

NEW MEXICO TRUE

New Mexico Tourism Commission

4th Quarter Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 2, 2023, 12:00 pm

Ruidoso Convention Center

111 Sierra Blanca Dr, Ruidoso, NM 88345

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 12:04 pm by Chair Jenny Kimball.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present:

Jennifer L. Kimball (Chair)

Ben Abruzzo

Belia Alvarez

Tania Armenta

Bill Lee

Commissioners not present:

Emerson R. Vallo

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Armenta moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Abruzzo, and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF FY23 Q3 MEETING MINUTES:

Commissioner Alvarez moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Lee, and the motion passed unanimously.

NMTD PROGRAM RESULTS:

1. Clean and Beautiful Program:
 - Provided approximately \$800,000 in funding to 45 communities in New Mexico for litter cleanup projects.
2. Tourism Event Growth and Sustainability Program:
 - Offers support to events, including an accelerator program, cooperative marketing, and sponsorship opportunities.
3. Rural Pathway Program:
 - Awarded \$50,000 to the Pueblo piggeries for the development of an interpretive center and trail.
4. Marketing / Promotions Divisions:
 - National Campaign focuses on advertising out of state and has received budget

- increases and special appropriations for recovery.
 - Targeted markets include Los Angeles, Santiago, Phoenix, Denver, Houston, Austin, Dallas, and soon the San Francisco Bay Area.
 - Cooperative Marketing Programs provide matching funds to promote destinations effectively with partners like municipalities, local governments, and tribal communities.
 - New Mexico True Certified program highlights locally made or grown products, driving sales through promotions and retail placements.
 - National Earned Media efforts secured \$12.5 million worth of media coverage without paid advertising.
 - Tourism Exchange is a business-to-business marketplace connecting hotels, events, retail, and experiences with global distributors, benefiting smaller businesses.
5. New Mexico Magazine celebrated its 100th anniversary with a special exhibit in partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs. The magazine received 17 international awards and experienced a 29% increase in ad sales. Nominations are open for true heroes in the community.

RUIDOSO PANEL:

Ski Apache - Ken Marlatt, Director

Ken discussed Ski Apache, a ski resort in New Mexico known for its 55 runs and unique gondola. The resort, opened in 1961, is proud to be one of only two Native American ski resorts in the US. Ken acknowledged the challenges faced by the resort, including the environmental impact of the Little Bear fire in 2012, which altered weather patterns and resulted in colder temperatures and stronger winds. Despite these challenges, Ski Apache remains popular, attracting over 100,000 visitors each winter. In addition to skiing, the resort offers summer activities like ziplining and disc golf. However, winter activities generate most of the revenue. Ken also highlighted the difficulties associated with the road leading to Ski Apache, including safety concerns and limited resources from the Department of Transportation. The resort provides transportation for staff but faces challenges in accommodating customers due to limited vehicles and road conditions. Ideally, a gondola would provide the best solution because of the decaying road and lack of vehicles best suited to handle the weather conditions.

Audience Member "Kevin," a season pass holder from Ski Apache, commented that a tramway, bus or gondola would sell Ski Apache out in the wintertime and provide more summer season tourism. Many customers complain because by the time they arrive, Ski Apache is closed due to the changing weather. Often these customers are renting their skis in Las Cruces and making the drive into Ruidoso. Kevin also commented that he has been frequenting Ski Apache for 24 years and has noticed positive change with Director Marlatt. Structural and safety changes that are important.

Rafael Salas, Mayor Pro Tem

Rafael, the Mayor Pro Tem, expresses gratitude and discusses the reliance of their community on tourism, specifically ski-related activities. They highlight efforts to bridge generational gaps and promote outdoor recreation. Rafael addresses challenges faced, including droughts, fires, and

freezing temperatures that have impacted infrastructure and tourism. Effective communication during crises, strategic planning, and marketing are emphasized. The community's strengths, such as favorable weather, diverse activities, and scenic landscapes, are mentioned. Threats like wildfires and regrowth of trees are also acknowledged. Partnerships with nonprofit organizations, including the Smokey Bear Stewardship Foundation and Ski Apache Adaptive Sports Program, are highlighted.

