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ECONOMIC AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

October 14, 2015

Topic: Tourism at Zuni Pueblo – and Beyond
**Presenter: Tom R. Kennedy, Director of Zuni Tourism/MainStreet – 505-782-7239 –
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Overview:

1. **Outlook/Challenges:** Tourism continues to hold great potential as a key economic driver at Zuni Pueblo due to a combination of positive factors, including Tribal leadership support, established infrastructure, key cultural assets and several emerging opportunities. **However critical programmatic and regional challenges need to be overcome in order to ensure success.**
2. **Assets:** Zuni Pueblo remains a unique destination for many visitors to New Mexico due to its world-famous arts, important history, deep heritage and natural beauty. We maintain a credible tourism program with –
 - a. Visitor Center with established facility & location (purchased & renovated in 2010 with State Capital Outlay funding), staffing, ample local & regional informational materials, frequent arts & cultural events, etc.;
 - b. Historic Old Mission, Middle Village tours, the A:shiwi A:wan Museum, arts trading posts & opportunities to purchase directly from artists;
 - c. Archaeological sites of Hawikku & Village of the Great Kivas;
 - d. Special visitor experiences such as traditional bakery, artist workshops or traditional meals;
 - e. Developments along our designated Zuni Pueblo MainStreet.
3. **Ongoing & emerging opportunities to strengthen tourism program and market Zuni:**
 - a. **Partnerships with regional & statewide marketing organizations and within the tourism industry:**
 - i. Region 1 Northwest NM Tourism Marketing Board – current board member;
 - ii. Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway (State designated but not active);
 - iii. Ancient Way Arts Trail – promoting local & regional artists;
 - iv. Creative NM (serve as Board Member);
 - v. Tourism Association of New Mexico;
 - vi. Maintain ties with NM Tourism Department, NM Arts and NM Economic Development and others as appropriate.
 - b. **Close collaboration with Zuni Pueblo MainStreet & NM MainStreet;**
 - c. **Two ArtPlace American grants** – one in partnership with UNM Indigenous Design & Planning Institute (iDPi) that seek to enhance the local arts-based economy (involving up to 70% of the Zuni workforce) by creating improved arts facilities & arts marketing.

- d. **Collaboration with Northwest NM Council of Governments**, especially on development of the TOTA Scenic Byway, Ancient Way Arts Trail and recent SET (Stronger Economies Together) USDA program.

Tourism at Zuni Pueblo Cont'd

4. Program for coming year:

- a. Visitor welcome & orientation (7 days per week);
- b. Brochure & active website;
- c. Tours – Old Mission & Middle Village (daily – 10AM, 1PM, 3PM);
- d. Tours – Hawikku, Village of Great Kivas and other archaeological sites;
- e. Tours – Artist Workshop & Demonstrations;
- f. Seasonal arts markets – Valentines, Easter, Zunie Pueblo MainStreet Festival, Zuni Cultural Arts Expo, Ancient Way Fall Festival, Holiday Markets, and others;
- g. Community arts planning meetings & skills workshops;
- h. Arts & heritage-based displays at Visitor Center;
- i. Artist demonstrations – as appropriate during high season – May to October;
- j. Considering weekly dances at Visitor Center – May to October;
- k. Artist marketing assistance – directory/business card/promotions;
- l. Artist Sales at Visitor Center – direct sales to public;
- m. Revenue generation – tour & photo permit fees, and merchandise sales, etc.

Resolving Challenges:

1. **Improve Marketing –**
 - a. **Issue – despite NM Tourism’s touted successes across the State, this has not been the experience at Zuni Pueblo and venues along Hwy. 53 – due to our remoteness from the key gateways of Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos.**
 - b. **Recommendation – closer collaboration with NM Tourism to reach parity with rest of the State – more active partnership, engage in NM True Campaign, articles in NM Magazine.**
2. **Activate State-designated Trail of the Ancients Byway –**
 - a. **Issue – TOTA has great potential to serve rural communities throughout Northwest NM, however lack of resources has stymied development & effective use of this asset.**
 - b. **Recommendation – allocate resources to vitalize this potentially important regional asset including outright appropriations and oversight via Region 1 Tourism Marketing Board.**
3. **Mitigate negative regional impacts of C&E Gravel Pit located at MM 52/53 on State Hwy. 53 –**
 - a. **Issue – rampant expansion of this site degrades our key regional assets of natural beauty and undermines “soft industry” tourism potential. Excessive heavy gravel trucks and now asphalt-laden trucks present serious safety and health hazards to residents and visitors. The widening scar on the otherwise natural Zuni Mountains degrades the view-shed, is an affront to Tribal religious sensibilities, is a concern to the National Parks Service and ultimately deters visitation, which undermines regional economy. The NM Environmental Department/Air Quality Bureau is understaffed and apparently lacks adequate enforcement against this company. Local residents who have attempted to limit C&E’s impact have been harassed and threatened.**
 - b. **Recommendations – limits need to be placed on the operation, heavy traffic and expansion at this site. We request a comprehensive committee examination of the operation and detrimental impacts of this site on the regional environment, economy and quality of life. See attached background support documentation.**

