



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

June 3rd, 2021

Minutes

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

- I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.
All Directors checked in.

- II. Approval of Minutes of May 6th meeting
 - a) Pete made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
Ara seconded. There were no additions, corrections or comments.
The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

III. Board Committee Reports

Executive Committee:

Libby reported that the Committee met on May 15th and had a lengthy discussion about marketing and advocacy/funding. Updates in the upcoming committee reports.

Financials:

Pete: Have funds and are spending judiciously. Operating expenses and contracts are the main expenses. Anticipating spending more funds on marketing endeavors.

Julie: Reported that currently have around \$200K in account. Map&Guide will have new photographs and some basic text changes and a few listing edits. For design update, printing and distribution estimate is \$30,000, this is the Bureau's most important and popular informational piece. Will print 125,000 to last through the season, then it will be totally redesigned for the 2022 season. The 12 Humboldt Adventure Guides (HAGs) are also being redone and the HLA may fund printing and distribution as they have done in the past. The 25 Things tear-off sheet will also be updated.

Five travel writers/media are scheduled to visit through end of July: Elizabeth Hansen* (Senior Editor, Ranch & Coast), Jonathan Berg (Royal Tours) in June. Mike Shubic (Mike's Road Trip) early July, and Ian Anderson (Moon Guides), Tanvi Chhedi (Travel & Leisure) both coming with their families (2 kids, 9 – 11yrs) at the end of July. They have agreed to have some videos and pic taken for in house use. Family road trip posts for social media.

Advocacy / Funding:

Julie reported on the due diligence process for applying for the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA). Asking for one-time funding of \$600K, 100% to be spent on marketing the county.

- The 21/22 Budget includes line item #6 for travel, tourism and spend research – including hotel/AirBnB and geotracking. This will provide solid data for future marketing strategies and campaigns. Data will be shared with county partners and stakeholders.
- Budget line item #7 (45K) is for partnerships which includes the North Coast Tourism council. Each of the four counties combine money for marketing which is matched to some degree by Visit California. Humboldt and Mendo traditionally give \$11K. Great ROI through the NorthofOrdinaryCA website, campaigns and social media. Receive leads through the website and send out mail chimp itineraries and information.
Pete: When get leads from NorthofOrdinaryCA – what areas are they from? He suggested that, at some point, on the ground surveys may be of value - with HSU students assistance.
Julie: The leads are from across the US. She noted that personal surveys are labor intensive and really only good for personal experiential data. Gathering electronic data is available and up-to-date.
Ara: Has recently worked with students on a couple of tourism surveys and research projects and can add them to the curriculum.

The other two partnership expenses for CAD (California Adventure District) and Cultivar Strategies to hire Brian Applegarth and his cannabis travel consulting company. They submitted a proposal to bring all cannabis industry stakeholders together to develop more information and strategies regarding cannabis tourism. The Bureau should hire Cultivar Strategies to lead and facilitate the initial county-wide meetings with various cannabis industry stakeholders. It will be good leadership if Bureau brings them on. Julie reminded the directors that the County recently reposted the RFP for Humboldt cannabis branding and marketing. This is perfect time to get all the players in the same room. Brian has strong credentials and he is the best person to get the growers, manufacturers, distributors and dispensaries in one room to talk cannabis tourism knows what is going on in the state and country.

Michelle: Great idea. \$25K will be for Phase One stakeholder sessions: If deemed of value, they can hire Cultivar Strategies to take them through the rest of the process.

Ken: Recently interviewed by NY journalist about the California cannabis regulatory process and told the Board that in 2014, held meetings with growers to discuss land use. This is very timely to bring them on. Cannabis going to be a billion dollar industry this will keep Humboldt at the forefront of the conversation.

Julie: Explained Budget Line Item #6: Contract for \$80K is for Matador, an agency that creates unique videos and digital assets that they push out to their specific audience of over 1.5 million subscribers. They can segment their market. The Bureau will have access to the videos etc. for own use. Good investment, but if we don't receive all the funding, it is a negotiable expense.

Supervisor Meetings

Lowell: reported that he hosted Julie and Supervisor Bohn for lunch. Rex was receptive although not totally happy with the \$600K. Commented that may want to ask for two \$300K contributions. It was a good meeting, Rex has his finger on the pulse and we think he will support the request. Julie put information packet together with data and gave it to Rex. All directors should take time a read over the 3-page request justification to get up to speed.

Julie: Each area supervisors represent have certain needs and issues. The Bureau needs to keep reiterating that all the areas and regions in the county will be supported by Bureau marketing efforts. Hoping to be granted the \$600K to deliver marketing as stated, rather than undermining the program and by cutting back on one or more of the services we provide the county. Scott said the presentation to the Supervisors will be in July. Need to continue with advocacy.

Marc: Will follow up with Steve Madrone again. Think plan and strategy is the Bureau's best shot at success.

Julie: Lot of organizations going after this funding and Bureau in a strong position as tourism has guaranteed and strong ROI, bringing other people's money into the county for everyone's benefit.

Marketing

Ken: Need to keep reminding ourselves that what Humboldt offers the visitor is important for the recovery. The timing to launch the full marketing plan is now. Need to maintain travel numbers and efforts as Mendocino and Shasta are running fully-funded marketing programs.

IV. ED Report

Julie: Working on the Map & Guide. Will be holding a meeting on Monday with the ED's of all the Chambers to discuss the Bureau's planned support of their areas and what they specifically would like help with. Continuing to meet with different people and groups to identify where we need to do more relationship building, and also getting our story out in the various communities. Met with Katie the Willow Creek Chamber ED and Terry at the Bigfoot Museum and discussed the Museum taking over the role of visitor information.

Shannon: It has been very difficult for Katie to find any staff for the Visitor Center. Now on the Board of the Museum and Terry is supporting the idea. At the next Museum meeting there will be a discussion. Very exciting opportunity. Terry is putting together a budget, and she encouraged Julie to meet with her to discuss it.

Marc: Two decades ago the museum was not open to providing visitor information. It has come full circle and is a great idea.

Jenny asked if each supervisor will be having a one-on-one meeting before the BOS presentation, and Julie responded, yes, and Directors are in the process of trying to arrange meetings.

V. County Update

Julie reported a scheduled meeting with Scott on Monday to review the MOU and scope of services. For the Bureau to continue to provide the full spectrum of marketing services, need to have \$700K - \$800K annual budget.

VI. Other Business – None

VII. Next Meeting will be held on Thursday July 1st at 11:30 am.

VIII. Libby adjourned the meeting at 12:48 am.