

# **City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska**

**Monday, May 2, 2022**

**Regular Meeting**

## **Item Reports1**

**Council to discuss and consider action on a request from Colleen Johnson, Executive Director of Old West Balloon Fest, to help with lodging costs associated with putting on the National Hot Air Ballooning Championship and Old West Balloon Fest.**

**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:** Colleen Johnson - Old West Balloon Fest

**Address:** 170188 Bay State Road, Mitchell, NE 69357

**Telephone #:** (308)225-0128

**Date of Request:** 5-02-2022

**Description of Requested Topic:** We respectfully ask for \$40,000 in funds from the  
Community Programming Fund to help with lodging cost associated with putting on a  
National Hot Air Balloon Championship and Old West Balloon Fest. Please see  
the attached document for further information.

### **Attachment Requesting funds from the Community Programming Fund**

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 featured 45 competitors from all over the United States and 27 Old West Balloon Fest Pilots. We anticipate the pool of Old West Balloon Fest participants to increase to 35 pilots this year. With 80-85 hot air balloons flying in 2022, the expense of providing hotel accommodations for the pilots is overwhelming. Our budget expenditures have risen 20% from 2021 to 2022. We are asking the City of Scottsbluff for \$40,000 from the Community Programming fund to help us defray the cost of hotel accommodations. The impact on our community with dollars spent in local businesses is substantial.

All travelers visiting our area will purchase gas, shop local stores, eat in our restaurants, and use local hotels/RV camps for lodging. Hotel occupancy was 96% in 2021. 67% of attendees were from outside the Scotts Bluff County area generating a minimum of one overnight stay. Estimated average daily expenditure per out-of-town guest was \$191.40. 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. Taxes collected in 2020 was a bit lower at \$43,197.36, but considerably more than the 2013 and 2014 lodging taxes collected. Lodging Tax collected in August 2021 was \$59,448.37.

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 continue 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, 2020 and 2021 event was incredibly positive and a majority plan on attending in 2023 and beyond. The community involvement was phenomenal with over 300 local volunteers helping to put on an incredible safe event and over 12,500 attendees over the weeklong festivities.