

**Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, meeting Wednesday, August 10, 2016 at the Red Lion Hotel, Eureka, California.**

Present: Lowell Daniels, Donna Hufford, John Porter, Cari Shafer, Shailesh Patel, Tony Smithers

Guests: Rob Holmlund, June Walsh, Tim Walsh, Dave Feral, Aaron Ostrom, Don Banducci, Tracy Mack, Mary Burke, David Lippmann

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 noon by Lowell Daniels.

The minutes of the July, 2016 meeting were examined and approved (Shafer/Porter/unanimous), and the agenda for the August meeting was approved as submitted (Shafer/Porter/unanimous).

Under Action Items, the first order of business was a presentation by Rob Holmlund, Director of Community Development for the City of Eureka. Mr. Holmlund had requested to give the committee a report on Transient Occupancy Tax collections in Eureka, and in particular to update the HLA on the many tourism-related projects being pursued by the City. His presentation included:

- Waterfront development on city property, including zoning for visitor-serving uses, California Coastal Commission, and the C to F Street development for which RFPs would soon be going out.
- Outdoor seating in Old Town, including the parklets, serving of alcohol, and development of some alleys into pedestrian friendly spaces for new development.
- The Sequoia Park Zoo master plan which includes the canopy walk.
- Continued development of the Eureka waterfront trail, which when complete will provide 13 miles of continuous recreation.
- Vacation rental unit zoning and regulation.
- Development of a historic theme park at Blue Ox Millworks.
- Licensing and regulation of food trucks.
- A strategic arts plan.
- A Parking Assessment District, and perhaps building a parking structure in Old Town)
- An Old Town Trolley attraction for public transport.
- The City's historic structure website.
- Cruise ship development and marketing.
- Vacancy rate analysis in Old Town and Downtown.
- A five-year plan to develop the City's South Gateway.

Following this presentation, Cari Shafer asked about the City's plans for dealing with homelessness, citing the many negative reviews that visitors have posted about Eureka. Mr. Holmlund replied that the City is investing a lot of resources into addressing this issue, and is also pushing the County of Humboldt to dedicate their resources to the homeless problem. Shailesh Patel stated that the City should adopt a basic policy of keeping homeless camps away from tourist areas, and should prioritize their efforts along the tourism corridors. Holmlund responded that the Humboldt Lodging Alliance should write a letter to that effect addressed to the Eureka City Council. He also said that the city's gateways and 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>

Streets are managed by Cal Trans, and that the HLA should also communicate its concerns to that agency. More concerns were voiced about the poor appearance of the County jail and administrative building. Mr. Holmlund confirmed that this building was the responsibility of county government, and suggested that county supervisors be invited to HLA meetings to hear their concerns. Mr. Holmlund concluded his presentation by handing out a transient occupancy tax (TOT) analysis that charted bed tax collections by local jurisdictions, the number of hotel rooms in each, and their respective contributions to destination marketing.

Next was a presentation and funding request from the Eureka Rhododendron Society, which was planning to host the National Rhododendron Society conference in Eureka this coming April 27 to 30<sup>th</sup>. The event will be at the Sequoia Conference Center and the host hotel will be the Red Lion. The keynote speaker is Dr. Peter Raven. The Society requested funding support for \$10,000 to help pay for Dr. Raven and to help pay for bus transportation for conference goers on various field trips in Humboldt County that are being arranged. June and Tim Walsh presented, saying that the event was expected to attract some 200 out of town guests, and that there would be a great deal of pre- and post-event travel and tourism within Humboldt County. John Porter commended the Walshes for their hard work; it was suggested that since this event most benefits Eureka that the funding could be split between the Eureka Community Tourism fund and the HLA Opportunity Marketing fund. Later in the meeting, the funding request was revisited, and the \$10,000 grant was awarded (Porter/Shafer/passed).

Following this item, a presentation and funding request was made by representatives of Humboldt Steelhead Days. Dave Feral began by introducing a new member of the Steelhead Days team, Aaron Ostrom of Pacific Outfitters. Feral then announced that they were expanding Steelhead Days to be a three-month long promotion, with a variety of events scheduled during that period. In this way, they hoped to avoid being vulnerable to unfavorable weather/water conditions during the event. Also:

- They are planning on a \$10,000 in cash prizes for the fishing tournament.
- They will issue a “member card” for participants to access a variety of benefits and services such as discounts at restaurants and outdoor stores. The discount card will be used to track participation and the origin of event participants.
- They are adding “restoration” and “spawning” tours on local rivers and tributaries.
- They are working closely with the Salmonid Restoration Federation.
- They are expanding their social media outreach, and are adding more ticket outlets such as the Pacific Outfitters store in Ukiah. Pacific Outfitters will be providing more tours and field trips.
- The 2017 event will increase the out-of-area advertising, targeting outdoor enthusiasts.
- They will continue to solicit partnerships and sponsorships.
- Don Banducci will be working on a Steelhead Days video and TV commercial that showcases Humboldt County in the winter time.
- They will implement a “Invite your friends and family” promotion aimed at local residents.

The presentation concluded with a request for \$65,000 in funding for the expanded 2017 event. “There is a strong undercurrent of interest in Humboldt County steelhead fishing” said Don Banducci. “It is magical.”

Lowell Daniels asked how many people had signed up then cancelled this year due to the weather and fishing conditions. Dave Feral said he would find out and report back. John Porter said that we need to look at this event as a long-term investment. Shailesh Patel said that we need to make sure our visitors have a chance to win the prize money, not just locals.

The funding request was approved (Porter/Shaffer/unanimous) with the following provisos:

1. The team will give their report on the event, with metrics, by June 30 of 2017.
2. There will be a prize category specifically for out of town visitors.
3. Clicks from the Steelhead Days website to the HLA website will be tracked.

Next, Tony Smithers presented the proposed 2016-2017 budget, which he said was based on the current year's revenues and the dispositions mandated by the Management District Plan. This document was approved (Porter/Hufford/unanimous). The financial statement for July, 2016 was then presented along with the Community Funding Status Report. These were also approved as presented (Porter/Shaffer/unanimous).

Finally, the committee addressed the engagement letter with Civitas, Inc. for consultation and services for the renewal of the Humboldt County Tourism Business Improvement District. In the absence of Board Chairman Chris Ambrosini, it was decided that Vice Chair Lowell Daniels would sign the letter to get Civitas working. The committee agreed that "time is of the essence," and Smithers was directed to obtain the latest version of the letter from Civitas for Mr. Daniels to sign. (It transpired that Mr. Ambrosini returned to town soon after this meeting, and the letter was duly signed and delivered to Civitas.)

With no further time, the meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers