the perfect becomes the enemy of the good in the sense of we have to have all these things done before we can do any. I think that there are things we can do from just an awareness perspective that we can work on prior to having specifically endorsed projects. I think where this starts to come into fruition is we still need to figure out a logo mockup, and that's something that we're going to be working on. I think that if we can do those things, it's going to allow us to be more, you know, able to at least start to market for the awareness piece and then we can get into some of the grit.

Madam Chair if I can... one of the ideas that came up, everybody sees the iconic Route 66 or the old historic Route 66 highway signs. What are we doing to alert people that there's Centennial celebration coming for Route 66? And so that's something that can be done as quickly as we can get NMDOT on board and signs made that say, you know, New Mexico celebrates the Centennial in 2026, something like that, so that we start instituting that right away. – Commissioner Lee

Did I make it up, or does New Mexico have the largest, the largest number of miles of Route 66 in our state? – Madam Chair

That may be true because we have, yes, 2 routes to get to 500 miles. – Commissioner Lee

So, I mean, that's something that's not going to change. Just saying from a marketing point of view, some of that we know now. – Madam Chair

I think we all have the longest urban stretch, do we not, through to Albuquerque. – Audience Member

Not that you don't have enough on your plate. You got nothing to do to plan. All right, any other questions, good conversation, which I hope not much. – Madam Chair

Tourism Department Spring/Summer- So just finishing up here on, I want to talk about just our spring/summer, and show you some give you a sneak peek on a couple really cool new videos and then trying to reintroduce one that we had, but then we had to pull back unfortunately because of the black virus that had happened. And but we really want to look back out there now especially but with the Gila Centennial this year. So first of all, this is our kind of you know summary of what we're going to be doing, so we're going to have a large out of home presence in the major airports. We're expanding that in California where we're seeing kind of one of the highest ROI's when it comes to our travelers. The Californians stay longer they and they spend more money. We're going to be you know having that out of home piece new this year that we're going to be doing is in those airports, we're going to be Geo targeting, and so those folks that are at those airports and they're seeing those banner ads are actually, you know if they go on the New York Times or somewhere else, they actually may see our ads kind of circle back from there. So we're going to have that big piece and we're also going to have obviously our placements digital and in connected TV. We're also going to be working on a placement for the Olympics with Peacock this year. I think that there's a lot of opportunity with that kind of venturesome traveler in the Olympics sports world. We're going to be looking at that and obviously you know when you look at the markets, California, Texas more we are staying in, in the same domestic markets with an expansion in California to San Francisco. With that I want to show you some of our new materials.

Video 1 – The Climber – <https://youtu.be/HPMPbxfyS0I?si=mKmVuY9PNGkU-rht>

This one is exciting us because we get to feature Roy NM, we get to you know feature Jemez we get to feature some places that just we hadn't featured before. So yeah, that one, I was not up there filming, with that guy filming that shot. So we're excited about that one.

Video 2 – Hoop Dancer – <https://youtu.be/jl7JN1312lw?si=rIYMnkV4ixu21Tk5>

So, with that just really proud of that piece, of the work that went into that. Shandean Lawrence is her name.

Video 3 – America's First Designated Wilderness: The Gila – <https://youtu.be/adaOHRI25fg?si=IukfRfpSj5zYqurd>

Then just moving on, I wanted to cover before I show this video because we did it before, we did have this video in market, but then again when the black fire happened, we did have to pull it based on what was going on. But you know we felt conversations that the Gila was going to be the Centennial, that it's a huge deal to celebrate right now. To make sure that we actually have these ads reintroduced in our spring summer this year, with recognition that this is the 100th year just so people know that there's kind of a special, special, time. So that will be running in our national campaign. The Gila will be running in our national campaign, and also some of these other activations. Outdoor focus multi-channel deal with Wild Sam which is a publication that's really targeted to our audience, adding a 30 spot to streaming placements and a pull-out poster with Gila Centennial Creative in the New Mexico magazine. So we're really going to be doing a lot to celebrate that. So we will be, you know, running that again as part of our spring summer. We're excited about that. I just want to give everyone kind of an update on what we're going to be doing there.