Summary: Zuni is well placed to continue developing tourism as a viable foundation for the local arts-based economy – especially in collaboration with Zuni Pueblo MainStreet. **To be fully effective, however, we need assistance with regional marketing, support for our Trail of the Ancients Byway, and mitigation of the C&E Gravel Pit.**

C&E Gravel Pit Mitigation – Fact Sheet:

Background:

- Gravel Pit is owned/operated by C&E Concrete of Milan – at least 37 miles away – meaning constant heavy truck traffic to and from the main office.
- Pit has been in operation over twenty-five years, however in the past fifteen years, it has radically expanded its operations to current heavy industrial proportions.
- Local residents have long attempted to limit the scope of this operation with limited success – and often with retaliation and harassment from this company.
- Apparently only the NM Air Quality Bureau has any jurisdiction – but is extremely limited in virtually all respects – scope, enforcement, and lack of personnel.
- AQB attempted about ten years ago to limit days of C&E operation to weekdays but company filed a lawsuit that opened operations to seven days a week.
- C&E continually has been cited for violations but apparently is willing to absorb such costs as “business expense.”
- Consequently, C&E has consistently pushed the boundaries of its operation and negative impact – with the latest affront the installation of a hot mix asphalt plant that had previously been blocked.

Issues:

- C&E operation degrades the natural beauty, which is the main asset of this region – as evidenced by its location on a Scenic Byway – between two National Monuments – adjacent to a National Forest – on a key tourist route to El Morro community, village of Ramah and Tribal communities of Ramah Navajo and Zuni Pueblo.
- The tourism-based economies of the region and especially Zuni Pueblo depend in large part upon visitors travelling along State Highway 53 to reach their remote communities.
- Native Americans see this degradation as an insult against Mother Earth as was voiced to me by the Zuni Supervisor of the NMDOT Ramah yard!
- Operation is continuous from before the permitted “sun up” to well after “sundown” – regularly seven days a week and even on designated holidays when visitation to the region is most active.
- Constant heavy truck traffic degrades the natural environment with constant diesel fumes and now from asphalt pollution; presents an ongoing safety hazard from heavily loaded, speeding trucks; gravel debris on the roads damages vehicles, increases insurance liability; and traffic deters casual travelers on this supposed Scenic Byway and especially bicyclers on this designated “Bike Trail”; and overall degrades the concept of a natural outing in a beautiful place.
- First attempt to install an asphalt operation about five years ago was blocked by effective community resistance; current asphalt operation avoided community comment via loophole of allowing an Arizona company – FNF – with a NM permit to secure a “relocation permit” to C&E site.
- For the past two and half months, asphalt operation has been constant with a massive increase in truck traffic – often one truck a minute or a count by NPS staff of 291 in a 7-8 hour period in clear violation of the “permitted” 112 trucks per day – and spreading noxious pollution throughout the El Morro valley and along the length of Hwy. 53.
- A formal complaint to the Air Quality Bureau by local residents in early September resulted in inspections that found fifteen violations. Though company is compelled to resolve these violations, local residents report little or no change in pollution that causes respiratory distress, nausea and other physical responses.
- The National Park Service is also obviously concerned and has been monitoring this situation and Superintendent Mitzi Frank issued a letter to NM Environmental Department on October 6, 2015.

C&E Gravel Pit Mitigation – Fact Sheet (cont’d):

Recommendation:

- Convene a special committee or task force to investigate the far-reaching impacts of the C&E Gravel Pit operations on the regional arts & tourism-based economy, natural environment (air, water, sound, night sky, wildlife and forests), safety, property values, and quality of life for area residents.
- Enact tougher guidelines, regulations and enforcement procedures to adequately protect all of the above.
- Minimal reasonable suggestions might include:
 - Formally recognize the importance and value of “natural, scenic beauty” on the economy, wellbeing and quality of life for the whole Hwy. 53 region;
 - Limit days of operation to weekdays to preserve at least weekends for travelers and residents;
 - Stricter enforcement of daily truck totals and speed limits;
 - Stricter control of diesel truck emissions;
 - Stricter control of truck load covers to minimize gravel on highway;
 - Eliminate use of engine brakes along Hwy. 53;
 - Prohibit any future installation of hot mix asphalt operations at the C&E site and elsewhere along Hwy. 53.