LEVEL UP PROGRESS:

Antoinette Vigil provided an update on the "Level Up" program, a collaboration between the LANL Foundation and the Department of Workforce Solutions, aimed at supporting youth in the workforce. The program is being piloted in Las Cruces and Taos, with \$720,000 funding for 120 participants. It focuses on the hospitality industry but may expand to other sectors in the future. Participants receive full payment to reduce employer burdens. The program is funded by discretionary money from the Department of Workforce Solutions and will continue based on its success. Boot camps for employers and participants are included, with a curriculum emphasizing destinations and marketing. Hotels and restaurants are involved as host employers. The program is still being evaluated, and future funding and expansion will depend on results and potential partnerships with existing programs in different communities.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES:

Commissioner Belia Alvarez

Las Cruces is experiencing various exciting updates and events. Virgin Galactic's recent spaceflight marked the final testing phase before commercial flights begin in August. The city is expecting a visit from the Italian Air Force in two weeks. The inaugural meetup event attracted over 10,000 visitors and featured family-friendly activities, music, and art. The upcoming Spaceport America Space Cup, the world's largest intercollegiate rocket engineering competition, is expected to draw even more participants and have a significant economic impact. Outdoor recreation festivals have seen strong attendance, with Memorial Day weekend attracting approximately 30,000 visitors and an expected 50,000 for July. The region is also looking forward to the Annual Las Cruces Wine Festival and the 51st Hatch Chili Festival. While the lodging tax in Las Cruces fell slightly below projections, it remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. The average daily rate and revenue per available room in guestrooms have remained stable despite current economic conditions.

Commissioner Tania Armenta

Albuquerque has experienced a robust visitor economy, fueled by sports tourism and the return of city-wide conventions. The tourism marketing district's first year has doubled the budget, enabling successful marketing campaigns like wrapping trains in Denver with Albuquerque-themed artwork. The city has expanded its presence in airports and established a significant presence in Los Angeles through outdoor billboards. Upcoming events include the Gathering of Nations, Wine Festival, Lowrider Car Show, Flamenco Festival, and Mariachi Spectacular. The fall will feature the Balloon Fiesta, coinciding with a solar eclipse, presenting opportunities for familiarization trips and media coverage. Albuquerque is actively promoting Route 66 and pursuing a destination master plan to enhance the visitor experience and achieve long-term objectives.

Commissioner Ben Abruzzo

The winter season was successful for the ski industry in terms of skier visits and economic impact. Statewide, there was an 11% increase in skier visits, totaling 845,000 visits and generating an estimated \$472 million in economic impact and \$36 million in gross receipts tax. Residents also actively participated in winter activities. Employment remains a challenge, but efforts are being made to address this issue. Ski areas are now focusing on ramping up their summer season to attract year-round tourism. The industry is optimistic about the future and looks forward to continued growth and success in the coming years.

Commissioner Bill Lee

McKinley County offers a range of thrilling events such as rodeos, bull riding competitions, car shows, motorcycle rides, Native American dances, and concerts. The area expects a notable surge in visitors, as hotels report strong average daily rates. The increasing popularity of Route 66 as a travel destination is being embraced, with plans for a new mural and photo opportunities along the iconic route. The community is actively promoting tourism and striving to provide memorable experiences for visitors.

Chairwoman Jennifer L. Kimball

The second annual Santa Fe International Literary Festival was successful, featuring renowned authors such as John Irving, Gillian Flynn, and Jennifer Egan. The upcoming market season brings relief as Spanish Market and Indian Market are set to take place with the help of others. Indian Market has a new executive director who is bringing energy and transparency to the organization. The summer will conclude with the opening of the state and city's first contemporary art museum in the rail yard in September.

Secretary Schroer U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission update

The Route 66 Centennial Commission has conducted two meetings focused on recommending activities and projects to Congress. It's important to note that the commission does not have any allocated funding. The process involves collaborating with stakeholders to identify projects and make recommendations to Congress. Some projects may not require funding or approval from Congress. The commission includes representatives from tourism, scenic byways, and national parks. Each state will establish a State Planning Committee to evaluate and propose activities and projects, including infrastructure, tourism marketing, and Route 66-related experiences. Discussions with Miles Partnership are ongoing to create an online platform for project submissions. Given the lack of funding, Brand USA is being considered to lead the marketing efforts for the Route 66 Centennial.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURN:

The motion was made by Commissioner Abruzzo to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Armenta, and passed unanimously. Chairwoman Kimball adjourned the meeting at 2:09 pm.

Approved by Commission vote at public meeting held on June 2, 2023.


Commission Chair Jenny Kimball