

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, meeting Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at the Red Lion Hotel, Eureka, California

Present: Chris Ambrosini, Lowell Daniels, Donna Hufford, John Porter, Tony Smithers

The meeting was called to order by Chris Ambrosini at 1:10 pm

The minutes of the May, 2015 meeting were examined and approved (Porter/Daniels/unanimous).

In a related discussion, John Porter requested that important items of business be put at the top of the agenda so that they can be addressed by committee members who may need to leave early. The committee also discussed the presentation received from the Misfit agency.

The agenda for June was reviewed and the motion made to move up the presentation by Malcolm deSoto to the top of the agenda (Porter/Daniels/unanimous).

Therefore, the first item of business was a video presentation given by Malcolm deSoto which previewed the past few months of shooting as he finished up the "Four Seasons of Humboldt" videography contract. Following the well-received video, the committee had some questions and comments.

John Porter: Can HLA members get access to these videos? How?

Donna Hufford: We need to establish a policy for HLA members to access the content.

Lowell Daniels: Can the committee watch all of the vignettes created by Mr. deSoto?

Malcolm deSoto: They are all available online and are password protected, and I will email a list of titles and passwords to the Executive Committee.

Thereupon Lowell Daniels suggested that staff drafts a policy for use of HLA content, to be provided to the committee by the next meeting. In discussion, the issues of member versus non-member usage, approval by the Executive Committee, and password protection, were addressed.

The committee then thanked Mr. deSoto for his excellent work.

The next item was presentation of the May, 2015 financial statement by HLA administrator Tony Smithers. He covered the expected expenses for the Follow the Magic campaign, a few community tourism fund expenses that had been approved, and overall revenues received that were looking to be well in excess of the amount budgeted for the fiscal year. The financial report was approved as delivered (Porter/Hufford/unanimous).

Next, a presentation was received from Sandy Scott, Executive Director of the Arcata Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center Manager, and Frank Whitlach, president of the Arcata Chamber. Ms. Scott began by describing the California Welcome Center Arcata and a little about its structure and history. "We serve 15,000 visitors a year. Our staff provide a high level of concierge service and keep it

local, local, local” she said, stressing that the Welcome Center serves all of Humboldt County, not just Arcata. In fact, she reiterated the point that “we are not the City of Arcata.”

The Welcome Center is celebrating its 15th anniversary even as, Scott admitted, they could have done a better job. “We are in the process of breaking into our books, “ she said. “The chamber of commerce is losing money by operating the Welcome Center.”

She also said that they had asked Visit California, which manages the California Welcome Center program, whether they could answer the phone “California Welcome Center Humboldt,” but this permission was not granted.

Finally, Scott said that there had been an outpouring of support for the Welcome Center after her board sent out a letter recently.

Lowell Daniels asked about the building which houses the Welcome Center and the chamber, and Scott explained how the chamber owns the building. Daniels then asked the committee why it wasn’t California Welcome Center Eureka, since Arcata does not contribute to the destination marketing partnership.

Frank Whitlach said that the Welcome Center is a tool for building tourism, and asked whether the HLA and the Visitors Bureau value what currently exists. “How can we use the Welcome Center better?” he asked.

The committee generally agreed on the need for hospitality and visitor fulfillment in the Humboldt tourism infrastructure.

John Porter asked whether the chamber and the Welcome Center have different boards (no).

Frank Whitlach explained that the Welcome Center is a franchisee and must follow some guidelines created by Visit California.

Lowell Daniels espoused the need for a Humboldt Visitor Center more than a California Welcome Center Arcata. Then he asked, “What kind of visitor goes to the Welcome Center?”

Frank Whitlach replied that it’s a visitor looking for guidance, and that Welcome Center visitors are proven to spend more time and money in the area.

Lowell Daniels said that it’s about heads in beds, though he had not seen a lodging referral report from the Welcome Center or other visitor center.

Donna Hufford said that the Welcome Center needed a board of directors that was bigger than the Arcata Chamber and represents the entire county.

Frank Whitlach replied that perhaps a broader advisory group could be appointed.

Ms. Scott and Mr. Whitlach were thanked for their presentation; they said they may be returning to make a more specific request of the HLA.

Next, the committee considered funding the residual amount requested by Kayak Zak's to operate the Stone Lagoon Visitor Center with expanded hours through the Summer season. Of the initial request, one third had been approved by the Northern Humboldt community fund (Donna Hufford) and one third by the Trinidad Community fund (Mike Reinman). The move to approve the final third from HLA Opportunity Marketing funds was made by John Porter and seconded by Donna Hufford, and passed unanimously. Lowell Daniels clarified that this funding was for the current year only, and would not automatically be renewed next year.

In a report on the destination photography project, Smithers said that photographer Gary Todoroff had completed uploading images to a special website from which the HLA could make its selections. Lowell Daniels suggested that the entire Executive Committee goes to this site and makes its "top 200" photo picks, as a way to start winnowing down the choice. These choices could then be reflected in a single digital collection that would be managed with the Lightbox photo software. Chris Ambrosini said that the HLA should cover the cost of purchasing this software.

Next, the 2015 HLA board of directors ballot was reviewed and approved for immediate mailing (Porter/Daniels/unanimous). A subcommittee of Lowell Daniels and Brad Laws was appointed to count the ballots.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers