

**Elko Convention & Visitors Authority  
Lodging Committee Meeting  
Comfort Inn and Suites  
2970 Idaho St  
Elko, NV 89801  
Wednesday, December 9, 2015  
6:00 PM.  
MINUTES**

1. **Welcome & Introductions;** Barry Bhakta, Chairman

**Committee Members Present:** Jairah Ramirez, Hilton Garden Inn  
Kristi Hansen, Play Elko Properties  
Jolene Stone, Ledgestone Hotel  
Laurie Nelson, Best Western  
Hannah Morrison, Holiday Inn Express  
Mike Patel, Scottish Inns  
Bob Bhakta, Esquire Inn  
Dan Bhakta, Holiday Motel  
Chuck Lal, Days Inn  
Kitty Nash, Oak Tree Inn  
Michelle Mota, Comfort Inn  
Laura Dorfman, Quality Inn  
Danny Bhakta, Centre Motel

**ECVA Staff Present:** Don Newman, Executive Director  
Tom Lester, Tourism & Convention Coordinator  
Kandiss Fallowfield, Events Coordinator  
Amber Merz, Administrative Assistant

**Visitors Present:** Russell McMullen, Western Folklife Center  
David Roche, Western Folklife Center

Mr. Barry Bhakta called the meeting to order at 5:56 pm. Introductions were made around the room.

2. **Public Comments** – Non-Action Item

Pursuant to N.R.S. 241.020, 2 (c) (3) this time is devoted to comments by the general public, if any, and discussion of those comments. No action may be taken upon a matter raised under this item on the agenda until the matter itself has been specifically included on a successive agenda and identified to be an action item.

None at this time.

3. Approval of the Minutes from the September 23, 2015 meeting – **Action Item (public comment)**

*Mr. Bob Bhakta made a motion to approve the September 23, 2015 Lodging Committee Minutes, Mr. Dan Bhakta seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.*

4. Presentation, discussion and possible approval of a request from the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering for a \$5.00 per room sponsorship for the 2016 event –**Action Item**

Mr. Russell McMullen of the Western Folklife Center Board of Directors introduced himself to the Lodging Committee. He stated that the reason he is here today is that the Western Folklife Center struggled quite a bit financially. He stated that there are not a lot of local board members for the Western Folklife Center. He does not want to see discussion begin on moving the event out of Elko, this has not come up yet but if they continue the way they did last year anything is possible. They do have an endowment that they have had to put some substantial dents in since 2008 and he feels they should be growing that endowment not decreasing it. Last year the Cowboy Poetry Gathering only broke even. They are struggling financially due to the Cowboy Poetry Gathering, maintenance of their facility and various programs that the Western Folklife Center puts on throughout the year. They are asking for this financial help to sustain the Western Folklife Center throughout the year. He stated that there have been hundreds of other Cowboy Poetry events that have come from theirs but theirs is The National Cowboy Poetry Gathering and they feel that is important. He stated that he feels it is Elko's responsibility to step up and help maintain this event. Before the Gathering there was really nothing that brought people to town that time of year and he feels that they have done a lot to stimulate the economy during what would otherwise be a slow time. He stated that their facility needs a lot of repairs that they are not able to afford and the Folklife Center staff has gone without raises for about five years now.

Mr. Don Newman stated that he agrees, the Gathering certainly comes at a slow time of year for Elko. He said he feels that it is a victim of its own success in that there are almost 280 other events that have sprouted off of this event. Mr. Newman stated that this Lodging

Sponsorship was created originally for the Mine Expo Banquet and once it became self sustaining they shifted the funds to another event in need. He stated that he certainly recognizes the importance of an event that fills the town for almost 5 days. He stated that after the Lodging Committee discusses this if they decide to move forward it will then go on to the ECVA Board of Directors for the final approval. He stated that we certainly do not want to lose this event. He feels that Elko is really what makes this event great and sets it apart from all of the others and he really feels it would not be as great in any other community.

Mr. Tom Lester stated that there are many grants that they could apply for through the NCOT. They could write grants to get funds to pay for a booth to promote their events at shows and events such as the NFR, they could write a grant to have postcards and save the date cards printed and distributed via mail or certified folder and there are even grants that they could write that can be used to help with the repairs that their facility needs. He believes that the Elko Chamber recently used grant funding to help repair their building. Mr. Lester stated that if they have any postcards or promotional materials that have been printed he would love to take them with him to any of the shows he works as well.

Further discussion took place.

Mr. Barry Bhakta stated that anytime an event comes to town people tend to think that the hotels make all of the money off of that event. He stated that this is only half right. The hotels do make money off of the events but so do the other businesses such as restaurants and gas stations. He thinks it would be great if someone with the Western Folklife Center would reach out to those businesses and ask for their support as well.

Mr. Newman reminded the committee that the ECVA would send out a letter to each hotel asking for their support and they would return the letter and their check to the ECVA. Once all of the funds have come in the ECVA would then cut a check for the total amount and give that to the Western Folklife Center.

