



Humboldt County Visitors Bureau

Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday August 6th, 11:30 a.m. By Zoom

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

MINUTES

- I. Libby called the meeting to order at 11:33 a.m.
Directors checked in.
- II. Approval of Minutes of July 1st meeting
Jeff made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
Ken seconded. There were no additions, corrections, or comments.
The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

III. Board Committee Reports

Executive Committee:

Libby commented that topics discussed at the meeting will be covered in the next agenda items.

Financials:

In Pete's absence, Julie presented the EOY Financial report.

Julie brought the Board's attention to pages 7 and 8: Line item under miscellaneous expense – Gateway Funding of \$184,331 – money from the County which is passed onto the Gateway Chambers. On Page 8, line item Total Marketing - \$250,671 is inclusive of the gateway funds. Actual total spending on marketing was \$66,348. Included consultant, Facebook, etc. Comment: While minimal marketing happened, need to invest more in this coming year.

- Expenses down over \$50K from FY 19/20, and going into this FY \$239K in fund balance, with spend rate of \$20K+- per month. In a relatively good position.
- County and HCVB have signed the MOU and will go before BOS on August 8th for ratification. \$203K in projected TOT in income. Convene the Marketing Committee to meet September (Ken, Aaron, Jenny, Paul, Ara & consultant) to establish priorities and budgets. Aaron confirmed that \$203K was for HCVB and does not include Gateway the funds or the ARPA funding request. HCVB will have \$400K for the year, and \$116 in reserve account.
- Julie reminded the Board of the decision taken in 2019 to no longer be a membership organization and some concern regarding the loss of income. However, as it consumed significant staff time it has been OK, and had about 85% positive response to continued

advertising in Map & Guide. This will offset the printing and distribution expenses. Ken pointed out that 85% ad re-up great. Julie noted that the Map & Guide and website are the main marketing tools for the county driving the visitor numbers and are very successful. M&G has wide distribution and is popular. Lowell attested to the importance of both, especially the website.

- Aaron reported that through the Pacific Outfitters Adventures Program, the last two months were banner months for hiking and kayaking tours. Busier than ever been with tours.
- Jenny: Garberville Chamber/Visitor Center getting a lot of traffic for info about Avenue of the Giants, Shelter Cove has been packed, Banner year for Inn at the Lost Coast. Wiyot Visitor Center, Redway etc., all busy.
- Justin: 100% occupancy for KOA. M&G main resource for visitors – no cell reception.
- Jeff: Fortuna have busiest month in 15 years in July. Most people very positive.
- Ken: Observed Jeff's staff almost like ambassadors. HCVB do an ambassador training program. How connect with visitors and give them what they need.
- Julie – asked Lowell about the Concierge program. Lowell: Great program funded by HLA and run by Tony, but not great participation by hotels. Aaron – great program that showed first-hand experiences, but lack of support. But business owners couldn't afford expense of sending staff. Lot of value. Ken – maybe reinvigorate this program, put on the Marketing Committee agenda. Justin – maybe do it through videos and google maps. Jeff: takes time and effort to go length of county – take time away from work. Develop familiarization program. Julie: we can go to them, part of Staff meeting. Short presentation to staff and dialog to find out what resources they could use to better serve the visitor. Bring the experience to them. Libby – prior to the Concierge program there were other programs (CR) that died on the vine. May be some resistance from hotels.

Advocacy / Funding:

Jeff: Learning about airports, learning about how work in Humboldt. Step to get HCVB on Aviation Committee so we can be in the know with plans to increase air traffic and impact on visitor services. Julie: Application was submitted, made strong economic development case.

Scott: what is expected on August 10th BOS Meeting. Two items going before the Board.

- 1: Renewal of MOU, extension taking it to June 30th 2024. Up for approval on the Consent Agenda. If anyone wants to speak, they do so during comment part of consent item, near the beginning of meeting. (Forwarded link to join zoom meeting). Some modifications – adding new DBA to be Humboldt County Visitors Bureau; formally identify HCVB as county destination marketing organization (DMO). Now contracted and official. TOT reform may happen later. Substantial change is actual services itemized. County staff looking at TOT reform – not an increase but include short term RV and camping stay – currently not charging TOT. Adding back in could be an overall 20% increase – would be a positive impact on HCVB. Gateway MOU's will be reviewed after MOU ratified.
- Currently developing MOU with department of Aviation to provide staff support. Collaboration with HCVB to market airport and services. Loaning staff and staff time for marketing, branding and tourism.
- Julie: Removed MOU text regarding Airport relationship, so will need to be updated and amended as implications for HCVB staff and added expenditure. Also asked about status of \$14M in fed funding for airport. Scott: Held up.

- Julie voiced concerns about HCVB not being part of any discussions regarding tourism marketing and aviation, as history of this led to many 'marketing' groups in the county and no communication. HCVB, as the County designated tourism marketing org, needs to be involved.
- ARPA Funding request update / next steps: Going before the Supervisors as a separate staff report from CAO office. How staff will be awarded throughout the community. \$13.1M received this year, BOS already given 25% government services, 15% for contingency, and 60% (\$7.8M) economic impact. As Federal funds – criteria set forth by Treasury. Revenue loss & preplacement during pandemic, other general activities for post covid recovery. Presently 6 direct ask. Agenda not posted until tomorrow (Friday) with full list of requests. May be done through other orgs. Encourage you to speak to this issue at the meeting. Have sent all received documents, letters etc. have been sent to BOS as supporting docs. Make a compelling argument. Probably happen later in the meeting. Need to tune in for whole meeting as maybe a lot of public comments.
- Julie voiced concerns regarding the Board understanding that tourism brings in millions of tax income into the county and without these funds the Bureau future is uncertain.
- Scott: Much depends on public comment, very persuasive. May all depend on US Treasury guidelines for the distributing the funds.
- Lowell proposed that speakers should be identified and message clear, make a good case and be articulate. Aaron – guidelines for US Treasury. Is HCVB within these? Important for post pandemic recovery, not just pandemic loss. Jeff: ask letter writers to make comments.

IV: ED Report

- Meetings being cancelled throughout the county. Updating website with new masking guidelines.
- Mid-September media visit / NBC Universal-Peacock: Julie has been working with the team to identify three or four 'adventures' for a new kids TV program, Introductions made to the Zoo, Justin to hunt banana slugs, and Captain Sebastian to harvest Oysters.
- Blue Lake Rancheria Project: A Proposal for a feasibility study for an indoor/outdoor waterpark in Blue Lake has been submitted to the Tribes. HCVB will be the lead on the study.
- NCTC grant approved: Visit California accepted the funding request for \$30,000 which has been matched by the four counties, of which 80% will be invested in digital marketing, and original video footage developed by each county which will be promoted on the North of Ordinary website and county ones.

V: Other

- Paul reported that KEET TV has shared the Live from the Old Steeple Concert Series recorded in 2019 with PBS affiliate stations throughout North America. Eleven have taken it including KQED, Inland Empire (LA) and Idaho and Wyoming & other states. This is great marketing for the Old Steeple and Ferndale. As HCVB was an underwriter and a short (20 sec.) video was embedded twice, this will also have been seen in 480 plays across the nation each time played. HCVB will sponsor as second season – when it happens. Go as big as possible. Big name artists and make a mark.

- Aaron: Looks like between 3 and 5 cruise ships coming in 2022. Need to look into this.
- Julie: Call out to Jeff and Libby – Blake Reagan, mural artist, doing a beautiful mural at Jeff's hotel in Fortuna.

Libby adjourned the meeting at 1:15pm.