



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MINUTES

Thursday, December 9th, 2021 • 11:30 a.m.

Present: Libby Maynard, Jeff Durham, Ara Pachmayer, Pete Oringer, Chris Ambrosini, Paul Beatie, Lowell Daniels, Jenny Early, Ken Hamik, Shannon Hughes, Justin Legge, Aaron Ostrom. Marc Rowley, *Ex officio*, Julie Benbow, *Staff:* Supervisor Michelle Bushnell, Scott Adair, *County,*

- I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.
 - Change to the Agenda:
 - Travis Scott, ED Visit Mendocino, was unable to present due to a conflict.

- II. Approval of Minutes of November 4th meeting
 - Pete made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
 - Ken seconded.
 - There were no corrections, additions or comments.
 - The motion to approve the minutes as submitted was passed unanimously.

- III. Board Committee Reports
 - Executive Committee: Libby reported that the committee discussed submitted cannabis rfp. and received an update of 422 First Street.

Julie confirmed that the move from the old offices was completed including the contents of the garage in which the Bureau had 47 boxes of archive materials dating from as far back at the 1990's. Shred Aware came, unfortunately all the contents had to be removed from the boxes and the binders, which were then taken to the recycling / dumpster.

Jeff reported that he visited 422 and purchased gifts from the holiday market pop-up. He is excited for the potential for the space.

Chris asked about Bureau signage – this will be discussed with the press release (Agenda Item IV – Marketing). 422 will not be open to the public until April. All regions/gateways/chambers and other business stakeholders have given input regarding representation / exhibits.

Julie has spoken with Kinetic Koffee about a partnership and is developing a list of future rotating seasonal exhibits. If funding allows, it is also planned to hire a part-time program & events manager for public programming starting after Memorial Day.

Financial Report: Julie addressed Lowell's concern from the November meeting regarding having financials available at the meetings being so close to the beginning of the month. Spoke with the CPA's and will have reports if meetings are held after the 4th of the month.

Recent payables included the quarterly invoice for SimpleView (website) and moving expenses including having the carpets cleaned and the technology support. No other big expenses coming up but would like to hire someone to produce sketches for the spaces. Want them to look different from usual exhibits and reflect feel of Humboldt. \$3500 - \$5000 set of schematics to be used as presentations when do our funding,

Shannon spoke in favor of investing funds in developing unique ideas.

Ken added, in a recent meeting with Avelos Air, Chuck Leishman of the HLA had offered funding for marketing projects. Should HCVB go after HLA funds for 422 especially for some of the more remote areas.

Julie said plans for approaching regional Lodging Alliances for funding to support their exhibits is planned. 2021 has been a very good year for TOT and will get great visibility and ROI.

Julie, working with Visit California, just secured wonderful coverage for Humboldt with an estimated 600,000 viewing at no cost to HCVB.

https://view.email.visitcalifornia.com/messages/16390731285559e17a946527a/raw?utm_source=zeta&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Dec3_US-CA_12_09_2021&utm_ee=oBys9gJdRA7

Scott requested to change the agenda to make County Updates. Cannabis marketing RFP was closed on November 22. Moving on to reviewing, ranking and scoring proposals by Trellis committee.

County has engaged a consultant (Lew Edwards Group) to poll community to expand TOT to include overnight campgrounds and RV Parks. This will capture additional revenue to support tourism endeavors. So far positive response.

Entered into an MOU to support marketing airport and hired with Diana Rios. Julie has already met with her.

Brown Act: Scott called attention to organizations receiving County Funding needing to adhere to the Brown Act and post meeting minutes and agendas for the public.

Julie requested an informational update about the ARPA funding. Some other areas have already awarded large grants to their DMO's for tourism marketing. Scott reported that County are behind with facilitating the process. Also need to meet regarding the gateway MOU's. State grant for tourism funding available.

Julie reported that MOU draft completed, but with upcoming leave, unable to do a grant of that complexity.

Chris: Regarding TOT on campgrounds and RV parks – is it for unincorporated areas of the county? Amount collected pretty significant – maybe \$800K per annum.

Michelle: Countywide unincorporated areas, excludes state parks.

Jeff: These are unrestricted funds that go into the general fund.

Julie commented, HCVB will continue to receive agreed percentage, so increase will not significantly impact HCVB funding - using the existing equation, projected increase could be less than \$20K.

Chris: Is the County open to giving more money?

Julie asked Michelle if HCVB can negotiate new percentage. As 422 is developed HCVB will become a much more significant asset to the visitors, county and residents, increased credibility.

Michelle: Have heard discussions among the Supervisors and staff about increasing TOT to help with nicer curb appeal in unincorporated areas of county. Not many solutions to help beautify area. Increase TOT – to 14%, which will make it among the highest in the state. May deter visitors.

Marc and Chris reminded the Board that the original equation was developed in the nineties.

Julie: Increase TOT means visitors are having to pay to fund projects which may not be done. Some of the Gateway funding could be used for litter removal and clean up, especially in Garberville which impacts visitors desire to stop. MOU funds can be used for “direct impact” projects. Need to designate specific tourism revenue amounts for such projects that impact quality of life for residents and quality of experience for visitors.

Michelle: Garnerville Chamber have actively been seeking for people to work as employees. Also homeless are an issue that Chamber has been working to seek solutions for years.