Coming back to sort of the in state stuff, I hope I mentioned the New Mexico True Certified. It's a big deal for our department. I feel like we have this huge role right of driving money into the state. But at the same time, I feel like we have a sort of this role in keeping money in the state, as well by making sure that our small businesses, artists and artisans really benefit from their work. This year we worked on kind of a special like wraparound of the New Mexico True Certified Program through our holiday gift guide. Our holiday gift guide featured many of our producers and our vendors and we also had an ad campaign which I believe this group saw the last Commission meeting. One thing that's important on this slide is that the 582,000 in revenue was only from the 60 or so respondents from the survey. So we actually had twice that number of vendors, and we're looking to say that there was \$1,000,000 of money that went you know towards those vendors as you know through their participation in the holiday gift guide. I mean I really think that we can do more, but I'm excited with the prospect of continuing this moving forward so that we can kind of have that in-state pride translate to actual dollars for our businesses. I just wanted to give a snapshot on that because Taylor from our team worked really hard with Brandy, and some of some of our staff. So really, proud of that effort. And if there's more questions about true certified, I can try to answer, or Taylor is here as well. But wanted to highlight that.

If my math is right, so this was a 30-day campaign and 32,000 items were sold, that's \$100 a day, isn't it? That's awesome. It's great. – Madam Chair

Tourism Department Research Update- So all right, lastly and then I'll stop monopolizing everyone's time here. Research update.

So, we recently finished our visitor profile study. This is a lot more requests than it had been in the past. I wish that our research director could be here today. She's not able to be here, so there's things or questions I can't answer, I'll make sure to get you in contact with her, but just wanted to provide some highlights. The way that the survey had been done was it was basically a large survey, that then they would say, OK, out of this large survey New Mexico makes up this amount, you know, it's like a, you know, as a percentage. And then they would just kind of multiply all the activity or you know and assign all the activity to kind of our little nook. These are direct, these are direct surveys with travelers. There's not anything in between that's an algorithm. And we had, I believe, a little over 2,000 surveys that were completed. I think we're on the right track. Adventure speaking culture remains our core brand in New Mexico true, food, culture, and history all appeal to around 70% of New Mexico travelers. So again, people that are coming here, 2/3 of visitors began the trip planning process within two months of their arrival. That's always good info for our DMO's to have. Out of state visitors more likely to visit parks and go touring and sightseeing. 20% of trips included experiences of Native culture and history. 21% included experiences of Hispanic culture and 20% of visitors had a positive experience of the state. Don't take that for granted. And I think tourism development, and the work that Holly does, and our team does, it's always looking at making sure we keep that experience. Some other things we have just in terms of looking ahead. We're going to be releasing a film tourism study. We may be presenting on this at the Governor's conference. Some work on specifically Los Alamos and the Oppenheimer movie and some of some of that, some of those lessons and opportunities we'll continue expanding our data resources we

have. It's incredible right now all the capabilities out there for you know for data products. But still you know, I think at the end of the day we have to make sure that we are, you know, true to what's important with respect to data, and always have discipline as to what's new and what just might seem like it's cool and what's actually going on to be worth it for us. We're always looking at that. We'll be completing an ROI study of our winter and summer campaigns in San Francisco, and we'll continue to provide our partners with info, this QR code if you want to check it out or we can talk to you after, but that gets you to our research division, robust amount of information that we have and Victoria and Eric from that team are just incredible. You guys have seen this, but I wanted to give some content. This was from our 2022 visitor spending. This is statewide, but I wanted to provide for the Southwest. This just kind of shows you how, how much we can kind of drill down into the data and look at your communities. Pretty incredible 864,000,000 direct visitor spending. I think that you look at that 10,000 number of pool java sustained, 81,000,000, it is obvious tourism is economic development and I think it in a lot of ways in rural New Mexico, it very much is. Just for this audience, here's kind of the origin markets right now, just for everyone's knowledge to the Southwest region. So again, if you have questions, I just want to make sure since we're with this group to provide that information. The top three right now Albuquerque, Santa Fe, El Paso, Phoenix, Tucson surprisingly would think they would, would have been a little bit higher. But yeah, this is, the current market share over the last 12 months. With that, thank you, Madam Chair, for the time and you know here to answer any questions. Appreciate you.

Any questions for the department before we go into commissioner updates?

Do y'all even know what the Tourism Commission does because I didn't until I got on it. So we kind of are, we're appointed by the governors and we serve long terms, 8 years. I mean really because what they're trying to do is straddle different administrations and we some of us must be Republicans and some must be Democrats and we have to have commissioners from every region of the state, and we meet quarterly. I feel like we are kind of the go is between the tourism industry and the department, so that theoretically the department kind of reports to us, but it's a joke 'cause they are all the professionals, and we are all have jobs and I mean other jobs besides tourism. So we kind of are the go between for the industry and the department to tell them you know what's what we feel like the industry needs, where they need support. And we also often are helpful with the department when it comes to budgeting in the legislative session because we can go in and lobby and get our industry to lobby for the budget which the department can't. So that's, you know that's what I think we do as a Commission is trying to align the industry to help support the department when they're going for the marketing for all the budgets. So that's kind of what we do. So just if y'all don't know, thank you. [Point of clarification, they're seven-year terms] Seems like 30-year terms. – Madam Chair

Chairwoman Kimball Update - So anyway, all right, so we're going to give Commission updates, I'm going to give mine really quickly and then we'll go down the line. So I am from Santa Fe. I work at La Fonda, which is the oldest hotel site in the country. It's been here since it's been a hotel on that site since the 1600s, so we're really excited about the Centennial. Things going on in Santa Fe in the next couple of months. We have the first ever Indigenous Fashion Week, which is going to happen in Santa Fe, May 2nd to 5th. We've got some award-winning Native American fashion designers that are doing fashion shows, they're doing films, and there's tickets on sale you can get on the Sawyer website, that's May 2nd to 5th. And the other big thing we're having in Santa Fe, May 17th and 19th is the third annual Santa Fe Literary Festival. If you haven't heard about it, it's amazing. Every year they bring in world renowned authors and they read from their books and there's usually Q&A. This year we've got David Grant coming. He wrote *Killers of the Flower Moon Fight*, the Oscar nominated film. We have Hi or Kai, don't know how to pronounce his [first] name, Bird. He wrote *American Prometheus*, which is what Oppenheimer is based on, he's coming to talk. I mean, that's just amazing. In Santa Fe we've got this caliber of authors coming to talk. We have, if anybody knows Julia Alvarez, I read her book *How the Garcia Girl's Lost Their Accent*. She's great. Anthony Door, *All the Light We Cannot See*, they made into a movie. I mean these are just a sampling of the authors that will be in Santa Fe May 17th through 19th, it's a nonprofit. You can get online Santa Fe Literary Festival and buy tickets.

And then lastly, kind of personally, La Fonda, we've launched a foundation where we are going to try to help hourly wage workers in the hospitality industry, starting with La Fonda employees trying to help them and their kids with English courses, with financial literacy courses, with down payments for homes. Because I'm tired of having some of our employees work 30 years at minimum wage and never be able to get beyond minimum wage to get into a salaried position. And if you don't have a salary, it's really hard to apply and get a home loan. If you don't get a home loan, it's hard to build equity. I watch our minimum wage workers, hourly wage workers that work for us for 30-40 years and never get out of that cycle. So anyway, if anybody wants to talk to me about it, we're trying to start with the La Fonda employees because they're my captive audience. And we've partnered with UNM for data collection on what we're doing and if it's working. And if it's working, the first person I'm going to call is Heritage and some of the other hoteliers and trying to spread the program,

because we feel like so many of the hourly wage workers are in the hospitality industry. If we could actually move the needle on that, it might actually move the needle on the state of New Mexico and the education, the poverty. Again, this is a long-term vision, but we got to start somewhere, and we just kicked it off. So that's kind of my passion at the moment. [What is the name of the foundation?] La Fonda Foundation, though, if we have trouble getting grants and getting people to support it, we'll knock the name Lafonda off. The only reason we called it Lafonda Foundation is we felt like since we had 100 years in the industry, we kind of had some gravitas, so we might be listening to better that we're trying to move the needle. But there is no pride of this. Actually, if this succeeds, I'm going to hurt my own hotel. Because if we can get our hourly wage workers trained and moved on, we will help them get jobs in the tech industry, we will help them get jobs wherever they can to get salaries. So, we will probably lose our best and brightest if we succeed, but how fabulous to help change lives.

Question from the Audience - that's pretty fascinating because I think I could comment around really providing that hand holding, and I do outreach work for New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority. When it comes down to families really wanting to become a homeowner, one of the most difficult things is they don't even know what's available. They don't understand their problems enough to understand that there are programs for down premium. They have the \$15,000 down payment assistance right now, and then understanding the different or participating lenders. And I think that again this goes back to when you come from those communities that are underserved, you don't even believe that those are opportunities for you. I'm a first time going home buyer, one of those that never thought could own a home, I'm a homeowner, right and I think it goes back to that. It takes people like yourself and others to really provide that that guidance to them because they don't even believe in themselves. I really commend you for those efforts and if I can help it anyway, I'd be, I'd love to.

- We've been using home wise, and Guadalupe Credit Unions have been giving financial literacy courses to the end. The important thing is, which is hard, we are paying their hourly wages while they are taking English classes, while they're taking financial literacy classes, but otherwise they're holding two and three jobs. If we're docking them, they're having to leave work to go take these classes, it's never going to happen. So anyway, we're going to see maybe in the five years the statistics will show we haven't moved the needle on anybody, but we're willing.

I bet you will. I think it's just like it's just like the childcare, right. We don't have, we don't have any childcare facilities, right. And it's not easy to build them. So I mean those are, the same kind of challenges at the workforce and everyone. – Audience Member

What a great incentive, I don't think they're going to want to leave you. – Commissioner Alvarez

- In an ideal world they would because you know we are only one hotel, so we only have X number of salaried employees and managers. If we really are going to walk the walk, we're going to help them find jobs either in other hotels or in other industries. And Santa Fe's got a lot of startups and tech, and we're partnering with the Santa Fe public schools. We've got Apple and doing a coding program; they are paying Santa Fe high school kids to program some hospitality apps. There's a lot of really great things going on that could be steppingstones and to get these kids that have not never had the opportunities, to think, can I code, what is an app? You know we're going to have interns in the hotels and they're in banks. This is that Level Up program that the Tourism Department, we all got involved with, and the legislative funded it, which is internships from high schools. Started with just hotels, there were five of us hotels in Santa Fe, and it was so successful that they now got legislative funding and others banking. There's some good stuff happening in the state, and we don't always hear about it. So just saying send good vibes our way because we're we got to start somewhere and we're trying. So, Commissioner Lee.

Commissioner Lee Update - So, first I want to say it's amazing what you see when you get off the Interstate. I came the other way Priscilla, I came through reserve and all of that, and as Dan said took my life in my own hands, this time of year. There was only a little bit of snow on the road and didn't slow me down too much. Beautiful drive and always a pleasure to come here. In Gallup, we are busy, busy putting together a new adventure guide. And for the first time one of the things that we've been missing in our outdoor recreation and the tourism industry, are guided tours of great places. And so we finally have a startup that's taking place with some very experienced folks in our community, who are going to take the reins, and really put that to good works. And so, we're excited about that. Our nightly Native American dances are coming back to the courthouse Plaza, so we're getting geared up for that. That will begin in May. We are also launching a new artist promotion program that we're all very excited about. We're working with our Gallup Arts District and we're working on launching a program to provide direct support to the artists like setting up social media for them and e-commerce areas for them in exchange for featuring them on artist profiles on the Visit Gallup website. So excited about that. A new billboard campaign is coming as well. When we talk about Route 66, we're starting to get very geared up in Gallup. We're named to the song we have to. So, we're getting geared up to do a number of things, including some neon sign

restoration that we're going to be doing. As well as there's plans for the city to apply for a destination forward grant for some Route 66 infrastructure funding, to put in this great big art installation about Route 66, so that's coming up. And I can't say a lot about it but let me just say this, we've got a great idea that we're *floating* on Route 66, so, you know, I fly hot air balloons, you can figure that out on your own. Lots of good things happening, and Trail of the Ancients, we're bringing a revitalized effort back to that. And that is all throughout the Four corners. All the way up into in fact Utah, but specifically focusing on the Farmington, Gallup, and Zuni and that whole corridor of Hwy. 53 and up Hwy. 491, all of that, the trail of the ancient. I'm working with the COG and Evan at the COG to bring that back. So that's all the things I've got. Madam Chair. Thank you for the time.

Question from the Audience – Commissioner Lee, the website that you said the local artists will be featured on, was that visit Gallup? [Yes.] And will that be rotating artists, or get more on the program?

- We're hoping to have a whole section that will feature not just a rotational piece but also a place for them to be there constantly so that they have a presence there all the time, and, we're not sure if we're going to send the ecommerce up through that website, or if we're going to have a separate website that if you click on that artist, it would take you to an ecommerce place. So, that's all still being worked out, but it's in the formulation. And it's something that we need to do for our, local artists. I mean the cottage industry in Gallup and the surrounding area is huge. I mean it's a big part of our economy and a lot of these folks don't understand how to navigate that tech side of the world today and could be doing far better than they already are if we could just give them the space. And so that's what our effort is. [Thank you for sharing that.]

Commissioner Armenta Update- Thank you, Madam Chair, and I just wanted to say exciting to see the great work of the New Mexico tour campaign of the Tourism Department and all of the progress, we were commenting on the progress that has happened over the last number of years and to be in San Francisco and seeing some of the new creative and all of that, is wonderful. I would also like to say just in terms of because I asked the question on Route 66, I think we all have that same desires to see us capitalize and succeed in the largest fashion. With Route 66, with the Centennial, and I do believe that even if you're not, if you're not in New Mexico area on Route 66, you will benefit from travel that will happen throughout the state. So, I think it's a great opportunity for us just as a as a total as an entire state. We're spending quite a bit of time focusing on that in Albuquerque in terms of preparation, lots of work in terms of infrastructure and neon sign improvements and various efforts with a community, a Route 66 community effort with both the city of Albuquerque and other partners. In terms of kind of highlights from an Albuquerque standpoint, we're coming off with this the first seven months of the year we have a lot of really great sports tourism business. We've hosted of course the USA Track and Field Indoor Championships in Albuquerque that was indoor track season. After we took the track down the exhibit hall at the Convention Center then became site of USA Boxing. They just finished up USA Boxing event. We moved on to gymnastics, USA Gymnastics, volleyball, regional volleyball events, as well as USA Taekwondo for the first time in Albuquerque. So, some, just some really strong sports tourism. We're also going to have the first time a cricket tournament take place at Balloon Fiesta Park in Albuquerque and so little emergence of cricket and so very diversified. And then of course Savannah Bananas, if you know who the Savannah Bananas are, they will be in Albuquerque, April, in April at Isotopes Park and we were a supporter for that, to take place. On the meetings and convention side, some great citywide pieces of business. We have one this week, a nice piece of convention business Downtown Albuquerque with a furniture rental group that's in Albuquerque. So again, trying to work to build that important business travel in the meetings and convention business back to Downtown Albuquerque; throughout Albuquerque, and its importance in our state to welcome key thought leaders in different areas to our state for that business travel. We have benefited from, and we've been able to diversify and grow our funding for lead for marketing through our tourism marketing district. We actually complement in many areas some airport advertising. We're in four regional airports, Denver, Phoenix, Dallas, Fort Worth and Dallas Love Field. We're also going into four additional airports with airport Wi-Fi. We're sponsoring airport Wi-Fi, so a new initiative for us along with Outdoor, we are doing some additional work in California to pair up with the advertising from New Mexico True along with digital advertising. Just wanted to mention a fun event that we are doing this next week with some of our partners in New York City. We typically do a media mission and this next week we will have a media mission and a sales mission in New York. With Electric Playhouse, if you're familiar with Electric Playhouse in Albuquerque, they're going to take and create an immersive experience in New York in a space. It's going to be an immersive dinner, lunch and dinner, the chef is Chef Marc Quiñones from Level 5 at Hotel Chaco, one of the heritage properties in Albuquerque. We already have really great RSVPs for that media and sales opportunity in New York. And the great thing is we're hoping that this could become something we could take on the road after this first event. And last thing I'll say member of our team this week with the Albuquerque Sun Port and the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, we have a delegation that is at an air service development conference called Routes America Building, working to build additional air service into Albuquerque. The Gathering of Nations of course is coming up in in April. Last couple things I'll note, Co-op funding we're again in year 2. This is the second year we've been

able to offer Co-op funding, thanks to that new and a supplemental funding and we're initiating that our second round of funding in April. So nicely timed I think for folks to consider how either the state's program or our program can work together. We're working through, we're about halfway through our destination master planning process in Albuquerque, very inclusive and involved event with kind of looking at the whole entire city as how is it performing from a visitation standpoint, how can we work to improve it with all things experience, infrastructure, additional elements from a destination standpoint. There's a lot of people. I mean I thank you. I was kind of engineering a lot. This is from a lot of community partners as well and the tram is back open for those of you two months, two months down. We're not used to that. Really proud, to have the tram.

Comment from Audience Member – Makes me think about because I'm going to be Albuquerque. We're talking all these people come from, from different parts of the United States talking about how rural communities around, you know and those are just a small agreement. So, when you think about it's just, it's just a great location just because it's easy in.

Commissioner Vallo Update- Thank you., Madam Chair. Good afternoon, folks. My name is Emerson Vallo from the Pueblo of Acoma, representing the natives here in the state of New Mexico, all the 19 Pueblos plus the Apache's and the Navajos. If you haven't been to any of the Pueblos, please do go visit them. They're starting their summer traditional festivities, and the Pueblos are open to the general public. You can go, if they have a tour established, you can take tours and stuff like that. If they don't, you can make friends with the local folks there and I'm sure they'll invite you in to eat because that's what we mainly do during those festivities. Just kidding. Always good. That's always good. Another good site to go to is at NativeAmerican.travel. On that website, it lists all the 19 Pueblos, plus Apache plus Navajos and other Native Americans across the country if you want to learn more about the natives here in this country. There's 574 federally recognized tribes and they're all listed that on that website. It's a good site to go to, to get an idea of what's available and the days of their festivities if they update their webpage. If not, I think the Tourism Department also has the website where you can check and see the dates the Pueblos are open. Route 66 coming up. I do hope that there's native representations there and voice. I'd like to see that. I know I used to work with the current director. I couldn't remember his name but Route 66 when they first started out, I used to work with him as one of their reps but I'll need to make contact with him again. I had a question on the holiday gift guide. Is there a place where artisans can go to get signed up for that? [Yeah, there is.] I'll get with you then. Yes. So that's pretty much it. And I encourage everybody to go out and get to know your neighbors, your Native American neighbors and especially around here. I don't have a contact down here in the South and maybe you do. I know there's the Gila dwellings there. It's pretty kind of creepy to get in there if you're afraid of heights, but it's a good place to visit. In Acoma. I'll push Acoma. We do provide tours, so we're open. Currently it's a guided tour about an hour. We also have our native restaurant the cultural center where they serve our natural foods or native foods. So, it's a good place to have lunch or bring your visitors from out of country or out of state to visit. I think that's all I have. Thank you. [Any questions or are you out there? – Chairwoman Where are you from? – audience member] From the Pueblo of Acoma. We're West of Albuquerque, about 62 miles South of Interstate 40. That's at Exit 102. It's about 15 miles. Oh, well, there's good signs there. So, since you're retired, come visit, right?

