

Minutes
NEW MEXICO TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING
Historic Fuller Lodge, Pajarito Room
2132 Central Avenue, Los Alamos, NM 87544
February 15, 2017
2:00 PM

Interim Chairman Chris Stagg called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Commissioners present:

Interim Chairman Chris Stagg
Commissioner John Garcia
Commissioner Jennifer Kimball
Commissioner George A. Brooks
Commissioner Scott Hutton
Commissioner Belia Alvarez

Commissioners not present:

Commissioner Emerson R. Vallo

Introduction of Guests:

Chairman Stagg asked everyone attending the meeting to introduce themselves and to state the district or organization they represent.

Welcome from Harry Burgess, Los Alamos County Manager

Mr. Burgess welcomed the group and said that Los Alamos County is very involved in expanding the tourism base in their area:

- Ski Hill – he said the county is still highly dependent on their neighbor, the National Lab, but they value diversity of employment and want to retain businesses that attract tourism. They're currently working on a transfer of ownership of Ski Hill to a public-private partnership, where the county ownership would about 60% of the land, and a ski operator who will run the facility for the county will also have part ownership.
- They have an RFP out for the development of the tourism plan, looking to structure their efforts around some significant activities here – like the recently-established Manhattan Project National Historic Park. They'll be promoting Los Alamos as a gateway to three National Parks: Manhattan Project, Valles Caldera, and Bandelier.
- He said he'd also like to highlight this building, part of the history of the area and one of the original ranch buildings here prior to the Manhattan Project. After the Feds moved over the bridge, he said, they deeded this property to the city to be maintained as event space. It's had

- a \$4M renovation, to update the aesthetics, add Wi-Fi, and improve fire protection, and it has been excavated to show historical structures found underneath the front area of the building.
- He said the County Council hopes the group has time to visit these areas, as well as the adjacent historical museum, also renovated in the past year.

Approval of Agenda: Motion was made by Chairman Stagg to approve the February 15, 2017, agenda and passed.

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Chairman Stagg to approve the December 16, 2016, minutes, and passed.

New Mexico Tourism Department Update - Rebecca Latham, Cabinet Secretary

Secretary Latham welcomed the group and said it's an honor to be in Los Alamos. They don't need to boost tourism for the money it brings in as much as other areas of the state, she said, but she very much admires their commitment and efforts to prioritize tourism and looks forward to seeing the progress of their plans.

This meeting is the first to be recorded and streamed live, and she hopes this will bring more attention to the work of this commission. She thanked the attending members of the North Central Regional Marketing Board for being at the meeting – Kelly Stewart, hosting for Los Alamos County, Tina Whitegeese, soon to be at the Pueblo of Pojoaque, Mayor Barbara Cottam from Angel Fire, and Ed Pulsifer from La Fonda.

2017 Legislative Update

- Secretary Latham said our priorities remain the same regarding budget.
 - Our budget request was essentially for a flat budget. The great news is that both the executive and LFC recommendations supported exactly what our needs are currently.
 - They did shift some funding around, but it did not impact the tourism marketing budget, so we'll be able to continue with that strong \$9.5M into advertising & promotion. To meet requirements in the current budget (to decrease general fund appropriation by 5.5%), we pulled every penny we could find that wasn't already being used for working media, to put into working media. So despite having a decreased budget, we still put over \$1M new dollars into working media, at expense of production and other things. We challenged our partners at Talweg to look for assets they'd collected in video & photo shoots that had not been used before in order to re-introduce those for new commercials without a new production budget. This was a one-time fix, and soon we'll need to shift more dollars into production.
 - Overall we are still strongly prioritizing our fly markets (at the suggestion of the legislature), where we know we can generate a 7:1 return on investment.
 - We won't have a Senate Finance Hearing this session – we do know that through strong relationships with members of the Senate that they believe in and support what we do. We still need strong support from the tourism industry to make a big push for protecting that budget. As it gets closer to end of the session, it'll be harder to justify every dollar

spent by government, so to make sure we're not forgotten, it'll be important for our budget for everyone to keep the importance of tourism in both small towns and urban communities in front of their representatives.

