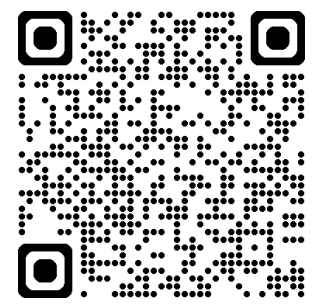


CITY OF
STURGIS™
 SOUTH DAKOTA

SCAN FOR
 COMMUNITY CALENDAR



STURGIS INFORMATION PUBLICATION

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2026

Sturgis takes closer look at Rally sponsorship program

The city of Sturgis has released a public status report outlining the current state of its Rally sponsorship program.

At the center of the issue is the tension between public transparency and sponsor confidentiality. Staff prepared a report at the direction of Mayor Kevin Forrester, who asked for a comprehensive review of the existing sponsorship model and potential pathways forward. The report is intended to provide context and clarity for residents and stakeholders while formal recommendations are still under development.

City Administrator Aaron Jordan presented the report at the Dec. 15, meeting of the Sturgis City Council.

“This is a status update, not a final proposal,” Jordan said.

“The intent is to lay out where we are, how we got here, and what legal and policy considerations are shaping the options moving forward, before the council is asked to make any decisions.”

According to Sturgis City Attorney Eric Davis, South Dakota open records law generally requires city contracts to be public unless a specific exemption applies. Prior legal opinions relied on trade-secret exemptions to withhold sponsorship agreements, a position Davis does not broadly support.

“The foundational principle is that the public should be able to see and evaluate agreements involving taxpayer-owned assets,” Davis said. “At the same time, we have to acknowledge the practical reality that sponsors view pricing and deliv-

erables as competitively sensitive.”

The use of confidential sponsorship agreements has also been a source of political and community dissatisfaction, contributing to the transition to an aldermanic form of government and the election of a new mayor and council with a clear mandate for change.

The report emphasizes that the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is not a self-executing event. Its scale and success depend on substantial city investment, including significant financial expenditures, thousands of hours of staff time across multiple departments, and intensive use of city infrastructure.

Public safety and core services represent the most resource-intensive components. Police, fire, emergency medical services, and public works all significantly expand staffing, equipment readiness, and operational capacity to accommodate hundreds of thousands of visitors in a short period of time. These efforts begin months in advance and continue well after the event concludes.

While the Rally generates important revenues through sponsorships, vendor fees, leases, and taxes, those revenues are closely matched by direct and indirect costs. Rally revenues help offset overtime, contracted services, infrastructure strain, and year-round municipal operations that make hosting the event possible.

“For decades, the city has worked to ensure that Rally revenues are not just covering costs, but also providing visible

value back to the community,” Jordan said. “That balancing act is central to why sponsorship structures matter so much to residents.”

The report provides a high-level historical overview of Rally management and monetization, describing five general “chapters” over time - from early Chamber-led promotion, through various centralized and enterprise models, to the current post-trademark era in which the city relies on city-owned branding, assets, and events to generate sponsorship revenue. According to the report, the current sponsorship program has been successful in attracting long-term partners and generating meaningful revenue, but it has also raised legal and community concerns due to the confidentiality of individual sponsorship agreements.

The report outlines two primary pathways currently under evaluation. One option would involve outsourcing sponsorships to a third-party agent, with the city publicly contracting with that entity while only aggregate sponsorship revenues are reported. The second option would keep sponsorships in-house, with individual agreements treated as public records. City staff are actively meeting with existing sponsors to understand their concerns, assess risks, and evaluate potential unintended consequences of any changes.

“No decisions have been made,” Jordan said. “Staff will return to the city council in early 2026 with a more detailed analysis and specific options for policy

direction. The goal is to honor the public’s expectation of transparency while preserving - and ideally strengthening - a sponsorship program that benefits the entire Sturgis community.” Mayor Kevin Forrester concurred saying: “Sponsorships are definitely a big deal for the community. I mean, at our last meeting, we had a financial report. We made \$1.3 million off of the rally and we rely on it as part of our budget. So, I’m looking forward to the work that’s going to come out of this and the success we’re going to have in the future.”

The full status report is available as part of the City Administrator’s materials for the Dec. 15, meeting and will inform future public discussion and council action.

Rally Sponsorships At a Glance

The City is reviewing its Sturgis Motorcycle Rally sponsorship program.

A public review focuses on balancing public transparency with sponsor confidentiality.

