



City of Needles, California Request for City Council Action

CITY COUNCIL NPUA

Regular Special

Meeting Date: August 11, 2020

Title: Update on the Needles Visitor Center in the El Garces

Background: The City has been working with the Needles Chamber of Commerce for at least 3 years to establish a Visitor Center in the El Garces. Building plans were developed, reviewed and approved in 2018. The Chamber has unsuccessfully sought recognition of the proposed Visitor Center as a California Welcome Center.

Councilors Belt and Gudmundson have been working with the Chamber and the Needles Downtown Business Alliance in an effort to conclude the effort. The Chamber has conducted fundraisers for initially a stand alone Chamber building that could serve as a Visitor Center. They reported that they have sufficient money to fund the construction of the Visitor Center in the El Garces. The Chamber recently sent a letter indicating that they are not proceeding with the Visitor Center in the El Garces. The City lacks the funding necessary to construct the Visitor Center.

A draft scope of work has been prepared for the potential vendor to use in the operation of the Visitor Center that outlines the City's expectations in exchange for City funding.

Fiscal Impact: \$25,000/year to hire a vendor to operate the Visitor Center

Alternatives considered: 1. Work to create a collaborative effort of the NDBA and Chamber to build and operate the Visitor Center. 2. Issue an RFP for a party to build and operate the Visitor Center.

Recommendation: Council provide direction.

Submitted By: City Manager

City Management Review: Rick

Date: 8/3/20

Approved:

Not Approved:

Tabled:

Other:

Agenda Item: 20

Scope of Work City of Needles, CA and _____

Prologue: It is the intent of the City of Needles, CA to enter into an Agreement with the _____ for which to operate a Visitors Center and offer professional visitor services to persons/groups visiting the City of Needles.

The City of Needles, California desires to contract with the _____ to operate a Visitor's Center within the City in order to promote local businesses, events and activities. In exchange for these services, the City of Needles shall provide the _____ a payment of \$25,000 for the period July 1, 2020 until June 30, 2021. This shall be made in two (2) payments with one being made by July 31, 2020 and the second by January 31, 2021. The following are the specific services that the Chamber shall offer under an Agreement:

1. The _____ shall operate the Needles Visitors Center within the _____ Offices located at ZZZ Street Needles, CA 92363.
2. The _____ shall have posted office hours of at least Z hours per week. Pursuant to this Agreement, the posted hours shall be:

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Sunday:

During said posted office hours, the offices shall be open and available to visitors seeking information on the community/region.

3. Those _____ employees, volunteers and/or Agents shall be provided basic direction and training by the _____ in such areas as:
 - a. Availability of Lodging Options (including hotels, motels, campgrounds and camping areas)
 - b. Availability of dining options (including both quick-serve (fast food) and sit-down options.
 - c. Listing and information on activities within the region, including both city and privately sponsored activities.
 - d. Listing and information on upcoming events to be held within the community and contact information for event hosts.

- e. Potential Locations for “TV, Commercial and Film”. This includes the creation of an inventory of potential film locations within the City/community (Downtown, Cannabis Facilities (if applicable), Parks, Boat Launch and Desert scape).

4. Static Display Services: The _____ shall create and offer a static display of materials that include brochures, pamphlets and other written information and materials to visitors inside the _____ offices

A. Materials shall include materials provided by businesses and organizations (private and public) that are based in the City of Needles or are hosting events within the City of Needles. Those providing materials are NOT required to be members of the _____.

B. At least two (2) times per year, _____ staff, board or volunteers shall visit all known local businesses and organizations asking them if they have materials that may be provided/passed out to visitors to the region.

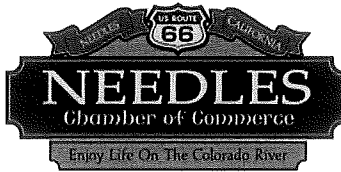
5. The _____ shall at all times have a working telephone for which Visitor's (or Chamber staff, board and volunteers) may call local businesses to arrange for or inquire for rooms, restaurants, shopping, vehicle repairs, transportation and special events (and other products/services).

6. The _____ shall be available with a physical location (tent, table or otherwise) to Visitor's at a minimum of six (6) community events per year including, but not limited to, (list events).

7. For times when the _____ and Needles Visitor's Center is not open, there shall be clear signage at the site directing visitors to a website or application (APP) that provides information to visitors on lodging, restaurants, activities, special events and general shopping/retail opportunities. Said website or application (APP) shall also include potential film locations within the community.

8. The _____ shall provide a monthly count of person(s) that inquire to the _____ for visitor services (inquiries to include both phone and in-person). Said counts shall be provided to the City of Needles City Manager by the 10th of the Month following the close of the previous month (for example July, 2020 counts shall be due by August 10, 2020).

9. The _____ shall provide a monthly count regarding website visits for Visitors services. Note that the website may be “pages” aka direct links on the _____ Website so long as there are clear front page banner links for “Visitor Services” “Film Locations” or other similar language to be mutually agreed upon.



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Dear Chamber Member,

We hope this letter finds you in good physical and financial health. In these uncertain times, as your Chamber, we recognize the importance of stability and constancy. For 100 years---Yes! This is the Chamber's Centennial year! ---the Needles Chamber of Commerce has enjoyed the privilege of serving you and your businesses. We all have a shared interest in promoting the growth and success of Needles, as well as the Tri-State area many of us call home.

There have been recent discussions about a change in structure. We feel it is your right to know, and our duty to inform you of any proposals being considered. Currently, the City of Needles, along with the Needles Business Alliance, is suggesting a merger, of sorts. Their recommendations are a dissolution of both the Needles Chamber and NBA, and an entirely new entity being formed, with a new board, new staff as well as a new tax status. Currently we are a 501 c 6 which is the status reserved for companies and organizations that qualify as "business leagues" under the tax code. This includes Chambers of Commerce. This designation is membership based. They are proposing a change to a 501 c 3 which exists to advocate and promote a specific cause to enrich the public in some way. This is most commonly used for charities. The proposal is that the new entity would have a new name that does not have the words Chamber of Commerce and would be housed in El Garces. All monetary resources from the Needles Chamber of Commerce would be pooled in this new entity.

As many of you know, we have been working on moving our location into the El Garces building here in Needles. Over the past four years we have worked with 5 different general contractors, who ultimately decided they could not take our project on. Donations from generous people and businesses, including many of you, as well as a lot of blood, sweat, and tears have gone into making this a reality. We remain grateful to all of you who have been here with us from the beginning, as well as all our new members who believe in what we do.

While the Chamber is not against a proper merger, we remain committed to our members and what is best for you. We do not feel we need to change our fundamental beliefs to do this. Our position as your Chamber, at this time, is that due to the current economic and health uncertainties, we feel that it would be fiscally irresponsible to spend the money and resources required to move into El Garces. We believe we can be of better service to you by staying where we are (only a few steps away from the El Garces building), and spending our time and resources solidifying and building current and new business relationships. In the meantime, the building fund will remain intact and under the jurisdiction of the Chamber. We will revisit the relocation of the Chamber as the economy warrants.

As a Chamber of Commerce, we are often the first point of contact for people considering moving or vacationing in the area. We believe we can encourage new growth and opportunity each time we greet people looking toward our community. By focusing our efforts on building relationships, we can be more effective to you, our members. We believe, in the spirit of stability and continuity, we should remain intact, as the Needles Area Chamber of Commerce, and reinforce, improve upon, and add to the services we are already providing.

As always, we welcome your feedback as we continue to grow together to make all our businesses and communities stronger.

Your Chamber of Commerce