- Amend Litter Control Council – changes to the act have been assigned as HB218.
 - It will be heard tomorrow. Representative Rebecca Dow (based out of Truth or Consequences) introduced the bill that will abolish the Litter Control Council and create a New Mexico Clean & Beautiful Advisory Committee of 7 members, to be nominated by the Tourism Commission. Rep. Dow has been great in explaining and working to support the new recommendations.
 - The current board has 28 members, appointed by the Governor, very specifically drawn from particular industries, and they must be approved by the Senate. Over the years, it has not been able to keep the positions filled under these circumstances, and the council hasn't been able to meet for 3 years. The main opposition for the legislature is over the new size, and a suggestion has been made to increase it to 11 members, but the current 28 members have been the ones who suggested a 7-member executive board or quorum, as 7 members could be more responsive. We're eager to continue working with the community stakeholders on this.
 - Once the bill is signed, it would go into effect July 1st. We'd ask the Tourism Commission to appoint a nominating committee of the interested parties who could decide who is best recommended for these 7 positions. A more manageably-sized council can be more active, involved, and responsive.

- We are losing Heather Briganti as our Communications and PR Director. The Secretary said we've been blessed to have her and wish her all the best with her move and new position. Tourism will be hiring two new positions to cover her duties: a PIO who will also handle policy, working as the legislative liaison. She will prioritize leveraging communications for a larger impact for the department. The second position will be a full-time director for travel PR efforts who can build on what Heather has done, and what Laura is now working on – to continue to put New Mexico in the hearts and minds of Americans making travel decisions.

- Discuss Tourism Day at the Legislature
 - Historically, the NMHA (and before it, the Tourism Assoc.) has provided talking points to rally legislators about tourism. Due to limited resources, NMHA has taken a step back on that this session. Secretary Latham told the Commissioners that if they see value in continuing this approach, that she's happy to organize the logistics and the talking points. She recommended they choose a date close to the end of the session and ask for industry RSVPs, so appointments could be set for meetings with legislators. One idea is to piggy-back off Tourism's social media campaign by having the industry members take pictures with their legislators and post them on social media, to create lots of talk about the importance of tourism in New Mexico.
 - Commissioner Brooks said one of the major issues was that the tourism representatives mostly spoke among themselves without enough legislators involved to make a difference, and that makes it not worth the time, effort and money.
 - Commissioner Garcia agreed and said he thought the tourism stakeholders/industry leaders are the appropriate ones to organize an event and push tourism's agenda, not the

commissioners – and not the Tourism Department. He said it might be best to wait until next year to plan this, as it seems difficult to get the attention of the legislators this year due to the focus on budget.

- Chairman Stagg said he thought it might be worthwhile to produce a flyer that highlights support for the department's budget, other legislative issues that both NMTD and NMHA are working on, showing the positions on particular bills, etc. They could pick a day to have NMTD make appointments with legislators, and stakeholders would discuss with them things the industry supports.
- Secretary Latham said that it's best to be respectful of their limited resources. The point is not to lobby or push a legislative agenda, but to keep tourism in the top of their minds. She said to focus on *communication* with the legislators might be a more productive path and one likely to win more favor with NMHA members. NMTD and NMHA could together come up with positive, effective talking points. She said the legislature misses seeing your faces and hearing our positive news.
- Chairman Stagg said if even 20 people showed up to meet with the legislators with such positive messages, it would be a good way to reinforce all of the good things tourism is doing for the state.

NMTD Program Brief

Jordan Guenther – Update on Marketing & Promotion

- The new website has been launched, and has met with overwhelming success and praise. The team is working on some gaps in content. They've scheduled a webinar for February 23rd, and he encourages all here to register and attend to get a very thorough walk-through the new elements of the website. In addition, he said, they will spend some time on the premium partnership media kit. There's been discussion about new opportunities for communities, DMOs, businesses, and event organizers to buy in and create premium placement in the website. The community wanted to see improvement in the website, since they're sending traffic to us and want to see the value in it. It's generating 125,000 unique visitors every month.
- The New Mexico True Certified Program launched last fall, and to date, we have 155 true certified partners in the program. These partners applied for the made-in NM category (the largest category), or the born-in/raised-in NM category. We've incorporated our True-Certified mark for those who have qualified – they show the mark on their website, on packaging, etc. He had a really insightful meeting with the New Mexico Grocery Association yesterday; we can create more awareness and develop it in the next few months. He said that NMTD could use the help of the community at this meeting to spread the word to their local businesses as to who could be a fit for True Certified. He said we're getting 5-10 new businesses every week to evaluate for the program. Chairman Stagg said that some Taos restaurants are into the organic movement and locally-grown produce, etc. Jordan said that NMTD is thinking along those lines for a phase two – right now they would fall into the born in/raised in and grown-in categories. He said they're working on how to incorporate appropriate restaurants and grocers into True Certified.

