

City Council moves to cancel 2020 Best of the Best Rodeo

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 03 July 2020 01:53



Coming off the heels of WildThing Championship Bullriding being canceled, another big summer gathering in Gallup has been taken off the schedule.

During their April 28 meeting, the Gallup City Council motioned to cancel the 2020 Best of the Best Rodeo for its original June date with a potential reschedule planned for August following the conclusion of the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial.

However, Jennifer Lazarz, tourism and marketing manager for the City of Gallup, said at the council's June 23 meeting, the circumstances impacting the rodeo's potential new date have escalated in the past two months. As a result, the city recommended canceling the event entirely for the calendar year.

First, the Governor's Public Health Order has not lifted the limitations on mass gatherings of more than five people.

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“While future restrictions may change, given the closed nature of the event, it’s not like we are going to be able to accommodate large numbers [of people],” Lazarz said.

After a motion made during the council’s June 9 meeting, Red Rock Park no longer has the capacity to host large events. All seasonal staff workers were removed after the budget was cut, and the remaining three employees at the park are not able to perform the volume of work needed for the rodeo.

“Historically, it has taken between 18 to 30 individuals to run an event of this size because we have the park personnel working, and staff from Parks and Recreation, the seasonal staff, and staff from other departments that help within the park,” Lazarz said.

If the rodeo were to proceed in the current circumstances, other city services would have to be put on hold to accommodate it, she added.

Lastly, if the event proceeds in current circumstances, the Lodgers Tax and city’s General Fund cannot absorb the potential losses that would be incurred as a result of reduced participation.

In previous years, the rodeo was able to offset the costs through participation fees, but the risk of reduced participation is higher because of fewer travelers and the event potentially taking place early in a new school year.

To date, the event expenditures totaled just over \$80,230 from the General Fund and the Lodgers Tax. This number included a contract with event organizer Walt Eddy, refunds for the 2019 rodeo, and other various fees.

Dist. 3 Councilor Yogash Kumar suggested the council insert a cancellation clause into future event contracts to avoid being penalized as much in future circumstances.

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Mayor Louie Bonaguidi had the same thought.

“It’s a good point, and we [have to] learn to learn the hard way,” Bonaguidi said.

The City Council voted to cancel the rodeo with a 5-0 vote.

By Cody Begaye
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