



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, February 9, 2023

Present: (in person) Libby Maynard, *President*; Ken Hamik, *Vice President*, Jenny Early, Lisa Sundberg, Paul Beatie, Lowell Daniels, Julie Benbow, *ED*,  
(via Zoom) Nick Bown-Crawford, Sam Wedll, Shannon Hughes, Ara Pachmayer  
Supervisor Michelle Bushnell, Dianna Rios, *County Liaison*  
Absent Justin Legge, Chris Ambrosini

- I. The meeting was called to order at 11:35 am.  
Role call was taken.  
There were no guests in attendance.
- II. Public Comment: There were no public comments.
- III. Approval of Minutes of December 1, 2022 meeting  
Jenny made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.  
Ken seconded the motion.  
The motion to approve the minutes as submitted passed unanimously.

IV. Board Committee Reports

- Executive Committee

Libby reported that the committee met and reviewed the board agenda:

- Financial Report

As Justin was unable to attend, Julie confirmed that Directors had received the mid-year financial statements, July a through December 31, 22.

HCVB received the county TOT funds late January. \$100K+ was banked, and the balance forwarded to the five gateways. *Note:* The P&L was set up to show gateway funds under "Marketing Expenses." Of the \$236K shown, \$178K passed through and HCVB spent \$58K on all direct marketing endeavors, hosting media and journalist hosting, and digital.

Current checking balance of \$215K. We have contracts to fulfill and two outstanding pledges: sponsorship of the Old Steeple concerts with PBS KEET for \$6500, and the co-op marketing agreement with the North Coast Tourism Council for \$11K – which is matched by Visit California. Monthly burn rate is at \$15K, so remaining funds are tight.

In answer to Libby's question regarding Gateway refusal to sign their MOU with us, Michelle commented that HCVB cannot withhold funds. Michelle will check with Counsel, as HCVB is contracted by the County to have signed MOU's with the gateways. Currently, the Southern Humboldt Business & Visitors Bureau have refused to sign. It was suggested to put the Gateway MOU's on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

*NOTE: This was a hybrid in-person & Zoom meeting and there were some technical challenges with the sound. The meeting was paused until all the participants were audible.*

- Website: A priority project is updating the website. It was constructed by Simpleview in 2018, using their own proprietary coding. The contract is for \$30K a year for hosting and support services. Building a new site to bring the content up-to-date is necessary. In 2020, HCVB received two bids from established companies to build a new, friendlier website. A three-year contract is coming for renewal in September and a new site has to be ready when they pull the plug on the current one. Estimates for a new site are between \$50K and \$80K including hosting. Current website has over 500 pages of information which needs to be edited and updated, the photographs need to be refreshed, and interactive maps and embedded videos need to be developed.
- Map & Guide estimated costs for printing and distribution are \$45K.
- Total projected expenses for map & guide and website - \$90K - \$125K.
- Projected income includes a monthly rental fee from the Ink People for the Brenda Tuxford Gallery space. And recently completed draft for KOA sponsorship.
- The Supervisors voted 3 to 2 not fund the HCVB with Measure J income. For one year, Measure J funds distribution will be 30% housing, 30% public safety, 30% arts & culture and 10% film commission.
- HCVB is waiting to hear when the Supervisor Ad Hoc committee will meet to discuss HCVB funding, as agreed at the October 2022 BOS meeting.
- Received funds from the Fortuna Lodging Alliance to create a display at 422. The project underway after meeting with Fortuna chamber, city and TBID partners.

In response to Dianna's inquiries regarding 2022-23 projected income, Julie reminded the Board that HCVB made two requests to the county for ARPA funding to be specifically spent on marketing endeavors, that had been rejected. This was reflected in the original budget.

- Marketing

Julie presented the Digital Analytics report.

- Strong numbers for December and January, both Facebook and Instagram up. Website had 97K unique hits in December and 85K in January.
- eNewsletter went out to 33K subscribers with a 39% open rate, click thru rate of 20%+-.
- 2023 is Centennial of Redwood Highway (from Golden Bridge to Oregon Border) -, talking with Chuck about partnering on series of short video campaigns for Humboldt. These will also be shared on the digital platforms of Visit California and North of Ordinary.

V: County Update

Dianna reported that the County has access to visitor data reports and will share them with HCVB.

VI: Other Business

- Executive Directors Report:

Attended international Cannabis Association Travel Symposium – presentations from people in Europe and throughout America. Very interesting. Humboldt is being left behind.

Will be attending the Denver Travel & Adventure Show (NCTC) with Mendo on behalf of the North Coast Tourism Council. February 23 – 27<sup>th</sup>.

Visit California annual industry convention, Outlook Forum, March 6 – 9 in Sacramento.

Working with California State Parks App and created marketing plan for their app.

Ken updated the Board on a new trade association being formed called the Redwood Cannabis Retail Alliance. Dispensaries are a key player in cannabis tourism. They will connect with HCVB to collaborate and discuss concierge training so visitors can get the full Humboldt experience.

After a couple of years interval, there is going to be a CannaFest in September, centered in Eureka and with events around the County. Should infuse a lot of life and interest. Last one in 2017 had 2,500 attendees.

Julie commented that cannabis tourism has not been developed in Humboldt, there other counties and states have fully developed and implemented cannabis tourism supported by events, destinations and experiences, including with accommodations and lounges.

Ken: Cannabis tours are happening through Matt Kurth, though not many Humboldt farms are licensed, and in need of larger passenger buses.

- HCVB Board Retreat

The importance of a retreat to discuss the future of the Bureau was emphasized by the Executive Committee, and it will provide the opportunity for directors to become acquainted. Proposed for a Saturday in March, before the April Board Meeting. It will be facilitated and held at another location, not at 422. Suggestions for a facilitator were solicited. Dianna suggested Jessica Pettit.

- Other Business

Paul gave an update of the current concert series at the Old Steeple which are being taped by KEET TV for broadcast nationally.

Jenny reminded the Board about the All County Chamber Mixer at the Benbow Inn on Friday March 3.<sup>rd</sup>

Lisa reported on work she is doing explorations into building with hempcrete, and also on projects to keep the traditional tribal languages and customs alive. Julie noted that she will be working on the new tourism initiative – Visit Native California – and reaching out to tribal leaders to better understand how the bureau and support and contribute to any efforts.

Lisa's mother, Joy has recently passed and her work and effort had brought new laws and visibility to many important tribal issues.

Lowell told the Board about his son, Marc, who has been working with the indigenous peoples of the Aleutian Islands for over 30 years, teaching them how to build traditional canoes. When he worked with them as a teacher, he discovered that they had forgotten how to build the canoes by traditional techniques and materials. He researched the history, and now teaches in the Islands and also from his shop, located in the Mind's Eye Manufactory & Coffee Lounge on Main Street in Ferndale. Every year he brings a young apprentice down to learn how to build the canoes then take the knowledge back to the tribe and teach others.

Libby shared that the Tribes have acknowledged Marc's work and its impact by giving him the title, Master.

<http://www.mindseyemanufactory.com/>

The meeting was adjourned at 1;20 p.m.