

**Fallon Convention & Tourism Authority  
Meeting Minutes March 18, 2014**

Present: Chairman James Richardson, Councilman Bob Erickson, Board member Pranav Morar, Board member Scott Tate, Executive Director Rick Gray. Absent: City Clerk Gary Cordes.

Chairman Richardson called the meeting to order and asked if the posting requirements have been met. Gray said they have.

Chairman Richardson asked the board if they have reviewed the minutes from the January 18, 2014 meeting. Councilman Erickson motioned to approve the minutes. Board member Morar seconded the motion, the vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said the next item on the agenda is for public comments. There were none.

Chairman Richardson said next is agenda item number four, consideration and possible approval of five grant applications and asked Gray to start. Gray said before the board are quality grants that fulfill the tourism mission which is to fill motel rooms with events that fit in with the community culture and add awareness of Fallon through their marketing efforts. Gray said a representative from each group is present to answer questions from the board about their grant requests. Gray addressed the grant applicants and asked them to come up to the podium when their grant is called and speak into the microphone. Gray said he wanted to remind the grant applicants the amount of funds available is contingent on available funds and budget projections.

Gray said before the board is a grant application from Hutchings Performance Horses and Richard Hutchings is here to talk about his event and to answer questions. Gray said this is a first-time grant so there is not an evaluation to go along with this application. Gray said he believes the event has a lot of potential and Mr. Hutchings will be able to answer questions and describe his event. Chairman Richardson asked Richard to briefly describe his event.

Richard told the board this is the 9<sup>th</sup> Production Sale which was established to sell breeding stock and takes place at his arena. He said this year he wanted to put on an "Invitational" along with the sale which takes more money to produce. Richard told the board he put on a smaller event earlier this year and it was very well accepted and brought a lot of people to the community. He said the Invitational and Horse Sale will be in September and will have events similar to rodeo events using the breeding stock for buyers to watch the horses that are for sale. Richard told the board they have a mailing list of several thousand they send catalogs to each year and they spend a lot of money on producing and mailing them. He said they also try to get the event information out through vendors and locals involved in the event.

Board member Tate asked how many horses are usually sold. Richard said between 100 and 150 are sold. Board member Tate asked where their buyers come from. Richard said the majority come from the western U. S. and some international as well.

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Chairman Richardson asked if there are any more questions from the board, there were none. Board member Morar motioned to approve \$2,500 to the Hutchings Performance Horse Sale. Councilman Erickson seconded the motion, the vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said the next item on the agenda is a grant application from the Churchill Arts Council and asked Gray to start off. Gray said Kirk Robertson is here to speak on behalf of the Churchill Arts Council. Gray said Saturday's event, The Paul Thorne Band, is sold out and their fan base is from out of town. He said these are the kind of events the arts council continues to bring to Fallon and he likes the way the advertising and marketing of their events grows awareness of Fallon each year. Chairman Richardson asked what sold out means in terms of number of people. Kirk said 350, which is the capacity of the theatre.

Kirk told the board about upcoming performances and described their efforts to promote out-of-market through email blasts and brochure distribution. Board member Tate said he enjoys attending events at the art center and has experienced sold out performances in the past including the ones during Tractors & Truffles. Councilman Erickson complimented Kirk on their events and appreciates their efforts.

Chairman Richardson asked if there were any other comments or questions from the board, there were none. Board member Tate motioned to approve \$8,000 to the Churchill Arts Council 2014-2015 Season. Board member Morar seconded the motion, the vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said the next item on the agenda is a grant application from Spring Wings and asked Gray to start. Gray said before the board is a grant application and evaluation from Spring Wings along with his recommendation. He said Charli Goggin is here to answer questions.

Charli told the board this is their 17<sup>th</sup> year for the festival and this is the only event like it in Nevada. She said they like to educate people about the wetlands and its importance globally, and educate people on the culture and history of Fallon. Charli said they are requesting a higher grant amount to support their festival this year because the National Wildlife Refuge staff and funding has been reduced and they have played a large part in paying for some of the festival's expenses in past years.

Board member Tate asked if there are any substantial changes from last year to this year's event. Charli said they have reduced the number of tours and are working with the Museum and Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe for some of their events. She said one of their new tours is a historic tour of downtown Fallon on a covered wagon, and the Canvasback Club has offered to let them use their facility, because of the low water situation at Carson Lake and the Stillwater Wildlife Refuge.

Board member Tate asked if a raptor will be released during the event this year as they have in years past. Charli said they don't know if there will be a bird ready to release this year and the Owl Prowl which is a popular tour isn't happening this year because of the reduced number of nesting raptors due to the drought.

Board member Tate asked if they were going to have the elementary kids program again this year as in years past. Charli said they are and it will include all third grade classes in the school district.

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Chairman Richardson asked if there were any other comments or questions from the board, there were none. Board member Morar motioned to approve a grant for \$4,000 to Spring Wings. Councilman Erickson seconded the motion, the vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said the next item on the agenda is a grant application from the Lahontan Valley Bird Dog Club and asked Gray to start. Gray said the Lahontan Valley Bird Dog Club did not get their application in on time and recommends tabling it. Chairman Richardson tabled the grant.