If you have not seen the Cultural Center in Acoma, it's incredible. The building itself is worth going to. The cafe has great food, they've got a good gift shop. It's really a nice if you're on I-40, it's a nice food and it's beautiful. – Madam Chair

It's a pretty special place. Our place sets on top of Mesa. It's about 365 feet above the floor level, so all our homes are on top. There's 500 plus homes you can walk up if you wish. Used our entrance way with a small crevice that there's stone stairs going up there but now we have a road so you can go up there with a tour bus. They won't let anyone just go on in. So but yes, please come and visit and

The church is beautiful. The bell tower at La Fonda is based on the bell tower at the Acoma church. It's beautiful. – Madam Chair

Well known for pottery, our pottery is real thin walled, does hold water unlike some of the other Pueblo pottery. So it's kind of unique and the artisans there basically they make their selling their artworks. It's appreciated what they're, you know, people buy stuff from them. Thank you, Chair.

Commissioner Alvarez Update- Thank you, Madam Chair, Secretary Adams, fellow Commissioners and esteemed guests. I do have a lot of notes. I see I have more time today to make up for the meetings I missed. It's so nice to see everyone. Honestly, I'm sorry I have missed, and I miss joining and participating and contributing to these important updates, so thank you. Today I'll primarily focus on some exciting seasonal events that took place and that will happen this spring and summer

