
Kilgore's July sales taxes way up

By Jana M. Russell

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Between industry and tourism, things are looking up on the sales tax front.

It's been years since July numbers have fared so well, according to a report from the Kilgore Economic Development Corporation, which tagged a 27.67 percent increase from the 2008- 2009 year to the same month in 2009-2010.

"This was wonderful – I certainly hope it's not an anomaly," said KEDC executive director Amanda Nobles.

The city's July total of \$267.916 in sales tax collections (actually assembled from the month of May, and reported in June) follows a year dominated by doubledigit decreases, mostly in the 20-30 percent range, in sales tax revenues, with other gains only in June 2009 (5.73 percent) and May 2010 (18.43 percent).

Kilgore Chamber of Commerce President Mike Coston said oil and gas has been a boon to sales tax numbers in recent months.

"The Haynesville Shale formation has helped a lot. Our service companies are gearing up for the production there, really starting to get busy and stock up and provide the services that the gas and oil companies need. Two months ago Halliburton was looking to hire over 100 people," he said.

"That's contributed to our uptick in the taxes," he said.

"In addition, the hoteliers are having a lot of leisure travel into Kilgore ... Leisure travel is up as well," Coston said, citing Rangerette events, the Texas Shakespeare Festival, Pump Jacks baseball games, sporting events, weddings and reunions.

"We know the leisure traveler spends (on average) about \$130 per person (outside of accommodations)," he said.

Coston said the chamber works hard to market Kilgore and its business community and attractions.

In business development, some 700 business organizations were sent information about bringing their meeting to Kilgore.

"We seek out groups looking for meeting places – we have some on the books as far ahead as 2012. They don't just happen in – we work hard at getting them here," he said.

According to a second quarter report given by the Kilgore Chamber to the city council at a recent meeting, businesses using Kilgore hotels include BJ Services, Badger Pressure Control, Bucyrus, Carter Chambers, Core Lab, Dialog Wireline Service, Exterran, General Dynamics, Halliburton, Kilgore College, Martin Resource Management, Permian Tank, Plains Marketing, Skeeter, Tank Works, TESCO Services, Waukesha Pearce Industries and Weatherford International.

The East Texas Oil Museum hosted over 8,000 visitors in the second quarter, and the Rangerette showcase hosted over 5,000 visitors in the same time period.

Leisure tours and group events from organizations like Bankers and Bikers, Unity Tabernacle, Texas Forest Trail Board, the KHS class reunion and Trips Unlimited have brought hundreds of guests to town.

In 2009, the Texas Shakespeare Festival's July run sold out 96 percent of the available seats. Some 75 percent of the attendees were from outside Kilgore, and a similar percent dined locally before or after the performance, while an estimated 30 percent spent the night.

In a presentation to the Kilgore city council, tourism director Carol Hinton said the numbers look good.

"Sales taxes are up 28 percent, compared to this time last year," Hinton said.

For more in the Kilgore News Herald click [HERE](#).