



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 12, 2022 • 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Via Zoom

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

I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:35am.

The Directors checked in.

Libby welcomed guest Cheryl Kelly, attending on behalf of the City of Trinidad. Cheryl introduced herself: On the Trinidad council, was on the planning commission and retired here after a career in hi tech. In answer to a question regarding the Chamber of Commerce status, Cheryl reported that they has recruited three new Board Members and are continuing to be in business.

II. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

III. Approval of Minutes of March 3rd meeting

- Action Item
 - Jenny made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
 - Shannon seconded the motion.
 - There were no additions, corrections or comments.
 - The motion to approve the minutes as submitted was passed unanimously.

IV. Board Committee Reports

- Executive Committee:

Libby reported that the meeting minutes were sent to everyone.

Julie proposed that, due to meetings being off schedule, the May 17 Executive Committee meeting become a joint meeting of the Advocacy/Funding and Marketing committees.

- Financial Report

Julie spoke of some concerns regarding the 22/23 county funding cycle. The actual disbursements are from the previous year's revenue (20/21) which was during the pandemic which may result in a reduction in funding. Not know the amount we'll be receiving until July.

Jeff commented that his hotel revenue was up, as were other accommodations so HCVB funding should be the same if not more.

Michelle: Have been checking and it looks as if there will be no reduction in funding this coming year.

Julie for the past two years, HCVB received PPP funds which are no longer available. Currently have just over \$200K in liquid assets and \$116K in reserves. Keeping expenses down. Have hired a Cal Poly Intern for the summer, starting June 1, to work on Blue Lake Rancheria Project and other admin/marketing projects 10+ hours a week. Expenses for Blue Lake including all staff time are all reimbursed through the grant received earlier this year. 990 Taxes, US Census and Employment documents all filed so the org is in good standing. *(Pete joined the meeting).*

- Advocacy / Funding

Jeff: All recent energies gone into researching Measure J, hopefully opportunity for education as to how TOT works in the County, and push for more funding for the HCVB. On HLA side, working with other hotels to develop messaging about better use for funding, then put out ads before the June 7th vote.

Julie: Submitted a funding request to Marc before he stepped down from the Lodging Alliance Board, for monies to support a comprehensive display at 422 for Willow Creek, including creating original video content and a multi-media display. He gave a verbal commitment, but asked to re-submit to Chris and Chuck Leishman.

Lowell: In the absence of an HLA representative, dispensing the funds falls on the HLA Exec Comm. All applications have to be submitted to the Exec Comm, not up the individual areas.

Shannon also submitted an application for funds to help with licenses for Bigfoot Daze. How does Willow Creek get a representative on the HLA Board?

Lowell: Has to be an owner of accommodations of 5 rooms or more.

Julie has connected with a set/exhibit designer so we can move forward with presentations for prospective funders, including Tribes/Casinos and corporate sponsors.

- Marketing

Julie reported on working with Carl developing a survey to be sent to all tourism/marketing partners and stakeholders in the County. Survey will cover current marketing endeavors, plus individual strategies, sustainability issues and education so can develop the White Paper. Julie noted that currently three Chambers – Eureka, Arcata and Garberville are without leadership (ED's), Arcata and Garberville are Gateways and receive County funding and will need their marketing data (investment/ROI) to include to present a comprehensive representation who is spending what, and its impact.

Paul: Ferndale Chamber is currently in discussion with the Bureau to explore if they will take over their social media. Meeting next week.

Julie: Bureau analytics for the past 30 days for our website traffic, and Facebook & Instagram engagements.

- **Website:** 57K users, mobile (58.5%), desktop (39.1%), and tablet (2.4%).

- **Social Media:**

Facebook:

56,439 followers, reaching 29,382 people.

64.6% women and 35.4% men.

Engagement was up 44% compared to last month, mostly due to the popularity of [this recent road trip post](#).

Also 12,991 views and 946 engagements for the May 4th Ewoks in the redwoods post!

Instagram:

13,256 total followers - reached 11,283 accounts.

From this group 61.5% women and 38.5% men, showing a 3% increase in men followers.

Also interesting, we're seeing more locals on the account with top cities being: Eureka, Los Angeles, Arcata, Sacramento, and McKinleyville. Over past year, grown from 8K to over 11K.