Two general options are being evaluated:

- * Using a third-party agent to manage sponsorships
 - * Keeping sponsorships in-house with agreements treated as public records.
- City staff are meeting with sponsors and will return to the City Council in early 2026 with policy options.

CITY OFFICIALS

MAYOR KEVIN FORRESTER

605-490-1177

COUNCIL MEMBERS

WARD ONE:

NICK JONES

605-215-5142

ALEX USERA

605-645-2468

WARD TWO:

RUTH NICHOLS

919-744-0578

TONY DARGATZ

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605-641-3630

MARK CHAPLIN

605-347-1771

WARD FOUR:

JESSE BLAKEMAN

605-206-0477

TERRY JENSEN

605-347-3928

STURGIS COMMUNITY
CENTER*New year, fresh start!*

Make your New Year's resolution stick by coming to the Sturgis Community Center. Whether you're looking to get active, try something new, or build a healthy routine, the Community Center is a welcoming place to start the year strong and stay motivated all year long.

Community Center Hours

Monday - Friday
5 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Saturday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday
Noon to 5 p.m.



Robin Korth, representing the city employees, presented Jerrid Goebel more than \$700 for the Sturgis Optimist's annual Toy Drive.

City employees raise funds for Sturgis Optimist Toy Drive

Sturgis city employees kicked off the holiday season by raising more than \$700 for the Sturgis Optimist Toy Drive during the city's annual employee holiday party.

Every department pitched in by donating an item for a holiday raffle, turning the party into a fun way to give back. From books and gift sets to one-of-a-kind surprises, the raffle table was full, and the competition was friendly. Raffle tickets were just \$1 each or 12 for \$10, making it easy for everyone to join in.

City employees, council members, and board volunteers enjoyed a wonderful potluck meal, plenty of laughs, and the chance to support a cause close to home. Some folks walked away with a stack of prizes, others just the satisfaction of helping out, but everyone left knowing it was for something that mattered.

The money raised helped the Toy Drive fill a real need, especially for older kids who are often harder to shop for during the holidays. It's a small thing that makes a big difference for local families.

City staff are grateful to everyone who donated items, bought tickets, and helped keep this holiday tradition going. It's one more way the City of Sturgis gives back to the community we're proud to call home.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Share your thoughts on street safety in Sturgis and help eliminate traffic accidents.

To take the survey, visit: <https://forms.office.com/r/V5juULFWP2>



Sturgis Public Library

Wisdom Begins in Wonder

Monday, Jan. 5, Healthy Habits with Sean: Master Your Health at 5:30 p.m. Join Sean for a six-week series on building health skills. This week, we will focus on building healthy habits and learning practical ways to care for your overall well-being.

Monday, Jan. 5, LEGO Club from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Join builders of all ages for creative fun and hands-on exploration with bricks. Let's build, imagine, and create together!

Tuesday, Jan. 6, Wonder Math with Richard Moeller at 3:30 p.m., all ages. Science-based lessons and activities for Winter!

Tuesday, Jan. 6, 10 a.m., Toddler Storytime for ages 0-3. Rhymes, sensory play, and stories with Miss Cindy.

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 11 a.m. PreK Storytime for ages 3-6. Celebrate literacy with movement, stories, and crafts.

Wednesday, Jan. 7, Level UP! Buddies from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Open for all gamers aged 6-10. Join us to play our Nintendo Switch! Group games and snacks.

Thursday, Jan. 8, MusicSpeaks at 44 North Lounge at 5:30 p.m. MusicSpeaks goes on the road this month. Join us at The 44 Lounge. Green Dolphin Jazz Quartet will be playing.

Thursday, Jan. 8, Crochet with Chelle at 5 p.m. Join Chelle for a relaxing evening of crochet tips, techniques, and creative fun, perfect for teens and adults. All supplies provided. Free to attend — please RSVP with the library.

Saturday, Jan. 10, Genealogy Workgroup at 1 p.m. This month, we will be tracing your immigrant ancestors. Anyone interested in genealogy is welcome to join us.

Monday, Jan. 12, Level UP! From 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Open for all gamers 11+. Join us to play our Nintendo Switch! Group games and snacks.

Tuesday, Jan. 13, Needs & Noodles at 3:30 p.m. Youth ages 11 to 16 are invited to learn simple recipes through hands-on cooking, including boiling, chopping, and eating what we create

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 10 a.m., Toddler Storytime for ages 0-3. Rhymes, sensory play, and stories with Miss Cindy.

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 11 a.m. PreK Storytime for ages 3-6. Celebrate literacy with movement, stories, and crafts.

