



**Humboldt County Visitors Bureau  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
MINUTES**

Thursday, September 21, 2023

Present: (in person) Ken Hamik, Justin Legge, Ara Pachmayer, Lisa Sundberg, Sam Wedll  
(via Zoom) Shannon Hughes, Jenny Early

Absent Lowell Daniels, Supervisor Michelle Bushnell, Dianna Rios, County Liaison

- I. The meeting was called to order at 11:39 am.  
Role call was taken. A quorum was present.  
Introduction of guests: Carlton Nielsen, 101 Things to Do  
Shannon Gibson representing the County.  
Molly Blakemore  
David Fitzgerald, new HCVB staff member.
- II. Public Comment: There were no public comments.
- III. Approval of Minutes of July 6, 2023, meeting  
Lisa made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted.  
Jenny seconded the motion.  
The motion to approve the minutes as submitted passed unanimously.

IV. Board Committee Reports

- Executive Committee

Julie reported that going forwards committee will endeavor to meet on a regular basis.

- Financial Report

Julie noted that there are enough funds to cover all operating expenses and contracts, with funds designated for priority and special marketing projects. Received the first payment from the County of \$160K and had \$80K+- remaining from FY 22/23. HCVB Sponsored both HAPA and Cannifest. HCVB has \$116K in reserves. Julie proposed that, should a marketing opportunity transpire that is not in the budget, the Board would be open to discussing investing some of the reserve funds.

- Advocacy & Funding Report

Julie had a second meeting with Donna Hufford (Orick LA) to discuss a proposal for HCVB to take over the marketing and PR for Northern Humboldt, replacing Richard Stenger. The proposal is for an initial 3-month period at \$6K per month.

It was discussed and agreed that HCVB will fully support the efforts of HCGA to educate voters and work in opposition to Measure A which will be on the county ballot in March 2024.

- Marketing Report

Jason presented the Digital Analytics report for August: *(see full report at end of minutes)*.

- Facebook: **Up** to 57,563 followers with a reach of 175,000 people  
Demographics: 35% men 65% women
- Instagram: 16,559 followers, **up** 8%, feed reached 10K in the last 28 days  
Demographics: almost same as Facebook
- For the third month in a row, three top cities are Redding, Sacramento & LA.  
Most of this is organic, but will do better targeting and content. Images other than landscapes to interest them in staying longer. Do reels and boost posts for the drive market.
- Push in next few months to ensure that Humboldt is top of mind. Lots of places in California have redwoods – need to distinguish ourselves.

Website:

- At this time of year there is always a seasonal drop in numbers as vacation season wanes.
- 83K+ sessions from 66K users, 80% of those new users
- increasingly younger viewer base, over 61% of all website visitors between 18 and 44 yrs.
- Need to put content in relevant places, and updating images so they are mobile friendly, and featuring more local photographers Working on the content of the website is a major undertaking. eNewsletter:
- September: (28,305 recipients): Open rate – 42.1% (17,650); click rate – 30%
- August: (27,983 recipients): Open rate – 28.1% (6,904); click rate – 38%

Ken: Very positive reaction on all platforms to the Kinetic Sculpture Race image and information – people are interested in the quirky events and festivals in Humboldt.

Jason: There will be an increase at the holidays, especially with locals who search for events, VisitRedwoods has complete listings of festivals throughout the county. A lot of tourists are on their way through the county to another destination. We need to get them to stay longer or have Humboldt as the focal destination.

Julie: Dave is working on the content of the website to make it concise and relevant. New itineraries are also being developed for a wider audience.

Justin reported that he has been working with a Bay Area Superintendent of Schools, four days and wanted an active itinerary for families with kids, and also a slower itinerary for those less active.

Jason: HCVB has invested in Monday.com, a project management software that the various regions will populate with content. Will work with representatives from the various regions so they will know what content and format is relevant ahead of time. With this tool, HCVB will have all the information and assets necessary for campaigns, social media etc. This will ensure that and every region and area of the county is represented.

Julie reported that she had met with Carlton and proposed that *101 Things* take over the production of the Map & Guide.

