



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MINUTES

Thursday, June 2, 2022

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

- I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:34 am.
Directors checked in.

Libby introduced guests:

- Sam Wedll from Blue Lake Casino & Hotel. Busy working planning upcoming concerts and outdoor events.
- Kyle - Cal Poly senior interning with the Bureau this Summer, and is working on the Blue Lake Rancheria Feasibility Study.
- Dianna Rios, economic development, new County liaison with HCVB.

- II. Public Comment (*3 minutes per comment*)

There were no public comments.

- III. Approval of Minutes of May 12th meeting

- Action Item
 - Jenny made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
 - Ken 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:

This meeting was combined with Marketing & Advocacy Committees.

- Financial Report:

Libby deferred the Financial Report until Pete's arrival.

- Advocacy / Funding

Jeff reported on his efforts against Prop J – including radio and newspaper ads which led to some very good and insightful conversations community leaders. Commented that, this year (2022) hotels will not match the revenue of last year (2021). At recent HLA, it was agreed to move ahead with branding Humboldt starting next week – focusing on digital and social media ads, then expanded for winter. It is a 3-year program. Hoping it will open opportunities for collaboration with the HCVB.

In answer to a question regarding the nature of the branding, Jeff reported that Misfit (HLA Ad Agency in Sacramento) was building on the original “Follow the Magic” campaign with “Tall Tales,” capturing all assets and attractions.

Julie asked Jeff for an introduction to Misfit in the future so the HCVB can support the program and align their marketing.

Julie reported speaking with Chuck Leishman (HLA) and will putting together a proposal for funding the displays for the areas of the county they represent. HCVB will work with HLA members to develop displays as they choose and will also use their video/photo assets as provided.

Lowell commented that it would be of great value for Julie to attend the HLA meetings to keep informed of their marketing plans and actions.

- Marketing:

Ken commented on the value of Tall Stories – especially with the work recently done By Jonathan Berg and now the HLA’s direction.

Julie reported that Jonathan’s fourth and final Humboldt Blog (Theroyaltourblog.com) has gone live. He writes smart and insightful stories. Also was working with Good Housekeeping – submitted some ideas and pics and just got a short piece in the 38 Best Family Vacations Issue. <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/travel/g3694/best-family-vacation-destinations/> She noted the current buzz words in the tourism industry “Sustainable Travel” but there is no consistent definition. Some destinations (Hawaii) have developed programs for visitors to engage with residents and work together on projects. There are many opportunities for promoting this and Humboldt can be at the forefront.

Ken reported on a recent event (May 28th) at Whitethorn, “Humboldt Lost Coast Live Market,” featuring food, wine, music etc. and also with access to canna bis and Joe’s Pot Shop. This is the first of a few events that combine a farmers market experience with cannabis. Continuing the conversations and exploring the stories about regenerative farming etc.- lots of energy and interest.

Jason commented on getting together with Sam to compare Bureau demographics with Blue Lake, maybe potential marketing overlap, maybe piggyback on each others work and identify new people to engage. Impressive to get guests from so many states with mainly regional advertising.

Jason presented May's HCVB social media and digital analytics:

- Website: 61,000 for the month, up 10% over last month: 136K page views. 61% mobile. Top 3 cities, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento. 53.2% women, also reflected on social media platforms.
Web visitors are getting younger: 18-54 years-olds – 79% of all viewers, boomers make up about 21% of all viewers.
- Facebook: Over 56K followers, but engagement has been increasing. The “May the 4th be with you” (Ewok) post reached over 13,000 people, over 400 reactions and 85 shares – which is where get traction for the posts. The post was not boosted. Facebook is getting a lot of young people so doing something right to get them engaged.
- Instagram: 13,300+ total followers. More than doubled in the last 18 months. Will work best when identify which posts attract which demographic (age, location) then invest a small amount to boost it. Resonates then boost to get out to right group.
- (With Facebook – a total of 70,000 followers). Works well with sharing posts cross-platform. Do not have accurate data about paid reach is due to privacy laws getting more strict, less information for marketers. Need to have a balance of paid and earned posts to hit 20K.

Ken: With the new Cal Poly and their plans to connect and engage with thousands more students, is there any joint marketing opportunities, or cross over to visitors. How can Bureau leverage marketing to grow numbers.

Ara: Cal Poly using same outreach as before, social media, high school, and college fairs to attract new students. Going through a rebranding process guided by an outside group. Messaging has always been about place – integrated into curriculum. Maybe something to look in to.

Paul: Asked about the website analytics and mobile devices – is device tracked by place of origin or actual location?

Jason: Actual location tracking. Apple has an opt out choice of geo-fencing. Agencies do specialize in collecting and tracking this data to help focus messaging on specific groups.

Paul wondered if data can be used to craft messages specifically for people planning trips and when they are here.

