

# **City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska**

**Monday, March 18, 2024**

**Regular Meeting**

## **Item Reports2**

**Council to discuss and consider action on a funding request from Colleen Johnson, representing Old West Balloon Fest, to help defray the costs of the event that will be held in August 2024.**

**Staff Contact: Sharaya Toof, 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

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

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

**Date of Request:** 02/09/2024

**Description of Requested Topic:** Funding Request from Old West Balloon Fest utilizing  
Community Programing Funds. Description of the fund request attached.

## **Old West Balloon Fest Fund Request from Community Programming**

Our mission is to create a joyful experience for patrons of all ages with a family friendly, all-inclusive community event. Old West Balloon Fest is a world-class event that brings pilots and visitors from all over the United States and Canada to Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. This will be our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. We have added many fun and exciting activities to the lineup for our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Old West Balloon Fest showcases our area by attracting tourists who travel from the immediate surrounding states: Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska. We were able to track the zip codes of those who purchased parking passes online for the 2023 event. Parking passes were purchased and mailed to patrons in 26 different states and 180 zip codes in Nebraska. One pass was purchased in the United Kingdom.

The economic impact of hosting the event has been substantial. Hotels and RV parks reported 98% occupancy during the 2023 event weekend. Lodging and sales taxes collected help to support our local economy. Our destination marketing is working to attract patrons from outside Scotts Bluff County. An informal survey was conducted with our Facebook and Website followers with over 45% stating that they attend each year, and some are using this as their family vacation.

Our goal is to ensure that this festival will continue to grow in attendance. We plan on accomplishing this by advertising through the Nebraska Tourism marketing program, Regional Radio, Television, Print and Social Media Platforms. We have budgeted \$15,000 to spend on advertising and marketing for the 2024 event. Social Media has proven to be the most successful in attracting out-of-state patrons.

We are committed to giving back to the community. We will continue to hold Youth Ballooning Camp which will take place August 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 to 11:30 am each morning. The purpose of the camp is to teach children the science behind hot air ballooning. They will experience hands-on learning. Certified balloon pilots will teach the camp which will include learning the history of hot air ballooning, the hot air balloon parts, putting the balloon together and participating in the inflation. If the weather permits, we will tether the balloon for the campers. The excitement for the addition of this portion of Old West Balloon Fest has been phenomenal. Over 300 children participated in the 2023 Youth Balloon Camp. We will be able to offer the balloon camp in 2024 for 400 children. The youth ballooning camp will be free of charge and each child receives a t-shirt.

For those unable to attend the camp we are hosting a discovery center tent on Mitchell Airfield to teach children and adults of all ages about hot air ballooning. With hands on activities and hot air balloon pilots on site to answer questions about hot air ballooning during the morning launches and the Saturday evening glow.

To kick off the event the first night glow will be hosted by WNCC on Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>. Followed by two morning mass ascensions at Mitchell Airfield on Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>. The City of Mitchell will host the annual Old West Balloon Fest craft fair, wiener dog races, and corn hole tournament. The grand finale will be the night glow at Mitchell Airfield where we will not only have balloons glowing, but we will also host a concert and drone show with over 200 drones depicting iconic symbols of Western Nebraska.

We are requesting \$20,000.00 to help us host the Old West Balloon Fest in August 2024, which will feature up to 50 balloon pilots from all over the country. The Fairfield Inn will be hosting most of our pilots and out-of-town staff this year. We appreciate the financial support of all the local municipalities to help us provide a fantastic experience for everyone attending.