

**Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, meeting
Wednesday, January 9, 2013 at the Adorni Center, Eureka, California**

Present: Lowell Daniels, Chris Ambrosini, Gary Stone, Donna Hufford, Marc Rowley,
Jeff Durham, John Porter

Staff: Tony Smithers

Absent: Mike Caldwell

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 am, and the minutes of the December meeting were approved with no changes (Rowley/Ambrosini/unanimous).

Next, the agenda for this meeting was approved (Hufford/Porter/unanimous), with Marc Rowley adding the presentation of a marketing idea under his director's report.

Under old business, Mr. Smithers reported to the committee the results of his office's research into lodging businesses that do not appear to be collecting TOT or the TBID assessment. By comparing the list of known TOT collectors to businesses advertising on VRBO.com and AirBnB.com, over 70 questionable properties had been identified in the different jurisdictions. (Marc Rowley explained the AirBnB business model to the committee.) The committee then discussed whether this list should be turned over to local governments to follow up on if they see fit. The motion to do so was made by Chris Ambrosini, seconded by John Porter, and passed unanimously.

Smithers then reported on progress in search of a marketing agency, saying he had distributed the request for qualifications and proposals to five agencies he had identified as capable of meeting our needs. The RFP had been developed with the HCCVB marketing committee, he said. Marc Rowley commented that in consume marketing the Baby Boomers are still driving the bus, and will continue to dominate for another ten to twenty years. Rowley then introduced a marketing plan for Eureka, with a handout shared with the committee. The plan called for concierge level services to be provided at an Old Town Eureka storefront, as well as for the development of various tours to keep visitors engaged for another day. "We are herd animals, but we are not doing a good job of herding our visitors," he said. "We have the assets to keep visitors occupied, and its not always going to be about the redwoods."

Donna Hufford added that visitors come for the redwoods, but they usually stay for something else. "We need to persuade private start ups that they can make money in tourism," Rowley added. Jeff Durham said that this need could be fulfilled by Humboldt Economic Fuel program, which had approached him for tourism project ideas. Rowley then referred to a current program by the North Coast Small Business Development Center, saying that the bureau needs to show leadership in this area. John Porter agreed, saying that we are the ones in daily contact with tourists and so we have a special perspective. Gary Stone added that this is the perfect role for the proposed Event & Project Coordinator. Rowley delineated the difference (and need for) 20-minute, 1-hour and 3-hour attractions. "It's our opportunity to be creative in our thinking," said Lowell Daniels, "to do something great."

Next, the committee approved payment of the five percent administrative fee to HCCVB for the first quarter of the fiscal year (Porter/Hufford/unanimous).

John Porter then reported on his follow up meeting with Mandi Kindred of Blue Lake Casino Hotel, regarding their participation in the Humboldt Lodging Alliance. Porter said that the casino had offered a \$10,000 “donation”, which he recommended against accepting while still pursuing an agreement with Bear River Casino. Lowell Daniels said that Blue Lake Casino & Hotel needs to participate at some level or they can’t be on the common website, etc. John Porter made the motion to send a letter declining the \$10,000 donation. The motion was seconded by Lowell Daniels, and approved unanimous, with John Porter agreeing to draft the letter. As far as Bear River is concerned, it was agreed that they same committee (Porter, Ambrosini, Stillman, Smithers) would approach them with the request for 2% self-assessment. The committee will report next meeting.

The format for the HLA financial statement was then presented for the committee’s approval. While they found the general format acceptable, John Porter asked for the report to have more marketing detail. “I want it to account for every dime spent,” he said. Marc Rowley suggested the solution of including the HCCVB financials along with the HLA report, and with this addition the format was approved (Daniels/Ambrosini/unanimous). HCCVB board member Peter Kenyon will be asked to attend the next HLA meeting to help explain the format and accounting practices.

Finally, the community tourism project funding was discussed, with staff asking if the program could be launched now. The committee decided to wait until spring before rolling the program out (Rowley/Porter/unanimous). The committee wanted to put its energy into developing the proposed staff positions (sales manager and event coordinator); and in setting up a broad-based hiring committee. (Porter and Ambrosini agreed to be on the hiring committee).

With no further time, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 am.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers