

City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Monday, June 7, 2021

Regular Meeting

Item Reports1

Council to discuss and consider action on a request from Old West Balloon Fest/National Hot Air Ballooning Competition for funding to help defray the cost of hotel accommodations.

Staff Contact: Starr Lehl, Economic Development Director



REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEM

If you have a specific topic that you would like the City Council to discuss at a future meeting, please list your name, address, telephone number, and the specific topic. The item will be reviewed and possibly scheduled for a future meeting or forwarded to City staff for appropriate action.

Name: Old West Balloon Fest - Colleen Johnson

Address: P.O. Box 251
Mitchell, NE 69357

Telephone #: (308) 225-0128

Date of Request: 5/18/2021

Description of Requested Topic: LB840 funds - See
Attached document describing request.

The principal purpose of Old West Balloon Fest/National Hot Air Ballooning Competition is to bring a world class event to Scotts Bluff County. The focus is to create a safe event for the public featuring a Hot Air Balloon Festival and **US National Hot Air Ballooning Championship**. Pilots travel from all over the United States and the world to participate in the competition. With adding the National Competition component, the economic impact on our community will be measured through sales and lodging tax collected. Please see lodging tax figures for previous years reported below. The competition in August 2021 will feature 50 competitors from all over the United States. Those pilots will compete for practice for the world competition held in the summer of 2022. We anticipate the pool of Old West Balloon Fest participants to increase to 35 pilots this year. With 85-90 hot air balloons flying in 2021 the expense of providing hotel accommodations for the pilots is overwhelming. We are asking the City of Scottsbluff and the City of Gering to consider using the tourism LB840 funds to help us defray the cost of hotel accommodations. The pilots will be staying in two hotels in Scottsbluff and two hotels in Gering. We are asking for \$25,000 from each municipality. The impact on our community with dollars spent in local businesses is substantial.

All travelers visiting our area will purchase gas, shop the local stores, eat in our restaurants, and use local hotels/RV camps for lodging. Taxes collected through lodging reports from 2020 are impressive considering the Covid19 pandemic. To put things into perspective, lodging tax collected in August before Old West Balloon Fest was re-established reported in 2013 were \$28,438.98; and in 2014 were \$29,542.93. The lodging tax collected in Scotts Bluff County in August 2019 (the first year of Nationals) was \$63,001.98. Last year's tax collected in 2020 was lower at \$43,197.36, but considerably more than the 2013 and 2014 lodging taxes collected. We did not factor in taxes from 2015-2018 as the event was held in September for those years.

The festival will show case our region by attracting the public from surrounding states, Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska. The hope would be that the festival will continue to attract the public from the surrounding region and grow each year in attendance. It will give us the chance to show case our community on a nationwide basis for those pilots who are attending from over 25 states represented in the competition. The feedback from our Nationals pilots who attended the 2019 and 2020 event was incredibly positive. The community involvement was phenomenal with over 300 local volunteers helping to put on an incredible safe event.