Julie – plans to talk to RREDC to see if they would like to share costs on a service to also track airport visitor traffic. Our current data is mostly anecdotal. Don't know if visitors come for a specific event, then stay and do other activities. Maybe talk with Sam, invest as a group and work our data together.

Sam – run a number of geo-fencing campaigns – interesting how much data is available, and some people actually feel stalked. But more opt-in now so landscape is shifting.

In response to a question from Julie, Julie asked Sam about Blue Lake
Sam reported that the Rancheria have many sustainable practices programs including a community garden focused on indigenous plants, the first solar microgrid, and recently invested in a zero emission all-electric shuttle bus for the tribe's community transport needs.

V: County Update

Dianna reported that the County is currently working on the pre-CEDS process and strategies, doing story telling about economic development, website collecting them: www.Humboldt Rising.com. Will be working with Bureau on this. (Dianna invited board members to reach out to her to get involved).

VI: Other Business

- New Board Member Nominee: Sam Wedll

Sam came to Humboldt in 1999, having grown up on the Mil Lacs Indian Reservation in Minnesota. Had been visiting California and Humboldt since a child to visit family. Having worked at Casino's in Minnesota, was a natural to join Cher'Ae Heights in Trinidad, quickly joined management, worked for Bear River before joining Blue Lake 9 years ago. Casino experience has been marketing focused – to generate local and regional business. Bring people in large concerts and events, motorcycle rally, country shows (Clint Black) should bring in 3,000 people. Hotel currently being remodeled, when complete will have 100 rooms. The three-day New Years Eve event brought guests from 28 states. Entertainment has possibility to bring in a lot of people and maybe engage with them about sustainability.

- Financial Report:

Libby noted that Pete had joined the meeting.

- Julie reported that two HCVB Bank accounts jointly showed a total of \$316K – of which \$200K is liquid. The Bureau has been in contact with the County for TOT totals, and we expect that they will release the fuds sometime in July. The new budget will include a smallish investment in digital advertising.
- Julie reminded the Board that their next meeting (July 7th) will be the first of the new fiscal year 22/23, however the year-end statements may not be available. Libby commented that the Bureau should not incur any special fees with the Accountant for a rush report, and that the Bureau needs to work on the GL formatting and clean it up.

- Julie: A lot of the expense codes are no longer relevant, will put together a proposal for bringing some of the simpler accounting tasks – including payroll and payables – in house. HCVB currently pays the accounting company a fee for every task. Rather use the funds for marketing and community outreach. Continue to do tax returns.

Libby: Pete has served on the HCVB Board of Director for twenty years, and Libby acknowledged his service through all the transitions and thanked him for his work as Treasurer and a community leaders.

Ken told the Board he met Pete over six years ago when he moved to Humboldt and Pete was one of his first “go to” people. He thanked Pete for sharing his knowledge and connections.

Julie thanked Pete for his dedication to ensuring the financial veracity of the Bureau, and for his eye for detail and ear for really awful puns.

Lowell worked with Pete for many years, acknowledged his steadfastness through all the Bureau changes.

Other Business:

- Board Treasurer:
Libby called for nominations and volunteers for the Board position of Treasurer, who also serves on the Executive Committee. There were no volunteers. Shannon was nominated. Julie will follow up with her.
- Libby thanked San for attending the meeting and asked him to leave so the Directors could vote on his nomination to the Board.
 - Action Item

Ken made the motion to nominate Sam Wedll for the vacant seat on the HCVB Board of Directors. He commented that, having had the opportunity to meet Sam, he has so much value and experience to bring to the Board.

Jeff seconded the motion.

Comments:

Paul: Sam’s experience with the Casino’s and his out-of-county knowledge and perspective can be valuable to the Board.

In response to a question regarding Sam’s relationship with the other casino’s/tribes,

Ken: Sam is working with members of other tribes on various projects, and he is very interested in sustainability and regeneration projects.

The Board voted unanimously to offer Sam Wedll a seat on the HCVB Board.

Libby once again acknowledged the great value of Pete’s contribution to the HCVB.

Comments:

- Lowell commented that he was unaware of the County's "Humboldt Rising" program described by Dianna. Got all different entities marketing the county, may be some overlap. Bureau should be involved and represented.
- Julie told the Board that she had submitted an application (as required) to serve on the CEDS committee in April and received no response, but acknowledged Dianna was very busy.

CEDS:

- Libby told the Board the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) is required by the Federal Government - the purpose is anything included can apply for both Fed and State funding, not in there then cannot. Document to be updated every five years and in recent years the process has become slightly more open, the County slowly soliciting input for more individuals, groups orgs etc. Has served on the committee and seen the process.

Jeff made the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Paul seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously adjourn the meeting at 12:40 pm.

The next Board Meeting will be held on Thursday July 7th at 11:30 am.