here in Southern New Mexico. We're gearing up for a season full of meaningful and fun filled activities. This past weekend we had the 35th Baton Death March at a 26.2 mile loop near White Sands that took place again this past weekend. This, this March was a commemorative weekend filled with events and over 5000 participants. Among those in attendance was Baton Denmark survivor Valdemir de Herrera. He is 104 years old and he's attended over the last several years. The commemorative March has significantly impacted our local hospitality industry. Not only does it serve as a poignant reminder of our shared history but provided an economic boost to our community. It's heartening to see how such events as this one bring people together, all while supporting our business, our local businesses. Las Cruces film -- there's film everywhere right now and was recently named for the second year in a row, "One of the best places to live and work as a movie maker" by Movie Maker Magazine. The Las Cruces International Film Festival is scheduled for April 3rd through the 7th. That's coming up, with honorary guests such as Ron Kirtman, and Eric Roberts to name a few. Over the night the last nine years, the Las Cruces International Film Festival has grown to be one of the largest film festivals in the country. Run by a university, the festival now attracts over 12,000 attendees every year. Since its inception, the festival has now drawn more than 80,000 visitors from all over the world, served more than 700 student participants and brought almost 1500 film makers to the area. Current filming is also taking place. We finally found out in T or C, I'm sure you read about it, but it's *Eddington* filming also in Albuquerque and Santa Fe shortly after. This film is set to star Joaquin Phoenix, Heather Pascal and Emma Stone to name a few, and it's exciting to see the focus on not just our larger cities, but supporting our rural communities as you mentioned as well. So, more jobs and more support to for our smaller businesses. The production will have an estimated economic impact of 52,000,000. Also in Las Cruces, I sure you heard, Tyler Perry Production's Joe College Road Trip and another one in June called *I'll Be Gone in June* which was also filmed in June. Mira Las Cruces. So, Visit Las Cruces is gearing up for the very successful Mira Las Cruces. It's a one-day festival. This is the second annual event that is scheduled for April 27th and this idea for the event was inspired and created to get visitors to look or see and get a taste of the variety of things that we experienced locally last year. They estimated and attracted a little over 10,000 visitors. Of this, 855 New Mexicans were from outside of Las Cruces and New Mexico, with Texas leading the way and notable visitors from California, Arizona, New York, Florida and Indiana. The free festival highlights our cuisine, outdoor recreation and great music on the mainstage. This year's headliner is Grupo Control, and there'll also be other local talent. OK, come on, go over and have some Cumbias with us. Mesilla. I rarely discussed Mesilla during our meeting, so today I thought I'd take time, and opportunity to shine a spotlight on them. Mesilla has a new mayor. Mayor Russell Hernandez has a hospitality and tourism background. Russell actually used to work for Heritage hotels and most recently he was a Food and Beverage director and also co-owner of Salud, the restaurant in Mesilla. Mayor Hernandez is poised to be an invaluable partner in our endeavors within the communities around us. Recognizing the significance of collaboration between us, he's looking at more joint programming with Visit Las Cruces as well as other communities and agencies around southern New Mexico to capitalize on tourism. This joint effort will include targeted experience and destination-based programming that will hopefully be launched in the next couple of months. Mayor Hernandez is also in the process of working with the Office of Cultural Affairs to open another great landmark for the town. One of my favorites, very dear to me, the Taylor Historic Site. This is scheduled to fully open to the public in 2025. Space tourism. The annual, The Space Cup, Spaceport America Cup is returning to Las Cruces June 17th through the 22nd. This is the world's largest intercollegiate rocket engineering competition for student rocketry teams, with teams formed from colleges and universities in 24 countries. This year we are expecting 158 teams that qualified and made it for the competition, 80 teams from the United States, 78 from other countries, 4 local teams and very successful these past couple of years with UNM and NMSU competing for the first time. Direct spending estimates last year were in the excess of 120,000 with estimated hotel revenue at 63,000 and restaurant revenue at 39,000. More teams and attendees are expected this year. Some of them did stay at the university and in surrounding areas to support them. Virgin Galactic flights have been successful. The last one, VGO SIX, took place in January and the next and possibly final one for the year or year and a half, maybe two is VGO 7 is scheduled for this summer, June. Also, on schedule and targets is a Delta class spaceship facility that is coming to life in Arizona. This new facility is where the Delta Spaceships will be built, tested to their maiden voyage after New Mexico. Future anticipated flights and the next two years will ramp up with two flights a week and thereafter with five flights a week. It sounds impossible and it's coming soon. I know everyone has been feeling like they're stopping, they're starting, but these Delta spacecrafts that they're building is really going to ramp up the business in and around us. Finally, our Las Cruces numbers. Year to date our fiscal's year revenue stands at 1.8 million with a projected total of 2.7 million for year end. While we are currently trailing slightly behind last year last was 2.8 million. We're optimistic about our potential to catch up. With ample time and opportunities ahead, we can bridge the gap and exceed our targets. Heritage Hotels continued improvement in our occupancy year to date and good short-term business pick up. Our recent job fairs, we've had many lately have resulted in a much better response than previous years with attendance from interested applicants exploring our hiring opportunities. We're continuing to see growth in our group business and catering business as we move into the year. Spring break is showing some strong occupancy and interest in our properties as well. Again, just some highlights from our Southern New Mexico a little corner of the world. So, thank you.

Any questions? Any questions for any of the commissioners? Does anybody have any public comments or any questions for the Commission or for the department? Hearing none. We do need to talk about the next meeting. OK, it looks like the next meeting will probably be in June. I was throwing out Roswell or Gallup or Carlsbad or Taos or anybody have any strong feelings where an exploring meeting should be? – Madam Chair

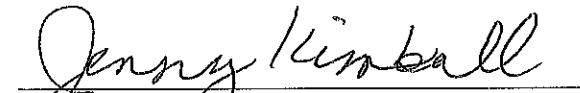
We'd be happy to host in Gallup. – Commissioner Lee

Is there anything going on? It'd be fun to have a meeting when one of the cities is having something. Space Flight is our area. Do we have a date for anything in June? [Date and agenda] will be published for the industry, so anybody who wants to attend can attend. I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Armenta. Second by Commissioner Alvarez. Passed unanimously.

Adjourned at 2:59 p.m.

Approved by Commission vote at public meeting held on September 10, 2024.



Commission Chair Jenny Kimball