Chairman Richardson said the next item on the agenda is a grant application from WGAS Motorsports for Octane Fest and asked Gray to start. Gray said before the board is a grant application from WGAS Motorsports to produce Octane Fest this year and his recommendation. Gray told the board he has worked with John Borba for the last three years to produce the Jamboree at the Fairgrounds, and WGAS is very familiar with the event and the community. Gray said as we try to maintain the brand and move forward with the event, he thinks WGAS is the company that can do that. Chairman Richardson asked John to give them a summary of his plans for the event this year.

John said they are hoping to expand the event this year with the help of out-of-area markets and Octane Fest will be added to his California tour of events. He said the monster trucks are a big draw right now and the demographics are a perfect fit for Fallon. John said they are going to have the famous monster truck, Bounty Hunter, this year as well as the Metal Mulisha freestyle motocross riders again, some type of jet car display, possibly mud drags and the car show previously held on Maine Street for the last few years.

Gray told the board along with the Monster Truck show, Top Gun Raceway will have the Lucas Oil Series drags again this year and Rattlesnake Raceway will host an IMCA Modified race which are all a part of the Octane Fest brand.

Board member Morar asked if there will still be separate smaller events in town as in the past. Gray said it will be similar with radio remotes at sponsor businesses but the car show will probably happen at the fairgrounds this year instead of on Maine Street.

Councilman Erickson asked if there will be any sort of food vendors at the event. John said he is working with Rick to come up with someone to run the concessions. Gray said last year they worked with the Lions Club and they are looking at them and other concessionaires also.

Chairman Richardson asked if there were any other comments or questions from the board, there were none. Councilman Erickson motioned to approve a grant for \$10,000 to WGAS Motorsports to produce Octane Fest. Board member Tate seconded the motion, the vote was unanimous.

Chairman Richardson said next is agenda item five, FY 15 budget proposal and asked Gray to start off. Gray said before we get started on the budget he wanted to comment about Spring Wings and its third grade education program and the horse program heard earlier. He said he has received a grant from the Nevada Commission on Tourism to promote birding in northern Nevada and he, along with the Abbi Agency, produced d an educational kit for every third grade class in Northern Nevada (293

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classrooms) in an effort to promote birding in the area. The kit contains lesson plans, science modules, a poster, brochures, and a bird house with a two-way mirror that can be affixed to a classroom window. Gray said regarding the horse event grant that the relationship with Hutchings could blossom. Because there is an interest to have more horse and roping events in Fallon, he said he is looking forward to planning more events in the future that could be held at the Hutchings arenas.

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Chairman Richardson said back to the budget discussion. Gray said the budget proposal before them was vetted by City Clerk Treasurer Gary Cordes who is not here today to answer any detailed questions but believes it is a very conservative budget and all input received today will go into honing the budget for the next meeting. Gray said the board should know that we are planning on hosting the Nevada State Bowling Tournament in 2015 which is included in this budget. He said he is planning on bringing more roping events to Fallon next year as well as more youth sports event. Gray told the board he is making a renewed effort to bring in more conventions and just returned from the Western Association of Visitors Bureaus Tech Summit which provided more tools on how to drive more conventions to the area. Gray said these are still challenging times and he will continue to be mindful of real time expenditures as it relates to realized revenues throughout the year.

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Councilman Erickson asked Gray about Spring Wings and the funds that have been cut by the National Wildlife Refuge. Will the tourism board be asked to augment their grant amount next year? Gray said the support provided this year is more than it has ever been and anticipates it leveling out. He said this "Friends (of the Refuge)" group is new and will be more experienced by next year's event by growing their fan base and partners and doesn't expect to provide more support than they received this year.

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Councilman Erickson asked if the arts council could receive additional grant funding to bring the support back up to \$10,000 as it has been in years past. Gray said yes. Gray pointed out that the tourism office received a \$10,000 marketing grant from the Nevada Commission on Tourism which will help off-set some of the hard advertising costs for the arts council and other Fallon summer events.

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Board member Tate asked Gray to confirm the revenues and expenses for Tractors & Truffles and if it is an event that breaks even. Gray said the event has broken even in the past with several grants that are no longer available. But more recently, it has turned into a successful marketing and branding tool for Fallon and costs roughly \$8,000.

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Board member Tate asked Gray to confirm the hard costs of Octane Fest. Gray said their hard cost is \$10,000 after sponsorships have been received.

Board member Tate asked about the retirement line item of \$7,500. Gray said Gary Cordes asked that this line item be put into the budget because Gene Mann is retiring in September of this year and it is the amount of payout for his sick and annual leave that are on the books. Board member Tate asked how he planned to manage the transition. Gray said we have an understudy at the center, Diana McFadden, who is a very good worker and hopes to transition her into that position. However, the position will be posted internally to city employees. Board member Tate asked what the compensation scale is for the position. Gray said roughly between \$14 and \$19 an hour. Board member Tate said you have the potential to save some money once all is said and done because you will not be starting the replacement person at the same amount that is currently being paid. Gray said that is correct.