*Ms. Kristi Hansen made a motion to approve a request from the Western Folklife Center for the \$5.00 per room sponsorship letter for the 2016 National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Mrs. Jairah Ramirez seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.*

##### 5. Review of ECVA Activities and Room Tax Update - **Non-Action Item**

Mr. Don Newman stated that Room tax is trending down about 7% but we are hopeful that the Cowboy Poetry Gathering will help to bring those numbers back up. Then once we get into spring and summer we should see more vacation and I-80 travel which will bring it up as well. Mr. Newman asked if anyone had any questions.

Mrs. Ramirez asked if Mr. Newman knew if there was an updated timeline for the sports complex.

Mr. Newman stated he really doesn't know. He knows they got it approved and he believes they have gone to their bonding source for the money.

Mrs. Ramirez asked if anyone knows when they will be breaking ground on Phase One.

Mr. Newman stated he does not know for sure, but he is wondering if it is possibly starting in the spring.

Mrs. Stone stated that she thought she heard it may be sometime in 2017.

Further discussion on the sports complex took place.

Mrs. Kristi Hansen excused herself at 6:25

6. Review of ECVA Marketing Activities – **Non-Action Item**

Mr. Newman stated that Mrs. Nelson is not present but her report is included. He stated that everyone could read through her report and ask him any questions they may have.

Sensing no questions the committee moved on to item 7.

7. Review of ECVA Event Activities – **Non-Action Item**

Mrs. Kandiss Fallowfield stated that the 2016 Events Calendars are finished and they look beautiful. We had some beautiful photos submitted for the Events Calendar Photo Contest. We now have the rights to those so some may be used in the Visitors Guide as well. The Festival of

Trees was the first event in the new Conference Center. The public loved it, it was great to see not only their excitement for the beautiful trees but for the beautiful new building as well. We raised approximately \$25,000 to be divided between the 5 charity partners this year. Mrs. Fallowfield stated that the charity partners are all listed in her report. There were 115 Christmas trees, 20 wreaths and various other items donated, so we were up in donations this year which was very exciting. The event was featured in the Elko Daily Free Press, Chamber Newsletter, as well as in various TV, radio and printed ads. The Reno Dance Company did 2 performances of the Nutcracker and they had a great turnout. She finally got feedback from them and they said that they had a great time and would love to return next year. She stated that she has now started to work on the 2016 Mining Expo, which will be here before we know it.

Mr. Newman stated that if you want Calendars right away please come to the business office and get them. The maintenance staff will be delivering them once our 2016 Visitors Guides come in. Until then they will not be able to take the Calendars out on their own to the individual properties because of how busy they are with the new facility.

#### 8. Review of ECVA Convention and Tourism Activities – **Non-Action Item**

Mr. Lester stated that his travel schedule will start to get really busy in January. He will be attending ABA, which is American Bus Association and NTA which is National Tour Association, then Go West Summit which is the 16 western states and the international market, then the LA Travel and Adventure Show and the Bay Area Travel and Adventure show. They just got back from the Governors Conference on Tourism, that's a great program down there as well in Las Vegas. Patty's Tours will be bringing in another tour, this time in March. He is currently working with a tour operator out of India who is interested in doing the National Parks tour. He did an insert with Madden Media in 6 key markets. We will be getting leads from that and then sending them out information. He stated that he has started the contract with RAD Strategies, he then passed around the most recent leads report from RAD Strategies and explained it to the committee. Mr. Lester then passed around various publications he has advertised in as well as some that have featured Elko. He stated that the 2016 Visitors Guide looks great, we just approved the final proof and it is now being sent to the printers. It should be out by the end of December. Those will be distributed to all of the hoteliers as well as taken to all of the shows he attends and sent to anyone who requests information on Elko. We will be placing a bid to host Rural Round Up in 2017. He feels we have a great chance of being awarded the bid as we do have the new Conference Center.

Mr. Newman told Mr. David Roche that he and the Western Folklife Center Staff and Board should all attend Rural Round Up this year. He feels it would be very beneficial for them. He explained that it moves around the state every year and that most of the ECVA staff attends each year.

Further discussion took place.

9. Discussion of lodging related opportunities or issues – **Non-Action Item**

Mrs. Jolene Stone stated that the Ledgestone construction is going well. The doors are on and the rooms are coming together nicely. They have met some delays but are hoping to still be open in February, they are going to be hosting the March Lodging Meeting.

Mrs. Jairah Ramirez asked if anyone knows when the Hampton will be open.

Mrs. Stone stated that she believes it will be in June 2016.

Further discussion on new property opening dates took place.

Mr. Lester stated that he has PBS coming in during the Cowboy Poetry Gathering. They will be doing a snowmobiling segment featuring the gathering as well as a mine tour with Newmont.

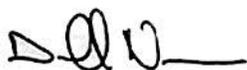
10. Next Lodging Committee meeting: **TBD**

Mr. Barry Bhakta asked if we should cancel the next meeting due to it being during cowboy poetry.

The committee agreed to cancel the January Lodging Committee meeting and possibly have another special session in February.

11. **Adjourn**

*Meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.*



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Don Newman  
Executive Director