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Monday, September 16, 2013 3:35 PM PDT

Needles Economic Development Corporation discusses tourism summit, 'Adopt-A-Window' program

NEEDLES — After a month hiatus, the Needles Economic Development Corporation discussed upcoming events and projects at their Sept. 11 meeting.

Jan Jernigan, NEDC member, gave the group some updates about upcoming events. She talked about the Discover Inland Empire Tourism Summit being held Sept. 18. She said the president of "Visit California," Caroline Beteta, will be the guest speaker.

Beteta will talk about the "Experience Pillars" that support Visit California's worldwide promotion of the state as a premier tourism destination and how the Inland Empire's tourism product reflects those pillars.

The pillars are listed as: family fun, culinary, outdoor adventure, culture and entertainment and luxury and indulgence.

Jernigan said there will be several other important speakers talking about tourism and how to capitalize on it the most. There will be workshops and other activities.

She reminded members that DiscoverIE is a tourism and marketing group that helps cities in the Inland Empire. The focus is to help bring in more tourists looking for various California experiences in the Inland Empire.

Jernigan also spoke on a program called "Adopt-A-Window." It's a way to help make the downtown area look more full than it is, at least while waiting for more businesses to move into the city.

She said local teacher Julie Rowan brought the program to her attention and Jernigan in turn took it to the Needles Downtown Business Alliance to look into.

The NDBA is focused on the downtown area and so the program will be a focus for that group, but Jernigan wanted to inform the NEDC of the program. It makes fake shops out of windows of vacant buildings, Jernigan said.

She said the group will look into it after the Centennial Celebration and plans are to challenge local groups to adopt a window and decorate it. This whole thing goes along with cleaning up the city and helping to make the city look better, she continued.

Jernigan came across a program in Victorville while writing a blog for DiscoverIE. It focuses on a property of the week, Jernigan said. She felt it would be good for Needles to do something similar, she continued.

What would happen is she'd put together a letter, give it to the local realtors and brokers in the city, and split the calendar year, Jernigan said. Properties that need or are wanted to be seen will be featured. It would be split up by three months per realtor or broker so everyone gets time to show properties, she added.

This may be a program worth discussing with the new city manager, Rick Daniels, she said. There had been discussion by members to wait to go full force with programs until Daniels was fully on board so the NEDC could collaborate with him on what he has planned.

The goal is for the city and the NEDC to work jointly on economic development. It's been previously discussed the NEDC is virtually an extension of the city so the goals should be similar.

The NEDC will meet again Wednesday, Oct. 9. They moved the meetings back to the Bureau of Land Management Needles office, 1303 Hwy 95. They meet at 11:30 a.m.