Heather Briganti – Update on Media Coverage

- In-state media coverage – The Sunport has three beautiful signs that feature NM True Certified products that can be found at the airport – they have great imagery.
- National media coverage – *TravelSquire.com* named New Mexico one of the Top 20 Destinations (in the world) to Visit in 2017. Last spring, we participated in an east coast media mission, and there met this travel writer from *TravelSquire.com*, Terri Marshall. She'll be here on Saturday to do a loop trip through southern New Mexico, also for *TravelSquire.com*, so we're expecting to see more from her soon. More coverage, resulting from a media trip this time last year, came from Eileen Ogintz, another travel writer who has produced lots of media coverage for New Mexico. She wrote a story that featured the Breakfast Burrito Byway, Tia Sophia's, and El Pinto; the article on "Making food part of your family vacation" ran in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Orlando Sentinel* this past month. Also, we had visiting media as a result of the TRENDS conference, and were able to get a couple of writers from the panel to stay some extra time in New Mexico. Don George, the editor-in-chief for National Geographic Traveler, did a loop through the north central region, including Los Alamos; he'd never been in New Mexico. Heather offered her thanks to the industry partners who arranged an "awesome itinerary" for Don and his wife – they had a fabulous time and fell in love with New Mexico. Veronica Stoddard, who used to be with *USA Today* and is now freelancing, went up to Chimayo, escorted by Laura. We hope to get some great coverage from both of them.
- Upcoming media events – Later in this fiscal year, we're hoping to do media desk-sides with partners in Austin, since it's a new market for us. We're planning one for Denver – a larger media event in a strong media market – where lots of writers who write for national publications live, since they have a major international airport nearby.
- A huge thankyou to Jordan's team, who've created the first-ever pressroom on the website. It features anniversaries, what's new, story ideas, superlatives, and rankings. It's a great resource for travel writers, and a great way for them to get to know our website, too.
- Secretary Latham thanked Heather, saying this is where they're also keeping these articles and information for the industry. With continued growth and popularity of social media, we're all challenged to constantly come up with new content to share on newmexico.org, as a tool-kit for the tourism industry. If you have nothing else to say, you can point to this resource for your own pressroom.

Chairman Stagg thanked Heather and said they will all miss her.

David Griscom – Update on Tourism Development

- He told the group that this is a relatively new division in the department. It encompasses four Visitor Information Centers (VICs), the Keep New Mexico True Program (the Clean & Beautiful Program), and Tourism Development, which is tasked with working with communities, local governments, and New Mexico non-profits that would like to develop new tourism product or enhance their existing product. One of the ways to do that is through the Grant Program.
- Grant Program launched on Jan. 12 – he said they've received some fantastic proposals for development, mostly in the "enhancing existing" category. They've received almost \$600K in requests, but we only have \$350K to grant. The grant is on a rolling timeline, where each week they evaluate all the proposals they've received. As a process filter, they've created a

“Think Sheet” so they can evaluate whether it’s a good fit for our grant. The proposal quality is high, and they expect the projects to be the same.

- Keep New Mexico True Program – David said they’ve just hired a new program coordinator, Victoria Romejko, and will be hitting the road soon to meet with the C&B affiliates. The C&B Program is funded by \$.50 from every motor vehicle registration the state receives. He said we use those funds to grant out to communities around the state to do clean-up, beautification, recycling, and anti-graffiti, etc. Victoria will be the point person for that. An ad campaign will be rolled out soon – Jordan and our advertising partner, Talweg Creative, coordinated to create the images for it.

