

## Humboldt County Visitors Bureau

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

October 23, 2019 Meeting, Angelo's Pizza, Eureka, California

### MINUTES

Present: Paul Beatie, Barbara Groom, Lowell Daniels, Justin Legge, Meredith Maier, Pete Oringer, Aaron Ostrom, Marc Rowley (Chair), Scott Adair (Director, County EconDev). Staff: Julie Benbow, Genie Brady, April Hagans. By Phone: Laura Lasseter

Absent: Chris Ambrosini, Cathy Kunkler, John Porter. Supervisor Rex Bohn

The meeting was called to order by Marc Rowley at 12pm.

The minutes of the September 25, 2019 board meeting were reviewed. Genie read emails of the three points that Laura wanted to see reflected in the minutes regarding the Map & Guide: 1) there were updates & design changes on all but one page of the current made by Julie, 2) Laura did submit updates & requested changes in the requested time period & those updates were acknowledged as received but omitted from the update version, 3) Laura felt that printing the Guide featuring only HCVB members & not correctly describing the destinations does a disservice to the County as a whole & misrepresents our County to the visitor & their experience. Meredith made a motion to add Laura's requested additions, seconded by Lowell **(approved, unanimously)**. Lowell made a motion to approve the minutes with the approved additions, seconded by Pete **(approved, unanimously)**.

The Sales Report: April Hagans briefed the Board updated the Board with the many current activities being undertaken, including upcoming Arborist group & the Family Nature Summit that were upcoming site visits for their 2020 meetings, and noting that the Family Nature Summit group postponed their visit due to the power outages. April stated that, the rich variety of Humboldt County's nature & experiences attract visitors there are gaps in the experiences. The economic impact of these groups can be measured thereafter. April reviewed recent wedding requests & the upcoming North Coast Journal wedding guide event. She reported on the multiple recent and future media FAM trips. April recapped work on the website for the Meetings, Weddings, & Membership sections to make it more useable for members & the Board. She asked Board Members who had recently visited the Members section, with affirmative responses from Justin, Meredith, & Laura.

The Executive Director's Report: Julie Benbow

The County Tourism Stakeholders Meeting Report: There was much discussion regarding the Bureau's future role as the DMO for Humboldt County, as well as the marketing of cannabis. Speaking for the County, the Bureau's role in marketing cannabis, Scott stressed that the RFP

for County cannabis branding & marketing is funded with industry tax revenue, and that it wasn't the Bureau's role to market cannabis. He stated that the RFP does not impact County funds for tourism.

He further commented that the County recognizes the Bureau's value, but questions its mission & plan, which is why the Bureau was asked to report to the Board of Supervisors in December. He recommended that the Bureau create a new strategic plan that includes recommendations for increased funding. Scott agreed that the Bureau is underfunded by the county for the expectations, but that it needs to present: a) what needs to be done, b) define its purpose, c) what it's going to do, d) how much it would cost, & e) how much it would cost for any other organization to do the same service.

Libby noted that after January's horrific events the Bureau has re-evaluated, but if the County has many different organizations marketing their area(s) all cohesive messaging would be lost. Laura explained that the Bureau, though having internal issues, is valuable & viable outside the county. She stated that other organizations were developed because they felt the Bureau was not meeting their specific needs. Meredith emphasized that the Bureau has burned a lot of bridges & has not been repairing these relationships. Julie responded that, over the past few months much effort has been invested in meetings with stakeholders and partners place to rebuild, reconnect and build relationships, and reminded everyone that internal changes have not impacted the quality of visitor experience. Laura noted that the external impression of the Bureau's value she be communicated throughout the County.

Scott noted that the last six months had not been enough time for the organization to rebuild and should ask for more time. The Bureau does need to layout specific tasks and goals. Lowell made a motion that the marketing committee, who would be meeting the following day, should be tasked to put into effect Scott's ideas. Pete seconded. **(Approved, with one abstention from Laura).**

Other Business: Genie is expected to be out for six weeks starting mid-November & Charlotte will be coming in to cover some of that time.

Next meetings: November 20<sup>th</sup> & December 18<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Prepared by Genie Brady & Julie Benbow.