Carlton noted that care needed to be taken promoting the Humboldt brand and there is a lot of fact checking required. The project will be more expensive than in 2019 as production costs have

increased substantially (paper etc.). We have the numbers for the printing and distribution of 250,000 copies.

Julie noted the history of the Map & Guide and that the format has not changed in years. Humboldt is one of the very few places that includes lists of restaurants, cafes, bars, etc. The movement is towards lifestyle, vanity publications selling the destination and experiences. The new M&G will be the “why come to Humboldt” and stay a few days. It will be a “choose your own adventure” resource, including QR codes.

In response to Lisa’s update regarding building a replica Yurok plank house from hempcrete, Julie described the new Visit California initiative *Visit Native California* focusing on visitor experiences with tribes. Outreach has been made, but each tribe shall decide whether or not to participate and will tell their own story. The Bureau will act as a platform for promoting their chosen experiences.

Julie reported on a meeting with the group from Ernst & Young who are undertaking the research for the Tourism audit on the North Coast. They will be sending out a survey which HCVB will share with all stakeholders and partners.

PR/Media Update:

- Sponsored by Brand USA, a group of ten Italian travel industry leaders visited the County. They stayed overnight at the Carter House and had a “Taste of Humboldt” dinner and a tour through the Avenue of the Giants. They each received a Humboldt Goodie Bag. Very positive feedback.
- HCVB worked with the publisher of LA Excites Magazine, Imaan Jalali, for an exclusive tour of redwoods National Park. Arranged the guide and accommodations etc. The article was the lead on the front page:

*Meet Griff Griffith: Conservation and the Redwoods’ Charismatic Champion*

[https://laexcites.com/2023/08/23/griff-griffith-conservation-the-redwoods-charismatic-champion/?fbclid=IwAR1OTK6N45pE4PgjaQOzSy5KTpanmh8h4Rve-Z47McNd\\_iscqBxP0vHmvV4](https://laexcites.com/2023/08/23/griff-griffith-conservation-the-redwoods-charismatic-champion/?fbclid=IwAR1OTK6N45pE4PgjaQOzSy5KTpanmh8h4Rve-Z47McNd_iscqBxP0vHmvV4)

- Food & Travel Magazine just published the summer edition featuring Humboldt County. *Heavenly Humboldt*, 5 pages of text and images. 300K+ viewers. JB provided text & images. [https://foodandtravelmagazine.com/2023/08/11/heavenly-humboldt-california/?fbclid=IwAR2PbBDM\\_alswusrQQpVCo1SfN8RJpBrnZj0L1HHDbORCutFu\\_O3h5lm9eY](https://foodandtravelmagazine.com/2023/08/11/heavenly-humboldt-california/?fbclid=IwAR2PbBDM_alswusrQQpVCo1SfN8RJpBrnZj0L1HHDbORCutFu_O3h5lm9eY)

V: County Update  
No report.

VI: Other Business:

Ken noted how lucky the Bureau is to have Carlton who brings not only a wealth of relationships in many counties, but also intimate knowledge of travel trends and traveler sentiment.

- Action Item:  
Shannon enthusiastically nominated Carlton Nielsen.  
Jenny seconded the motion.  
Carlton was unanimously voted in as HCVB Director.

Carlton nominated Molly Blakemore for the Board. Molly is the head of Marketing & Community Relations at College of the Redwoods and is an enthusiastic community member and advocate. Before the next meeting, Molly will meet with Sam and Ken.

- Cannifest:

Ken reported that the two-day cannabis festival held on the Eureka bayfront in Halvorsen Park, was a great success with over 2,500 – 3,000 attendees. It was a community event, HCVB participated in a Cannabis Tourism Panel, sponsored by HCVB, as well as others, great music, and the very popular “Grow Games”. A bus with influencers from the Bay area came up, and their postings and reels on Instagram “weedmap” blew up with 8K+ viewers. HLA sponsored the marketing. There was a family parade featuring opposition to Measure A. Very successful event. Carlton reported that visitors from out of the county came for the event and stayed.

The next HCVB Board meeting will be November 16th.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45p.m.