Secretary Latham provided context for the role of Clean & Beautiful and the grant program:

- Keep NM True is the marketing arm for the C&B Program, and its focus is to encourage New Mexicans to participate.
 - Our approach is to inspire New Mexicans to put their pride into action, she said, to make them proud of their state, and what we’re all stewards of.
 - Then we give them an action plan to participate in – a clean-up or community beautification. The fund is for large, impactful projects that have a lasting effect on a community, and which create a desire for people to participate. We’ve funded small parks and a program in partnership with the Zuni Pueblo called “Trash to Treasures,” where an artist creates a piece of art from trash to sell, in order to generate revenue.
 - This is a phenomenal program, she said, and it’s the first time we’ll have a broadcast as well as corresponding digital and print campaigns, to remind New Mexicans of what we have in our state, why it’s important to protect it, and give them a place to put their state pride into action.
- David continued, explaining that the roll-out will be late February-March-early April, with a series of digital and print marketing pieces, and broadcast radio throughout the state, including Pandora.
 - The call to action is to go to the website, take the pledge, and sign up for clean-up events in their community. This creates ambassadors around the state who can advocate within their communities, and leverage their voices to bring others into the movement to build in-state pride. Prints show lush scenery of the Rio Grande, and shots of the Organ Mountains and Shiprock.
 - In answer to a question on the grants, David said that grants can fund infrastructure projects (except co-op marketing and advertising, or C&B). They consider most others that increase/enhance the visitor experience.

Secretary Latham – Update on New Mexico Magazine and Vacation Guide

- The subscriptions for students program has been very well received – it provides a resource for students at no charge, gives local businesses the opportunity to support that initiative – they can leverage that they’ve donated to the program via a printed label. For instance, “*courtesy of La Fonda,*” etc. A \$250 donation provides 30 copies of NM Magazine for 8 months. Kurt Coey and the ad sales reps tell us working with the educators and donors has been going very well.
- Also, once the new New Mexico True Vacation Guide is out, we have a three month partnership with Barnes & Noble where the magazine and guide will both be for sale in all

Barnes & Noble bookstores across the nation, in their travel section and end-cap for three weeks, then rotate.

- Secretary Latham told the group that we've taken a new approach for the NMT Vacation Guide this year. Traditionally, it's been primarily lists. The new format is to serve as more of an inspirational piece, more like a magazine, where it directs readers to the listings at newmexico.org. After the website has been re-vamped, we will take steps to update the Guide as well.

Responding to a question about the New Mexico True TV show, she told the group that the department sponsors the TV show. The content is not purchased by ads; rather it is based on what's best in New Mexico, not on elements that have the biggest budget to participate. We own the content and also use it in social media to show what New Mexico has to offer.

Los Alamos Community Engagement Project - Dave Hayduk and Jim Glover

Dave Hayduk said they are currently working with Los Alamos to create their own brand, so that it integrates with the community. Dave said they did not create the brand, "Los Alamos, where discoveries are made," but that they are working to integrate the brand into the fabric of the community, much like NMTD is doing with New Mexico True. Dave introduced Jim to continue with the discussion of the Los Alamos brand.

- You have to go from community to community to get each entity to understand what the brand means; it's a 3-pronged process to create a successful community brand:
 - Brand positioning – how you want the community to be perceived
 - Brand identity – visuals, cues, logo, and website
 - Brand integration – make sure the community members understand and get behind the brand
- The Process: you need to distill brand positioning, get community engagement with locals and businesses, talent, visitors, and tourists. Get them engaged, excited, and to embrace the brand. You create action teams/alliances around the brand; have community meetings to come together and focus on details of how they start, then find a way to deliver on the promise of the brand, and how to leverage it. He discussed the brands for Los Lunas, Farmington, and Gallup.
- He said that while history is the soul of the brand, it's true that *discoveries* can mean more. So they could distill the brand to: Los Alamos is all about cultivating curiosity and creating "aha" moments, and "what is your aha moment?"

