



By JENNIFER DENEVAN, Needles Desert Star  
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## Guidelines formulated for use of El Garces

*Work is nearing completion on the historic El Garces Harvey House, being restored as an intermodal transportation facility. ROBIN RICHARDS/News West*

NEEDLES — With renovations on the El Garces intermodal transportation facility to be completed soon, city council members approved three items allowing them to move forward with future use of the building during the regular Feb. 25 meeting.

Renovations are expected to be complete by the end of March. A ribbon cutting ceremony is planned for the El Garces for May 3.

Rick Daniels, city manager, said the renovation is scheduled to conclude at the end of March. As of April 1, the keys will be handed to the city.

There are already requests to use the building, he said. Staff is trying to figure out the cost to operate the building and use that information to determine how to recover those costs through room rentals. That same information could be used to determine how to develop leases with private businesses, he added.

Daniels said the item he brought before the council has three parts. The first deals with creating policies and procedures for use of the El Garces Community Room (also known as the luggage room). This would create a temporary room rate of \$300 a day.

Staff checked with other similar sized rooms in the city and cost is upward toward the cost of \$500 to rent those places, he said. This is probably a good interim room rate, he continued.

Rental policies were created as well. Daniels said renters must be at least 21 years of age and the rooms can be reserved up to six months in advance. Security and cleaning deposits will be charged, affixing signs to walls will be prohibited and food service must be approved by the city. Scotch tape can't be used. Open flames are prohibited. Other, similar types of policies that would be expected in a room rental were included, Daniels said.

Provisions will be made for alcoholic beverages to be served for an event such as a wedding reception, he said. Renters would be required to have a one day permit from the state's Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control and an off-duty police officer would need to be employed as a guard for safety purposes. A million-dollar liquor liability insurance policy would also be required, he added.

The second part, he said, is a preliminary budget for cost of maintenance of the building. Staff worked with the utility department to have an idea for the cost of utilities in the building.

Daniels said there will be electric, water and sewage charges. There will be pest control, janitorial costs and other similar costs.

It appears the early numbers for cost of utilities in the building may be approximately \$270,000 per year, Daniels said. The city's goal is to recover that through leases from private businesses leasing portions of the building, he continued.

Based on that cost estimate, it works out to being about \$1 per square foot, he said. These are early estimated costs. Actual costs will be brought before the council at the end of every quarter, he added.

Daniels said the third part of the proposed item was to issue a request for proposals to engage a commercial broker to handle leasing the spaces in El Garces so those costs can be recovered. The idea is to get someone involved who isn't a city employee, but has a profit motive to get businesses to locate in that building, Daniels said. This would mean the city wouldn't have to bear that cost of utilities which would be addressed through the leases.

He said the broker would also manage the property and would be responsible for all items related to the building.

Jim Lopez, councilman, said he didn't think the city should be in the business of trying to manage El Garces. "I think in years past we've figured out we can't run a hospital and I think we've figured out we can't really run a golf course."

Lopez said he thinks it's very smart to go to a request for proposals for El Garces because the people who lease locations like El Garces bear the responsibility for the location and they are paid on commission. So if it's not leased, they aren't paid, he continued. The broker would be responsible for cleaning up and other elements.