Wednesday, Jan. 14, Coding Club, Join us for hands-on coding activities and programs, designed for ages 6-12. Practice coding skills using Scratch, robots, and more!

Thursday, Jan. 15, Healthy Habits with Sean: Better Balance at 5:30 p.m. Join Sean for a six-week series on building health skills. This week, we will focus on improving balance, stability, and confidence through gentle movement and practical tips.

Friday, Jan. 16, History at High Noon, the program is titled: "Neva Esmay: A prairie girl who reached new heights," presented by Tim Velder. Co-sponsored by the Sturgis & Meade County Historical Society

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 10 a.m., Toddler Storytime for ages 0-3. Rhymes, sensory play, and stories with Miss Cindy.

Tuesday, Jan. 20, Wonder Math with Richard Moeller at 3:30 p.m., all ages. Science-based lessons and activities for Winter!

Wednesday, Jan. 21, 11 a.m. PreK Storytime for ages 3-6. Celebrate literacy with movement, stories, and crafts.

Thursday, Jan. 22, Books on Tap at 6 p.m. at the Vet's Club. Theme: "Purpose & Progress". Read a self-improvement or inspirational book to kick off the new year! All readers 21+ are invited.

Thursday, Jan. 22, Chess Club from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. From learning the basics to mastering strategy, participants will play friendly matches and develop focus, logic, and patience. Open to all ages and abilities.

Monday, Jan. 26, S.T.E.A.M. Team at 4 p.m. Featuring "Winter Wonderland" a S.T.E.A.M. activity for kids, age 6-10. Join us to engineer snowflakes and build snowball catapults.

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 10 a.m., Toddler Storytime for ages 0-3. Rhymes, sensory play, and stories with Miss Cindy.

Tuesday, Jan. 27, Needs & Noodles at 3:30 p.m. Youth ages 11 to 16 are invited to learn simple recipes through hands-on cooking, including boiling, chopping, and eating what we create

Wednesday, Jan. 28, 11 a.m. PreK Storytime for ages 3-6. Celebrate literacy with movement, stories, and crafts.

Wednesday, Jan. 28, Coding Club, Join us for hands-on coding activities and programs, designed for ages 6-12. Practice coding skills using Scratch, robots, and more!

Thursday, Jan. 29, Winter Sowing at 5 p.m. Join Chelle for a winter gardening informational workshop and discover how starting seeds in winter can simplify gardening, improve germination, and help set you up for success, whether you're new to gardening or looking to try something new.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

1 - City offices and Public Library closed. Thursday and Friday garbage will be picked up on Friday.

8 - Armchair Travelers Book Club meets at noon in the Lushbough Room at the Sturgis Public Library.

8 - Sturgis Area Arts Council meets at 2:30 p.m. in the Lushbough Room at the Sturgis Public Library.

16 - History at High Noon, presented by Tim Velder. His presentation will be "Neva Esmay: A prairie girl who reached new heights." Noon at the Sturgis Public Library.

17 & 31 - The Sturgis Gathering Market indoor community market featuring local growers, makers, artisans, and small businesses, inside the Massa Berry Building, 890 Lazelle St., Sturgis

19 - Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, city offices and public library closed. Monday and Tuesday garbage will be collected on Tuesday.

CITY OF STURGIS CONTACT INFORMATION

City Hall 347-4422

Code Enforcement 347-5070

Community Center 347-6513

5 A.M. TO 8 P.M. M-F

8 A.M. TO 5 P.M. SAT.

NOON TO 5 P.M. SUN.

1401 Lazelle Street

Finance Office 347-4422

8 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F

1040 Harley-Davidson Way

Fire & Ambulance 347-5801

1901 Ballpark Road

Library 347-2624

8 A.M. TO 7 P.M. M-THURS.

8 A.M. TO 5 P.M. FRI.

8 A.M. TO 4 P.M. SAT.

CLOSED SUNDAY

1040 Harley-Davidson Way

Police Department 347-5070

1400 Main Street

Animal Shelter 347-8310

1140 Otter Road

Public Works 347-3916

6 A.M. TO 3 P.M. M-THURS.

6 A.M. TO 10 A.M. FRI.

1057 Dudley Street

Rubble Site 347-5605

8 A.M. TO 4:45 P.M. M-SAT.

20492 Avalanche Road

Sturgis Liquor 347-5983

8 A.M. TO 9 P.M. M-SAT.

10 A.M. TO 6 P.M. SUN.

1075 Lazelle Street

After Hours Emergency call

Police Dispatch 347-2573

www.Sturgis-SD.gov

CITY OF STURGIS
1040 HARLEY-DAVIDSON WAY
STURGIS, SD 57785

ECRWSSSEDDM
POSTAL CUSTOMER
STURGIS, SD 57785

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
STURGIS, SD
PERMIT NO. 40

City of Sturgis sales tax supports local services and infrastructure

Sales tax collected on purchases made in the City of Sturgis – whether in local stores or through online retailers such as Amazon – plays a critical role in funding city services and infrastructure that benefit residents year-round.

