

**Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance meeting  
Wednesday, August 15 2012  
HCCVB Office, Eureka.**

Present: Mike Caldwell, Jeff Durham, Chris Ambrosini, Gary Stone, John Porter, Donna Hufford

Absent: Lowell Daniels, Marc Rowley

Staff: Tony Smithers

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am. The first order of business was the review and approval of the July, 2012 meeting minutes (Caldwell/Porter/unanimous). With regard to the minutes, Donna Hufford requested that absent committee members be listed in the minutes.

The first item discussed was the “community funding” program of the Management District Plan. The committee agreed that the word “grant” was not to be used in connection with this program. Questions regarding the process of funding requests and approvals were raised: would the individual committees present their recommendations to the board for approval? Are there concerns about jurisdictions with single decision makers? (For example, Donna Hufford said that she covers a large region from McKinleyville to Orick). John Porter suggested that when the program is launched we should put an ad in the paper to alert potential partners. Gary Stone wondered whether there should be an appeal process for applications that don’t get selected, with only HLA members being eligible to appeal, and a very high bar being set such as a majority of the board vote needed to approve the appeal. Mr. Stone reminded the committee that they had agreed to give staff until year’s end to submit draft policy and procedures for the community funding program. Mike Caldwell asked to put the item on the September agenda so that the committee could begin to set policy.

Tony Smithers briefly explained how the HLA chart of accounts would track the fund balances in each community fund through separate general ledger codes, not with separate bank accounts.

Next, an accounting of start-up costs for the Humboldt Lodging Alliance and the Humboldt County Tourism Business Improvement District—incurred by the Humboldt County Convention & Visitors Bureau—was distributed to the committee. The total amount for reimbursement came to \$32,837.01. The committee decided that this reimbursement was to be made as soon as the funds were available.

The suggestion was made and agreed to that agendas for the Executive Committee will include an “old business” item as well as an opportunity for the committee to approve bills for payment.

Next, Tony Smithers reported that he had purchased Directors & Officers insurance on behalf of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance. He said that he had opted for a higher level of coverage (\$2 million) because the nature of the HCTBID was more controversial than a simple destination marketing organization. He

reminded the committee that the insurance premiums were included in the five percent administrative fee that HLA will be paying to HCCVB.

The committee then proceeded to discuss the issue of working with the local casino/hotels that are not included in the tourism district. Jeff Durham pointed out that the casinos have no legal obligation to collect the assessment, therefore our approach needs to appeal to their self interest. He suggested that the HLA liaison team needs to present them with a fully-fledged marketing plan and ask for their participation, rather than a bald request for money. Jeff felt that the casinos should be approached by an experienced local person (such as Alex Stillman). John Porter said that the presentation needs to be professional, and also that the casinos should be asked to contribute more than 2 percent to make up for the lack of TOT funding that is not going to tourism promotion from their operations. The committee agreed to bring this item forward to September and the development of a marketing plan. The proposed liaison team comprises John Porter, Chris Ambrosini, Alex Stillman and Tony Smithers.

The committee then began to address a list of marketing topics provided by Tony Smithers, and while the list was by no means completed, many salient and useful comments and ideas emerged:

1. It would be a good thing to print enough travel guides so that they could be distributed in hotel rooms throughout Humboldt County.
2. The travel guide needs to be more inclusive
3. We need mobile apps. Gary Stone suggested an app of local history for self-guided tours.
4. We need a dedicated individual to work on our social media channels
5. Jeff Durham suggested recruitment of people around the county to feed social media content to our channels, providing an authentic sense of place.
6. Mike Caldwell said we should start by all "liking" each other on Facebook.
7. Mr. Caldwell also said the "Redwoods Plus" notion needs to be expanded...as a tagline, a slogan, a campaign or even as a brand.
8. Create the hash tag #humboldt to concentrate tweets about our destination
9. Jeff Durham said that the members should all send their videos to one another so they can be reposted and popularized.
10. John Porter said that the Groupon site works for the Benbow Inn because it brings in new customers that would not have come otherwise.
11. Staffing is an important part of the marketing plan, with the Sales Manager and Event Coordinator positions being considered.
12. John Porter asked for Job Descriptions and an organizational chart to be circulated to the committee.

Final items of discussion included a request by Jeff Durham that the Executive Committee minutes be distributed to the entire HLA board upon approval. There was also discussion of whether more frequent board meetings were needed. And John Porter asked that the issue of RV Parks be placed on the next agenda.

With no further time, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers