

Red Rock Balloon Rally receives \$35,000 from Lodgers' Tax funds

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Gallup citizens will have something to look forward to in December when the Red Rock Balloon Rally returns for its 40th anniversary on Dec. 3-5.

During the Lodgers' Tax Committee meeting Aug. 17, one of the event's founders, Peter Procopio, asked for \$35,000 for his event.

Procopio explained that the rally had lost some of its sponsors during the pandemic, including Marathon, which usually donated \$30,000 to the event, but suspended operations at its Gallup refinery in April, 2020.

"We're worried a little bit about other sponsors not [being] able to or willing to participate after a bad year, and we understand that," Procopio said. "But we're going try to do our best to make up whatever we can to complete our budget."

One committee member said he viewed the balloon rally as a premier event for the whole state.

"We're all proud to have it here in our hometown," Jason Arsenault said.

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Gallup's Tourism and Marketing Manager Jennifer Lazarz informed the committee that if they approved the \$35,000 amount, she would have to ask the city council for a \$16,000 budget adjustment. In an interview with the *Sun*, Lazarz explained that the extra money would come from the city's Lodgers' Tax fund balance.

The committee approved the entire request.

Also approved by the committee was a request of \$3,500 for the Turquoise Roping Event (also known as the New Mexico Turquoise Classic), which took place on the weekend of Aug 28-29.

In order to support these two events and the remaining events that will take place before June 30, 2022, the committee approved a \$38,500 budget adjustment.

According to Lazarz, the remaining budget for the Lodgers' Tax fund is \$59,000 for the rest of the year.

The last round of applications for the 2021-2022 budget is due on Feb. 25, 2022. If any of that money isn't used, it will roll back into the fund's reserve.

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