“Sales tax is one of the most important tools the city has to maintain services and invest in long-term infrastructure,” said City Administrator Aaron Jordan. “Whether a purchase is made at a local business or online, those dollars help support public safety, streets, parks, and facilities that serve our community every day.”

Jordan noted that many residents are surprised to learn that sales tax follows the delivery address, not the physical location of the store. “When an item is ordered online and delivered

to a home in Sturgis, the local portion of that sales tax comes to Sturgis,” Jordan said. “That includes online purchases from Amazon, groceries ordered online and delivered to a Sturgis address, or even building materials purchased out of town but delivered here.”

Since 2019, South Dakota law has required large online retailers and marketplaces with more than \$100,000 in annual in-state sales to collect and remit sales tax, ensuring online purchases contribute to local communities. Mayor Kevin Forrester said understanding how sales tax works helps residents better see how everyday purchases support city services.

“We absolutely want to support our local businesses whenever we can,” Forrester said. “At the same time, it’s helpful for resi-

dents to understand that sales tax, whether from local shopping or online purchases delivered to Sturgis, helps fund the services and infrastructure our community relies on.”

Resident Bonnie Alberts concurred saying it’s important to make intentional purchasing decisions that support the community.

“If we want this budget to get made, if we want that sales tax to feed our needs, then we have to shop at home,” said Alberts, a community advocate. “We have to think more about what we’re doing and act more intentionally.”

As an example of the sales tax breakdown, a \$100 purchase made in Sturgis generates \$6.50 in total sales tax: \$4.50 goes to the State of South Dakota

\$1.00 is deposited into the City’s General Fund

\$0.90 goes to the Capital Improvement Fund

\$0.10 supports the Equipment Replacement Fund

Under city ordinance, Sturgis collects a 2% municipal sales tax on most goods and services purchased within city limits. Half supports the General Fund, which funds police, fire, library, parks, and recreation. The remainder helps pay for infrastructure improvements and replacement of city equipment. City officials note that while sales tax supports many services, state law does not allow cities to receive sales tax on motorcycles or motor vehicles sold locally, even during major events like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

City staff review response to recent power outage

When the lights went out during a recent power outage, City of Sturgis leaders were reminded just how much depends on electricity, and how important it is to be ready when it’s gone.

City staff gathered to talk through what worked, what didn’t, and what could be improved the next time a major outage hits. While Sturgis does have some emergency plans on the books, there was clear agreement that those plans need updating, sharing, and regular review as staff and conditions change.

Staff also discussed the importance of clear communication, both internally and with partners such as Black Hills Energy, as well as having backup plans if cell service or internet isn’t available. Much of the conversation

focused on public safety. Dark traffic signals, especially at busy intersections and interstate exits, can quickly become dangerous. While state law treats dark signals as four-way stops, not all drivers know that.

Extended outages may require officers directing traffic, coordination with the state, and help from Public Works to keep key routes open.

Communication was a recurring theme. During the outage, cell service held, but that is not always the case. City leaders discussed improving notification lists, backup communication options, and training staff to work within an emergency command structure so everyone knows their role in the event of a prolonged outage. Finally, staff talked about the public side of preparedness.



During the recent outage, Black Hills Energy encouraged customers to remember these safety tips during an outage:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to help preserve food.
- Use flashlights instead of candles to avoid fire hazards.
- Don’t use generators indoors or in enclosed spaces.
- Non-functional traffic signals, treat as a four-way stop.
- Know your heat source: If you

rely on electricity for heat, have extra blankets and warm clothing ready. Never use grills or generators indoors.

• Protect appliances: Unplug sensitive electronics during outages to prevent damage from power surges when electricity is restored.

The city also encourages residents to have a plan: Know where your flashlights are, how to manually open garage doors, and who to check on, especially neighbors who may need help. This meeting was just the first step. Follow-up conversations will focus on coordination with partners, prioritizing critical facilities, and strengthening plans so Sturgis is better prepared, both inside city hall and out in the community, the next time the lights go out.