

Gallup Council OKs 2017 rodeo contract with Walt Eddy

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Best of the Best hurting taxpayers financially

The Gallup City Council unanimously approved a promotional contract with local rodeo guru Walt Eddy in connection to the annual Best of the Best Timed Rodeo. The action took place at the Jan. 10 regular city meeting and was introduced by City Attorney George Kozeliski.

“After the city lost the Junior High Rodeo Finals, (Walt) came up with a proposal (Best of the Best). He agreed to do it and promote it, do all the necessary stock contracts, for \$50,000,” Kozeliski explained. “His idea was that in three to four years it would break even and in five to eight years we could have as many contestants as the park could handle. After the first year, which was disappointing, we came up with the present contract in which he is paid \$35,000 plus incentives — if more contestants come. He has never received an incentive because of the large number of contestants that need to enter. However, the rodeo has almost doubled in size every year since.”

Kozeliski reiterated that the contract is practically identical to a contract drawn up last year. He said contract payments come from the city’s lodgers tax fund.

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The approved contract stipulates, among other things:

- Eddy is contracted with the city to promote and run all aspects of the event with expertise in timed events.
- The city is entitled to all revenue from the event, such as stall rentals, jackpot arena, recreational vehicle space rentals, parent arm bands, parking, office charges, sponsorships and the trade show. City Councilor Allan Landavazo asked Eddy how far out folks came to attend the event. Eddy replied that contestants came from Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, California, Oregon and South Dakota.

The approved contract contains incentives such as if this year's rodeo exceeds 266 entries, Eddy will receive a \$5,000 bonus. And if the 2017 entries are more than 500, then Eddy gets a \$10,000 bonus.

The city hosted the JHNR for nine years and essentially replaced it with the Best of the Best event so as to maintain some kind of respective revenue. The city has contracted with Eddy for three years, including 2017. The Best of the Best includes breakaway roping, goat tying, barrel racing and pole bending for female participants. For males, calf roping, heading and heeling are included.

BEST OF THE BEST - LOSING CASH

City Attorney George Kozeliski confirmed that the Best of the Best Timed Rodeo is not a money-making venture for the city – not yet anyway.

"We feel this should be the break-even year," Kozeliski speculated. "We received all the stall rental fees, RV space fees and \$50 from each \$250 entry, so the more entries the more horse stalls and fees we make. Last year, we had excess lodgers taxes, which is used for this event, not general fund money, and we hired a national TV company to come in and film the rodeo and

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the Gallup area which was a promotion for the city. It was on the national TV station RFD-TV on four different occasions and that station is watched by a lot of rodeo folks. So we hope this one-time expense will help push us over the top in getting contestants.”

Kozeliski added that the city realized that it took too long last year to really promote the event in national publications. Last year, Kozeliski said the purse or the event exceeded \$80,000, which, he said, is based on the quantity of contestants.

“The key to the entire rodeo is we are not a promoter trying to make money on the rodeo,” Kozeliski said. “We are trying to get people to come to Gallup to put ‘heads in beds’ and increase the tourist economy.”

Eddy’s view of the Best of the Best remains rosy in light of the recent financial news.

“We’re optimistic about this year’s event,” Eddy said. “It’s growing in popularity and I think people like it.”

City finance Officer Patricia Holland introduced a matter for a budget adjustment of \$57,135.57. The revenue received from the 2016 Best of the Best, which is held at the city-owned Red Rock Park, was \$158,835.733 and the expenses for the event amounted to \$215,971.30, Holland said. The Gallup City Council unanimously approved the budget adjustment request.

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