Marc: Maybe time to rethink the whole Gateway concept and discuss with them in the future – help communities deal with these issues. Does Willow Creek Chamber have an active tourism component? Maybe revisit this thirty-year old business model that has no relevance to today’s rural communities.

Shannon: As someone who is actively working with multiple groups and organizations is Willow Creek, and we are very much active in addressing these issues. There is a lot going on and community are engaged.

Jenny: As previous ED of Garberville Chamber, it was very challenging to find someone to work with the community. Get help from Community Services but issues so big beyond the capabilities of the Chamber to address them all. Eel River clean-up crew take out up to 900lbs of trash weekly, and John Shelter and his crew work down there also. Organizations that can help have been doing so for years.

Advocacy / Funding

Julie: Jenn Eddy (Eddy Alexander), visiting Eureka with her company team from Virginia, stopped by 422. Shared the vision for 422 and mentioned the Eureka Visitor Center. (*Libby and Julie have already met with City reps about this*). Were positive about the vision. Julie is planning on securing funding support and buy-in from other towns/areas of county and then approaching Eureka for their support.

Pete: Good way to get them re-engaged and supportive of HCVB.

Ara asked the Board of anyone knows when the Eddy Alexander contract is up for renewal. It is either 3-year contract, up for review in 2022, or 5-year.

Julie: Strategy is to invite all regions and towns to help develop their exhibit/presentation by identify their top five assets in different categories (nature, events/festivals, activities,

eating/drinking, perfect day out etc). Have them supply photos & videos where possible. Help all areas. Go to Eureka last with ideas for them to gauge response.

Ara – good idea to engage communities and get their investment in 422.

Julie: Also get their input developing a calendar of events etc. by season. Example: Nat Geographic are coming to do a profile on Topher Reynolds and Copious Glass. He has put on – single-handedly- a very popular and well attended marble festival for a few years. He is a great example of a niche experience for visitors to enjoy.

February Board Retreat:

Julie will be attending Visit California Outlook Forum 14 – 16 February. Propose the Board retreat Tuesday 22nd, then stakeholder meetings Tuesday afternoon/evening and Wednesday morning. 22/23rd February. With Carl Ribaud, put together an invitation and description of intent and what will be discussed. Tuesday February 22nd. Meeting will be 9:30 – 2:30 with lunch and refreshments. Depending upon COVID and other developments, the meeting may be in person. Accommodations will be available for those traveling.

There will be two facilitated sessions. One is proposed to be Tuesday afternoon – 3:30 – 5:30 (tentative), Wednesday morning session 9:30 – 11:30. These times are dependent upon the scope, contents and outcomes as defined by Carl with Ken, Jeff and Julie. Julie will contact the Board individually regarding identifying tourism/business stakeholders from throughout the County to invite to the sessions. Sessions will be by Zoom.

Staff updates: Kristin's surgery was successful, and she will be in the office full-time from Monday 20th and holding down the fort while Julie's in England. Julie plans on working from England and keeping on top of email and various projects. Also hopes to meet up with the Visit California representative in London.

Other:

Ken is working on a very important project with Cal State Humboldt Poly for housing. Exciting venture with European technology: Called Seed to Home.

Scott Holmquist in from Berlin. (Chronic Freedom series on You Tube) experience with illegal cannabis industry and people's history of Humboldt. His books were hand-printed at the Ink People. Very Humboldt document.

New Southern Humboldt Elevate the Magic Cannabis video. Not reflective of farmers in other parts of the county.

Good article in TS on state of Cannabis, interviewed many of the important players including Ken and Julie.

Marketing:

Ken commented that the Bureau is moving in a very positive in direction.

Jason: Get 422 up and running, place to welcome people. Physically host community events and forums. Will also have an agency version of that for organized partners feel they have a say

in the matter but also some responsibility to get information to us (with pics etc) and be part of the show. Also, public will have a better idea of what Bureau does. Be more organized buzz factory. Stakeholders will get it as they not only do they have a central location where they are well promoted, see press coming from it. Multi-faceted marketing machine and will see where the funds are going and the return on their investment.

Julie: Historically, HCVB has not done a good job in telling our marketing story and successes. That is a big part of 422 where we'll have a physical location to be the megaphone for county tourism and its impacts. Projections indicate it will be 2024 before international tourism returns to pre-pandemic numbers. So can focus on the dual goal of engaging residents on impact of tourism, also telling bigger tourism story of where revenue is spent. Redefine internally who we are and how we are doing it. Important for 422 direction to include sustainable messaging.

Ken: Julie's vision of combining economic development, community and tourism is crucial to all we do. Destination management shift is great especially in sustainable tourism. Important to show visitors and residents what is happening in the county.

IV: 422 First Street: Finalizing move this month. Julie happy to share plans and logistics.

V: County Update: (See previous)

VII: Other Business:

- a. Report from Mendocino cancelled.
- b. Nov / Dec / Jan staff schedules: Julie out from December 27 through January 20th.
- c. Board meeting dates for 2022

It was agreed to move the January meeting to the second Thursday of the month – 13th. Julie will facilitate if from UK.

The February Board meeting will be replaced by the Board Retreat facilitated by Carl Ribaud.

In March, the regular schedule of First Thursday meetings will resume.

VII: The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm.