In 2019, Bureau was spending \$98K year on Google ad words promotion, but no investment in Facebook or interaction with Instagram. Discontinuing that cost has not seen the negative impact that some feared.

Paul: Is there a way to tell / track origins of mobile device users?

Julie: The Bureau does not have the ability to do geo fencing, however hiring a company was in the HCVB "vision" budget. There are a couple of very good companies that provide detailed monthly and quarterly reports of data segments as identified by the client. Will talk to Gregg at RREDC to share the expense as the data will be very helpful for the airport arrivals and subsequent travel within the county.

Aaron reported that Pacific Outfitters Instagram and Facebook has not seen a significant uptick in the past year.

IV: County Update

- Dianna Rios is the new HCVB / County liaison.

V: Other Business

Board Elections:

- There is one Board seat that will be vacated by Pete who is terming off on June 30th. Maybe get representation from one of the tribes, or anyone who would be a great ambassador representing an area or business we currently do not represent. Please let Julie know.
- Aaron: Sam Wedll is the head of marketing at Blue Lake Casino, he may be a strong member.
- Julie: Invited by the City of Blue Lake to a presentation about their plans to develop an upscale RV park and campground. Unfortunately, the city of BL and the Rancheria do not have a good relationship. Bureau-doing the Rancheria Feasibility study-maybe a good bridge.

Next Board Meeting:

- At the June 2nd meeting, Board will hopefully vote on, and elect, a new member and for the one board seat and also vote in a new treasurer.

Community Updates:

- As Leann Greene, the ED of Garberville Chamber, is leaving at the end of the month, Jenny asked the Board if they know of anyone who may be interested in the position.
- Julie met with both Larry Doss (running against Steve Madrone) and Natalie Arroyo (for Virginia Bass' vacating seat) to discuss tourism impacts, and advocate for the Bureau.
- Julie reported that City of Eureka is interested in passing cruise ship itinerary development and facilitation to Bureau (and hiring Jonathan), and also transferring the Eureka Visitor Center in to 422.
- Jenny reported that the Cannabis Plaque installed at the Hemp Connection in Garberville as part of the Cannabis Trail, has been relocated to the Chamber Visitors Center.

Cruise Ship Visit:

Justin commented on the cruise ship that docked in Eureka. Thanks to Jonathan Jones, Aaron and Julie. A few roadblocks that need to be worked out.

Lowell: Curious of financial impact of cruise ship. Did they spend any money?

Julie – . Jonathan Jones (hired by Eureka) worked hard to organize four excursions (Avenue of the Giants, Ferndale/Skywalk, Prairie Creek and a guided historical tour of Old Town) but cruise operators decided just to do Prairie Creek and a round-robin shuttle (Blue Lake Casino) from the dock to Old Town. Proposed next time make short location teaser videos of the experiences so can engage passengers and pre-sell them.

Lowell: Jonathan worked to put a tour of the Carson Mansion and lunch together. the cruise ships mark up the cost of the excursions to make a profit, so if they don't sell then they don't make money. If a community goes all out to support cruise ships but it doesn't help the community then it's not a great thing.

In response to Paul's question regarding the economic impact of the visit, a debrief meeting is scheduled for May 23.

Julie: Bureau had a table and passed out brochures and information to visitors in hopes they will return in the future. City of Eureka welcomed them with coffee, donuts and music, and had cider, oysters and music in afternoon. Ship brought a lot of county residents out for a viewing. Very much a public relations venture – invest money, time and energy with the goal of attracting future visitors. Two more cruise ships coming in September.

Media:

Ken Noted that blogger Jonathan Berg, who the Bureau hosted, wrote a couple of really good articles. Great investment for the Bureau and the County.

Julie – Jonathan was very open to guidance as to the subject matter for his blogs (regenerative agriculture, oysters, cannabis tourism),

Humboldt has recently received some very valuable media coverage including an article in the travel section of the Sunday Irish Times. Media investment does pay dividends.

Julie will be out from June 6th for surgery and probably out of commission for a week (or more). After that, will be working part-time – then be out for maybe a week then part-time but will keep in close communication with Kristin.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.38pm.