

Crouch Looking at Ways to Create Revenue as a Resort Town

By Janet Juroch

The sign coming into Crouch reads that Crouch was established in 1951. Initially, the founders wanted a place to sell alcohol and gamble. This was only allowed if an incorporated city was formed. Back in the day it was just a simple village. Today it is suffering growing pains with no additional revenues to improve aesthetics and create a safe and appealing environment.

Thought was given to find a way to draw up some additional local revenues, so a committee was formed with some members of city council local residents and businessmen in Crouch to address how that can help the city with growth issues, and abundance of tourism. The Idaho Tax Commission has allowed for small tourist towns to create a local tax. This is referred to as Local Option Tax that would capture mainly tourist money. It will be decided by the community if this is a viable and purposeful way to achieve additional revenues.

Crouch is considering a few options to help defray the impact tourist demand on the city and seek ways to make the area safer and do some beautification as well. The city would like to join 15 other Idaho resort towns that have opted for a “tourist tax”. Resort towns can use this local tax to include sales tax to lodging, alcohol by the drink, and restaurant food or anything subject to a city sales tax.

Taxation is always a sore subject, but this type of local tax certainly targets the tourist dollars. Tourists can provide a boost to the economy but have a huge impact on infrastructure and the general wear and tear of the community. Crouch has never asked property owners to pay extra taxes to the city for these things. However, that means that Crouch does not have enough revenues to do the “extras” people like and expect in the town they love. The Local Option Tax could give some relief because dollars accrued could go to improvements such as road maintenance, services such as water and sewer, as well as safety and beautification.

Owners of the Garden Valley Market say this: “The Garden Valley economy is growing from both local growth and an increase in visitor traffic. While the majority of the visitor traffic is positive and helping to grow our economy and provide more opportunities for local residents, there is also a strain put upon the infrastructure in Crouch. Basic concerns such as safety, road surfaces, litter, good signage are difficult to address due to lack of funding. The business owners for years have pitched in to help when and where they can but a funding option to have visitors help with the process is a positive idea that the Market supports. Creating a partnership between the businesses, local residents and visitors with a very low-cost funding option is a good solution for a long-standing problem.”

Steve and Teresa Fitz, Crouch Mercantile Owners, want a robust and thriving community saying, “We believe the City of Crouch needs funding to provide not only essential services such as increased city water infrastructure, road maintenance, and safe pedestrian foot traffic areas, but also to provide for beautification of the town center. We support the tax options proposed as the best solution to incorporate a sharing of expenses for those that visit and spend time in Crouch.”

The city council is proposing the following Local Option Tax rates: Lodging Tax of 3% would include hotels/motels, rooms in homes or home rental, VRBO, AirBNB, RV Pads, and camp sites. For a \$50/night room this would add \$1.50 tax charge. Alcoholic Drinks & Meals Tax of 2%: this would be on individual

drinks sold at bars and restaurants. For a \$5.00 drink this would add \$0.10 and for a \$12.00 meal this would add \$0.24.

The Local Option Tax funds would be used for improvements such as road paving and expansion, parking, bike/walking paths and city building improvements., snow removal, public safety and sanitation, city water system completion, expansion, and maintenance. There is a need to support the arts and cultural activities and facilities, land acquisition for additional city parks and recreation in partnership with the Parks & Recreation District.

The community can have a voice, ask questions, and see what a Local Option Tax can do for the area. First, there will be a Public Meeting on June 22 at 6:00pm in the Crouch Community Hall. This is the time to be informed and weigh in on the proposal. Then it will come to a vote of the City of Crouch residents in November.

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