New Mexico Hospitality Association - Jen Schroer, President and CEO

*Chairman Stagg told the group that Jen couldn't be here today, as she is testifying at the Legislative Committee Hearing on the bill to amend the lodgers' tax law. Ed Pulsifer spoke a bit about the bill. Chairman Stagg told the group that the Hospitality Association partnered with the Association of Commerce & Industry, earlier in January, and they put on a great conference with the Chamber in Santa Fe. They had a reception at La Fonda that the Santa Fe Chamber of

Commerce sponsored, Business Day that ACI sponsored, and the TRENDS Conference. He said that having all those together worked really well and had better attendance than having the events individually. In future, they should include more on tourism, as he believed it was not emphasized enough compared to business and economic development.

Reports from Commission Members

Commissioner Hutton

- Great news for Santa Fe: the Mayor is adding \$1M to the tourism budget; the state of the city speech is tonight
- BrewFest – coming up at the Santa Fe Ski mountain on the 25th
- Restaurant Week for Santa Fe (19th-26th) and for Taos – the following week
- Upcoming Senate Bill 58 – to allow restaurant patrons to bring their own wine. There's debate as to how that will work

Commissioner Kimball

- Talked about how beautifully done the new Blake Hotel is in Taos. She said it's taking hospitality to a whole new level, and she advises everyone to go check it out. Do stay there and ski, she said.

Commissioner Alvarez

- First, she wished Cabinet Sec. Latham a belated happy birthday (it was over the past weekend)
- The Las Cruces Mayor will address their city next week
- The 5th Annual Las Cruces Country Music Festival will be on April 28-30. They've had a 10-percent increase in attendance, and have a great line-up this year
- Las Cruces Spanish Market is this coming weekend, with 30 artists represented
- There will soon be an announcement of a new tour operator company for Spaceport; they also expect a third tenant at Spaceport soon. Dan Hicks, of Las Cruces, and from White Sands Missile Range, is the new executive director at Spaceport. She said he's a fantastic person, and he's creating new opportunities for the southern New Mexico area.

Commissioner Garcia

- He said he'd had a steak dinner at La Fonda a couple of weeks ago, and it was the best he remembers ever having – to definitely go check that out!
- Albuquerque is focusing on amateur sports and teams and the infrastructure for them – he thinks that's a great opportunity as a market for business to the hotels and restaurants.
- He spoke about how the New Mexico True Certified brand is genius, that lots of people talk to him about it. You see it on billboards and trucks, and it shows a sense of pride, he said, that goes beyond just leveraging the brand.

Commissioner Brooks

- He said his “aha moment” today was making the first turn at Pajarito – there is definitely powder on the hill!
- The ski industry is going well overall. Hopefully by the end of the season, we’ll have some great numbers.

Chairman Stagg

- He said thanks to Jenny for pitching the new hotel (the Blake), that they’re very proud of it. Since she’s an experienced hotelier, it’s great to get her feedback. He’s hoping to get a commission meeting up there, and also legislative meetings up there.
- The Flight Santa Fe program is coming along – is a help to Taos and Los Alamos. They’re hoping to build more traffic out of Santa Fe. They have the new American Airlines Santa Fe-Phoenix flights, so please use those to PHX, or to the west coast. For the first quarter, they’ve been running at about 50% occupancy, and they need 70% to break even. The second quarter is looking better.

Public Comments

- Ed Pulsifer said a small group of hoteliers are taking the flight from Santa Fe to Phoenix in the first week of May to meet with meeting planners for leisure travel collaboration and to promote this flight.
- Chairman Stagg mentioned that it’s their hope to build service for the Santa Fe Airport for flights to Houston, Chicago, and Atlanta, so travelers will have easy access to northern New Mexico, for skiing, etc.
- Invitation to come to the Nature Center after this meeting for refreshments and to see the building.

Next Meeting

- Sec. Latham would like to have the commissioners engage the tourism industry and their communities by hosting meetings in their districts, to be more involved in the process. This has gone really well, so we’d like to continue that trend, she said. We’ll be reaching out to Commissioners Alvarez and Vallo in Congressional District 2 for their recommendations on speakers, topics, and location. If you can narrow the dates down to a week, then we can check everyone’s schedules. She said we need to look at April, May, or June. Commissioners Kimball and Hutton will be out of the country in late April.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Interim Chairman, Chris Stagg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Stagg", written over a horizontal line.

Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Latham

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Latham", written over a horizontal line.