

Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance meeting
Wednesday, October 30, 2013
Hampton Inn & Suites, Arcata

Present: Mike Caldwell, Chris Ambrosini, Lowell Daniels, Donna Hufford, Jim Johnson, Pritesh Patel, Jeff Durham, John Porter, Audrey Archibald, Marc Rowley, Alex Stillman, Tony Smithers, Richard Stenger

The meeting was called to order by Chris Ambrosini at 2:05 pm. The meeting's agenda was approved without change (Daniels/Rowley/unanimous).

The minutes of the July meeting were approved as presented (Daniels/Caldwell/unanimous).

There were no items of old business.

Tony Smithers presented the financial statement for September 30, 2013, which was accepted without alteration (Porter/Daniels/unanimous).

The next item of business was a staff report on the Fall advertising campaign in San Francisco Bay Area. Richard Stenger and Tony Smithers reported on the schedule, the budget and the creative strategy. With no retail offer to track, the immediate response to the campaign was still not known. However, staff reported that the \$300,000 budget purchased over 60 million advertising impressions during the six weeks of the campaign, and that over 13,000 new website visitors went to the campaign website at www.redwoodcoast.com.

Marc Rowley questioned the logic of doing a mass market campaign, and also opined that the campaign creative was old school. "Californians are a lot more contemporary than this campaign suggests," he said. Further, Rowley said "We are not ready for prime time—we are just putting together a framework for our marketing campaign and we had to work with what we had on hand" referring to the stale video and photography used in the campaign.

John Porter commented that the campaign was produced with a short lead time, which was unfortunate.

Chris Ambrosini said that more marketing ideas would be generated at the board retreat. Meanwhile, he was glad that we did something.

Lowell Daniels said it's important that the HLA be seen doing something (by the assessed businesses)

Pritesh Patel said that the marketing needs to "create a buzz," to which Lowell Daniels replied that we should look at a book titled "Buzz Marketing."

Next, a follow-up letter to lodging properties was reviewed and approved for mailing (Hufford/Daniels/unanimous).

Next, a discussion of coming campaigns for the Winter and Spring seasons was discussed. Both Jim Johnson and Lowell Daniels recommended that we focus on the shoulder seasons, but John Porter replied that people WILL come up during the winter (off) season, especially while school is out.

Donna Hufford recommended that we continue with the "Getaway" campaign theme for the sake of continuity and consumer recognition.

Chris Ambrosini clarified that the “Winter” season included December through February.

Mike Caldwell reiterated the need for continuity, with no gap in our market presence. He also strongly advocated for networking with the Bureau of Land Management and other public land agencies to support one another’s goals.

Alex Stillman suggested that a winter market position could be that we’re not snowed in.

Marc Rowley agreed that our weather is not an issue, it’s actually a benefit to our marketing.

Chris Ambrosini brought up whale watching, storm watching and the Christmas bird count as possible destination draws during the off season.

Jeff Durham said that any new campaigns should have continuity, with the message focused down into the villages in our destination.

The board opted to not combine with Winter/Spring campaigns, as suggested by staff, but to keep a Winter campaign budgeted at \$120,000 (Porter/Rowley/unanimous).

Next, the board discussed the scheduled Board Retreat, set for January 8-9 in Shelter Cove. This was described as a “study session,” and Mike Caldwell said that we should come out of the retreat with a plan. “When people come to us with requests, we just say no because we don’t have a plan,” he said.

Jeff Durham agreed that every presentation has been uncomfortable. “We need to capitalize on what others are doing,” he said.

Marc Rowley asked whether the retreat should be open to other partners and players, a broader spectrum who might bring other visions and plans for tourism.

Jim Johnson commented that we are reinventing the wheel by not bidding our tasks out to other agencies.

Alex Stillman said that the retreat needs to have a professional facilitator. Tony Smithers suggested asking John Poimiroo if he was willing to facilitate, and this was approved by the board (Porter/Daniels/unanimous).

Next, a staff request to establish a budget of \$50,000 for producing quality destination video was discussed and quickly approved (Daniels/Caldwell/unanimous).

A meeting schedule for the remainder of the fiscal year was presented and approved (Porter/Hufford/unanimous).

Next, an update on Community Funding projects was given, followed by a public comment period in which Judy Hodgson announced the Eureka Crab Crawl event supported by the Eureka HLA committee; and Don Banducci introduced his concept for destination video shooting entitled “The Four Seasons of Humboldt.”

With no further time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers