

Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, meeting Thursday, October 19, 2017 at the Victorian Inn, Ferndale, California

Present: Lowell Daniels, Marc Rowley, Mike Reinman, Chris Ambrosini, Gary Stone, John Porter, Donna Hufford, Lisa Cosoletto, Cari Shafer, Shailesh Patel, Tony Smithers

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by board president Chris Ambrosini.

The first item of business was ratification of the Executive Committee members and board officers recommended by the Executive Committee.

"I shall be happy to not serve as board president," said Chris Ambrosini. Nonetheless, Marc Rowley moved, and Donna Hufford seconded, to accept the slate as presented. In discussion, it was brought up that the board officers and the executive committee membership were separate motions on the agenda, with the intention that officers would be appointed from committee members. Marc Rowley then restated his motion to include approval of executive committee members and board officers in one vote. John Porter seconded, and the motion passed unanimously—with Lowell Daniels adding a friendly amendment for a vote of confidence in Chris Ambrosini's leadership.

The agenda for the October meeting was approved as presented (Rowley/Cosoletto/unanimous).

The minutes of the April, 2017 board meeting were examined and approved (Rowley/Reinman/unanimous). Of note: It was requested that the minutes reflect the actual votes for and against motions, rather than simply stating "motion passed."

The board then addressed the appointment of new board members to fill vacated seats until the next board election. Lowell Daniels moved and Marc Rowley seconded to offer the vacant board seat in Fortuna to Pritesh Patel, and the vacant seat in Eureka to Nil Patel. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, the preliminary budget for fiscal year 2017-2018 was presented. The budget was based on the previous fiscal year's assessment collections, but on the new Management District Plan fund distribution. The budget was approved (Hufford/Rowley/unanimous).

The board then addressed the Misfit Agency and the coming year's marketing campaign. The discussion included:

- Donna Hufford had questions about the primary and secondary markets targeted and the relative drive times to our destination. She said she is seeing more business from Eugene and Portland, OR and asked whether we should target those markets.
- Chris Ambrosini confirmed that he, too, is seeing business from Portland and Seattle, WA. and asked whether we should be spending more in those markets.
- Marc Rowley said that there are "ten different Americas" with people constantly moving for cultural and lifestyle choices. This makes traditional target marketing less and less effective. Marc also said that we are not reaching the "hook and bullet" crowd, and that there are big demographic and psychographic changes going on.
- Chris Ambrosini said that with digital and social media emphasis in our campaign, it is easier to target a shifting audience with fast campaign changes.

- Gary Stone said we need to tell Misfit to do more.
- Mike Reinman suggested that we need more detailed demographic information about our different audiences.
- Marc Rowley opined that “San Francisco market has plenty of rednecks” referring to the sports fans targeted through our Comcast sports advertising. He said that basketball fans are “more groovy” and more abundant in the Silicon Valley.
- Lowell Daniels said that our campaign is missing the boat on what we have to offer: The redwoods. We forget what we are all about.
- Gary Stone felt that we need to market the redwoods out of the region, not in the SF Bay Area.
- John Porter said that many Northern Californians have not seen the redwoods, really.
- Gary Stone reported that he “played tourist” locally and was very impressed by the redwoods.
- Donna Hufford noted that in her experience visitors from Australia are coming for the redwoods and are not disappointed.
- Mike Reinman related how in marketing his business (Redwood Coast Vacation Rentals) they really focus on experiences.
- Marc Rowley agreed with this approach—monitor what AirB&B is doing with focusing on the experience. They really own the Millennials—that’s the way we should go.
- Chris Ambrosini reminded the board that the HLA started the process with market research conducted by Destination Analysts, who reported that interest in the redwoods is overwhelmingly our top draw.
- Lowell Daniels discussed lodging occupancy, and noted that the STR Report does not include numbers from vacation rentals and AirBnB stays, where most of our inventory growth has been.
- Lisa Cosoletto noted a shift to more and more online reservations at her property.
- Chris Ambrosini agreed, but said that curiously he had seen a lot of walk-ins over the past two weeks.
- Changing the subject, Chris Ambrosini said that he would like more “drill-down” about what the Misfit Agency and the Eureka-Humboldt Visitors Bureau do.
- Mike Reinman said that he wants to see demographics and a breakdown of who we are targeting.
- John Porter observed that females like the Golden State Warriors (during whose games the HLA Follow the Magic ads appear). Chris Ambrosini agreed that the Warriors are certainly a different sports audience and are not “rednecks”.
- Lowell Daniels said that he doesn’t believe our online ads are working, and suggested that the funds could be better used for public relations or sponsorships.
- Chris Ambrosini concluded the agency discussion by noting that Misfit is a business and therefore tries to maximize profit. “Why can’t we recycle these ‘award-winning’ ads?,” he asked.

Next, the board received the report on Executive Committee actions, which included the Humboldt Bay Trail presentation that the committee had declined to fund. John Porter said that the HLA’s job is to market the facility, not pay to build it. It was agreed that the project was properly an issue for the Eureka and Arcata community funds. Mike Reinman did bring up the idea that bike rentals could be part of the Bay Trail. Gary Stone spontaneously created the idea of “The 17-mile Ride.”

The financial statement for September was presented and accepted (Shafer/Cosoletto/unanimous).

During Director Reports, the following was presented:

- Chris Ambrosini spoke about the new Visitor Center in Eureka.
- John Porter announced that the Benbow Inn expansion project is coming to a close. He shared some of the fascinating Benbow family history, as well as projects at the Benbow KOA RV park. Mr. Porter also said that Reggae on the River was a bomb this year, that there is a lot of activity in Southern Humboldt around cannabis legalization, and that he was participating in a Wine Auction fundraiser to benefit the Clarke Museum.
- Donna Hufford said that she had received a request from the Redwood Parks Conservancy for an art-based event in celebration of the park's 50th anniversary.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:04 am.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers