

SALADO TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES – April 16, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Larry Prellop, Chair, 8:27am, April 16, 2024, Salado Municipal Building

CALL OF ROLL: CHAIRPERSON

Present were Larry Prellop, Chair, Richard McClure, John Senger, Glen Bowen, and Lynette Jones. Jennifer Weir was not present.

Prellop welcomed Village Administrator Manuel De La Rosa to the Board Meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: There were no minutes to approve from last meeting because there was not a quorum.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS: The new members were introduced by Prellop. Lynette Jones and Glen Bowen gave a brief impression of their backgrounds and interest in the Tourism Board. Both mentioned they love Salado.
- B. UPDATE ON VISITORS CENTER EMPLOYEES: Prellop asked if there had been any new movement regarding hiring a new marketing manager and De La Rosa stated that an offer had been made but not yet accepted. Prellop asked why the Advisory Board was not allowed the courtesy of reviewing the candidate's resume, or a meeting with the candidate to ask pertinent marketing question about the position. De La Rosa stated that hiring is his domain, and he is responsible only to the mayor and alderman in this regard. Prellop pointed out to that the board was involved in the selection of Andrea Howard, the former Tourism Director. There was no mention at this point about the process of hiring April Walker. De La Rosa stated that the tourism marketing manager's responsibilities are more than just marketing. They also include competency in public relations and tourism knowledge.
- C. DISCUSS AND CONSIDER ACTIONS TAKEN BY PREVIOUS TOURISM DIRECTOR CONCERNING ANDERSON MARKETING GROUP: Prellop introduced the agenda item regarding an existing contract with the Andersen Marketing Group of San Antonio. He stated he was concerned that April Walker, former tourism marketing manager, hired the firm without reviewing the need for an external marketing firm with the Advisory Board.

Additionally, the Advisory Board members present agreed that hiring a marketing firm to perform marketing for the tourism marketing manager was not appropriate and they considered it a waste of money.

According to De La Rosa, the contract was approved by Don Ferguson, the former City Manager. The contract was for a scope of work to rebrand Salado as a tourist destination and to generate a new tagline for Salado that would speak to its uniqueness. Both Prellop and Alderman Paul Cox stated they were disappointed by the [5] five or so tag lines the Anderson Group suggested, stating that they were all weak. The strongest one was thought to be, "Salado, that special kind of place."

De La Rosa mentioned that he had the contract with him, but he didn't share it and apparently wasn't asked for a review by the Board. One Board member suggested that the Anderson Group contract should be included as an agenda item for the next Board meeting if not shared before then.

Prellop and Cox both suggested Andersen go back to the drawing board to come up with something stronger. According to De La Rosa the Anderson Group is now ready to present their ideas again to the Tourism Advisory Board and the Aldermen.

A discussion of the \$7625 Anderson Group fee was discussed, and it was generally agreed that it had been a waste of money. De La Rosa said the scope of work was just for a new marketing phrase. Bowen asked De La Rosa if the contract could be cancelled to which De La Rosa responded, "No. It would cost more to cancel it than to leave it in place."

Prellop said he would call the Andersen Group for a follow-up, but De La Rosa suggested that he should first send "her" an email to let her know that Prellop would call to arrange a zoom-style meeting to present any new thoughts about a stronger tagline.

In between agenda topics, De La Rosa mentioned the hotel occupancy tax revenue is pegged for tourism and is a current budget item. Several board members asked the amount, but De La Rosa didn't have the figures in front of him, however the Village budget which breaks out the tourism budget and expenses plus the occupancy tax revenue is a public record.

- D. DISCUSS AND CONSIDER POSSIBLE ACTION TAKEN BY PREVIOUS TOURISM DIRECTOR CONCERNING POSSIBLE CONTRACTS FOR TWO BILLBOARDS PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED. Prellop asked De La Rosa if there was any additional information about the two potential billboards to which he responded, "No." A discussion was held about the distance of the billboards from Salado and how this was not an effective advertising media because for matching funds they must be more than 50 miles from the Village. De La Rosa explained there are a lot of towns in between that distance and Salado making them virtually ineffective. Bowen mentioned that regardless of how funded, that billboard advertising for places to stop, eat, refuel, etc., are only effective if they are near the exits for these facilities. Thereby, billboard advertising for Salado needs to be in the immediate area of exits for the community. The billboards must state which exits to

take and it's usually means the next one or two which doesn't include lots of towns in between. The discussion ended without resolution.

In between agenda topics, Bowen asked if April Walker was still working for the Village while employed by Cedar Park as its tourism marketing manager. McClure confirmed that she was and Debra Bean, City Secretary, agreed. Bowen asked if anyone had read the unprofessional post that Walker made to the Village FB page the day before? Jones said she saw it and agreed it was inappropriate. Others on the Board had not. Bowen mentioned that the statement was since corrected and was no longer inappropriate in its corrected form. Cox said he would investigate the posting while making a note to himself. McClure said it's Walker or nothing. Bowen mentioned that he could find a qualified volunteer to make daily posts without remuneration, however he was told that the decision rests with De La Rosa and the Aldermen.

- E. DISCUSS AND CONSIDER POSSIBLE ACTION SETTING THE DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE SALADO TOURISM ADVORY BOARD. Prellop provided the date of May 21, 2024, same time, and place for the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by Richard McClure and seconded by Glen Bowen. The meeting was adjourned.