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Board member Tate asked about the administrative allocation and where we are at with it at this time. Gray said the discussion began in July with this board where Gary outlined the allocation for the services the city provides the tourism office which comes to \$24,500. Board member Tate asked if the money goes to the general fund. Councilman Erickson said it does. Board member Tate asked if this is an allocation other agencies make as well. Councilman Erickson said other areas of the city do pay this allocation. Board member Tate asked why this has come about now. Gray said the allocation in this proposed budget is greater than allocations we have paid in the past and this is a result of the city's reevaluation of the true value of the services and support provided to the convention and tourism effort.

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Board member Tate asked how long ago the Fallon Convention & Tourism board was formed. Councilman Erickson said he believes since 1978 or 1979 and the center was built in 1980. He said it was designed to provide operating money of the center and to provide for the expansion of it. It was a requirement of the Fleischmann Foundation grant to have a revenue stream to operate and provide for the center before it was built and was designed as the operating money for the center which was to come from room tax which was passed in 1977 or 1978.

Board member Tate asked Councilman Erickson how he felt about the convention center and the amount of room tax funds it takes each year to run and maintain which is a substantial portion of the budget. Councilman Erickson said he thinks the community needs a convention center and this may not be of adequate size anymore. He said hardly any convention center operates in the black and he really thinks this community needs a convention center. Councilman Erickson talked about the Fleischmann Fund and how the convention center project came about and said the ground the convention center is built on used to be the old fairgrounds and is leased from the county.

Board member Tate asked who owned the land the convention center is on. Councilman Erickson said the county. Board member Tate asked who owns the building. Councilman Erickson said the city does and we have a long term lease for the land but is not familiar with the terms. Board member Tate asked Gray to find out about the lease from Gary Cordes and asked if he could get a copy of it. He said he would like to know the terms of the lease to understand where they stand in that regard.

Board member Tate asked Chairman Richardson what his thoughts are on the convention center. Chairman Richardson said he agreed with Bob, that a convention center is needed for a community of this size and it does need to be bigger. Chairman Richardson said he looks at operating a convention center a lot like operating a public swimming pool. It's a community need and not a business investment. He said just like the improvements being made to the swimming pool, he doesn't view the convention center as a business investment. Chairman Richardson said he views the needs of a convention center on not how full it is nor on how many business meetings are held, it's how it serves the community.

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Board member Tate asked how other convention centers similar to ours are funded. Councilman Erickson said most are funded in a similar way, through room tax revenues.

Board member Tate asked Gray what his thoughts are on the need of a convention center to the community and it's adequacy at this point. Gray said it definitely serves a need of the community and the number of days and the amount of space rented has grown,

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exponentially since he arrived. He said you would be hard pressed to find a day when the facility is not being used by one group or another, whether local or from out of town. Gray told the board the number of meetings and conventions can grow and he thinks it's important to focus on finding those groups that have a reason to meet in Fallon like agriculture, ranching, outdoor recreation, military, reunion, and other groups. He said it is unrealistic to go after some of the larger groups that aren't a fit for the area because a lot of convention business is driven by after-hours entertainment and a lot of groups aren't meeting as frequently as pre 2007. Gray said he is making a renewed effort to target groups who have a reason to meet here and also believes the dairy industry offers promise.

Board member Morar questioned the convention center amenities and asked if they were sufficient to attract meeting and convention groups. Gray said that he thought they were though the age of the building doesn't allow for those amenities to be built in as you might find in larger cities or newer facilities. Gray said that our ability to provide for multimedia presentations simulcast on more than one screen is good. Gray also stated that our WiFi and ability to connect to the web is outstanding. He added that fees are not charged for these audio/visual and internet services and that is a competitive advantage.

Board member Morar asked if those regular meetings get in the way of booking meeting and convention groups. Gray stressed that groups that meet regularly at the center do not restrict the center's ability to contract with meeting and convention groups. Groups that meet regularly are routinely "bumped," rescheduled, or relocated to make room for larger events.

Board member Tate asked Gray if the convention center space is adequate. Gray said it is adequate when we are able to work with the community college for additional space. However, there are some groups that have out grown the convention center including the arts council, the Nevada Association of Counties pushed the building's seams, and other groups have taxed our convention center space. Gray said if we had a larger space it would allow us to go after larger meeting and convention groups.

Chairman Richardson asked if there were any other questions comments on the budget. Board member Tate asked if the budget is approved at the next meeting. Gray said the budget line items will remain the same without any input and be approved at the next meeting. There were no changes made to the budget by the board members.

Chairman Richardson said the next agenda item is Board & Staff reports and asked Gray to start off. Gray said he didn't have any further reports. Chairman Richardson asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

Chairman Richardson asked if there are any public comments, there were none. The meeting is adjourned.

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