



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MINUTES

Thursday, August 4, 2022

Present: Libby Maynard, Jeff Durham, Ara Pachmayer, Justin Legge, Lowell Daniels, Jenny Early, Ken Hamik, Shannon Hughes, Aaron Ostrom, Sam Wedll, *Ex officio*, Julie Benbow, Kyle Abelli-Amen, *Staff:* Jason Baxter, *Marketing Consultant*, Dianna Rios, *County Liaison*
Absent: Chris Ambrosini, Paul Beatie, Supervisor Michelle Bushnell

- I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:35 am.
 - o Directors checked in.

- II. Public Comment
 - o There were no public comments.

- III. Approval of Minutes of July 7th meeting
 - o Action Item
Aaron made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
Jeff 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 Committee met on Tuesday July 26 and discussed creating a designated Board Advocacy role. (*see Advocacy/Funding, page 3*).

Finance:

Julie: The draft End of Year financials statement had been sent out, and final statement will be available July/August when any outstanding invoices have been paid.

- Last year, HCVB received one-time PPP funding (\$21,700) which was forgiven.
- Page 3 Revenue item "Government" for \$383,985 is the total County TOT.
- Page 3 Expenses, "Marketing includes the \$178,409 pass through TOT funds.
- The Bureau received \$203,896 County funds.
- The 22/23 draft Budget is being developed and will present at the August meeting. Anticipating more expenses next year with increased in rent and some other obligations.

Marketing:

Ken reported on meeting with a group of possible investors from Los Angeles interested in regenerative farming. Julie noted that, like this group, there are business people coming into

the county looking for investment opportunities. They have funding and are interested in developing an educational program to engage and train young people.

Ken: Working with a small group to discuss developing a “Taste of Humboldt” event with Nigel Skeet. Envisioned in late August/September 2023, to include cannabis, music and art. Showcase the best of Humboldt. Lot of interest from Humboldt Made, Growers Association and others. Like the current Whitethorn market event. In multiple locations throughout a week event. Julie: This is an event which want to develop over the next few years so it will become a signature Countywide event. Want to involve Cal Poly and CR, and have a mini symposium. Maybe invite Michael Pollen as a keynote. Also have a movie night. Work on putting packages for visitors including accommodations etc. Give the event some credibility – not just people waiting in line for food. Bring diverse groups in the community together – which is also the purpose of 422. Need to have ability to track where visitors are coming from.

Julie: Blue Lake Rancheria Waterpark Feasibility Study – Hosted a series of Focus Groups, not good participation (summer, kids out of school). Changed direction and put together a second survey which will go out to 1300+ this week. Hoping to receive database of Hotel guests to send them a survey.

Jason reported on Digital & Social Analytics. (Included at the end of the June minutes). July, all numbers up. Website up 7.7% (153,000 page views, 67K+ unique users). Top cities, LA, San Jose, San Francisco, Sacramento, also New York and Seattle. Facebook page reach up 7% to over 26K. Instagram followers up to 13.5K. Numbers really going up. Need to invest in original content to promote different areas and assets, help extend reach and expand to YouTube and maybe TikTok.

Kyle: Sent out second monthly newsletter with five featured articles, sent you to over 30K subscribers (up 10K from last month). 5,000 engagements, spread of readers across the US.

Julie noted that HCVB collects emails from consumer events (Travel & Adventure shows) sign ups through website, contacts through North of Ordinary website, some travel writers, and media. Will add emails of chambers, cities etc. community leaders.

Advocacy / Funding:

Julie: Positive meetings with Chuck (HLA) to collaborate on a couple of projects. What Bureau provides very different services from HLA, so not a contest. Working on a draft proposal that will go to Lowell and Chris for comment before presentatin to HLA.

Attended Measure J follow up meeting with County staff, Film Commissioner, Sheriff, Chris & Chuck (HLA) Leslie Castellano (Arts & Culture), Supervisors Bushnell and Wilson. Projected income available after June 2023, \$400K. Robust discussions about use of money. No resolution. There will be further discussions.

Jeff: Proposed that there be a designed Board member to focus on Advocacy.

Developed a bullet list of scope for advocacy position be regularly engage with the BOS and community leaders and keep ahead of any tourism issues. Ensure that we take care of Bureau needs and work.

- Should be someone local
- Review weekly agenda for County Supervisor meetings, note any pertinent agenda items for tourism/funding/economic development
- Maintain relationships with the Supervisors
- Maintain relationship with the County Office of Economic Development (Dianna & Scott)
- Report to the Executive Committee and Board any items that require HCVB input
- Develop polices for communication (letters/email) from the Board and individual board members to the County Supervisors and community leaders
- Attend meetings as needed

With online meeting accessibility, many of these tasks can be done from a distance. Libby asks the Directors to consider taking this position. Julie offered to meet with any interested Directors to share background information.

V: County Update

Dianna: CEDS team getting ready to rollout community meetings in different areas of the County starting August 24th in Southern Humboldt. Hoping to get good feedback and response to a SWOT analysis.

Meeting with airlines in October to secure more flights and destinations (Alaska air t Seattle). Phoenix flight ending. Will be marketing Humboldt to airlines & destinations, hopefully work with Julie on that. Two cruise ships coming in September. Julie working with Eureka and the cruise committee.

In response to Julie's question about airport infrastructure impacted by increased passenger volume, (parking etc.) received ARPA funds for a new runway, looking at new parking lot increase current 175 spaces to 500, grant funding. Parking number one revenue generator. Put in request to fund 54 EV charges with new microgrid.

VI: Other Business

Julie: Valuable relationships include North Coast Tourism Council created by Visit California. (Lake, Del Norte, Humboldt, and Mendocino counties). Rebrand to be North of Ordinary CA (www.northofordinaryca.com), been very successful. Each county pays into a fund which is matched by Visit California and used solely for co-marketing the area. Humboldt is Board Chair, writes funding application. Annual Meeting hosted by Larry Galup (Pomo) from Twin Pine Hotel & Casino, Lake County. Very good meeting, marketing assets and investment (\$88K total) decided for 22/23.

Both Clearlake and Lake Mendocino are in bad shape, low water marks and extensive algae blooms restricting access and recreational use. Lake and Mendocino counties are developing strategies to address this situation, as both lakes are significant tourist/revenue drivers. Both Lake and Mendocino have a strong, developed wine culture.

Individual marketing (DMO) budgets are: Del Norte - \$195K with 28,100 residents, Lake (new TBID) \$120K with 68,766 residents, Mendocino \$1.7M with 91,305 residents and Humboldt, \$200K with 136,310 residents.

VII. Community Updates

Shannon – installation of the sign on east end of town – Willow Creek, Bigfoot Capital of the World, created by two local artists.

Bigfoot Daze was a great success, attracting more people than previous years. Selling shirts and hats - Bigfoot swag. Online store ink coming soon.

Jenny – Garberville invited some artists to talk about future murals on downtown building. Will get some photographs. Reviving Arts Alive in August.

Ken – Arcata Chamber looking to hire a new ED. Important position.

New film coming out and a sneak peek in October at the Arcata Theatre Lounge. Called documentary called Tending the Garden about regenerative agriculture farmers in Humboldt and some from Mendocino.

Julie: Reached out to County regarding the July 6th TOT invoice but have had no response to date. Will follow up.

Julie: Working with LA Times on an article about Arcata and need recent photos. The Bureau needs new high-quality photographs for all areas of the county.

Justin – working with a guest writer to do a road trip article.

Next Board Meeting Thursday September 1, by Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45pm.