

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance meeting

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

Hampton Inn & Suites, Arcata.

Present: Gary Stone, Chris Ambrosini, Lowell Daniels, Raul Ainardi, Mike Caldwell, John Porter, Donna Hufford, Tony Smithers

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 pm and began with approval of the October meeting minutes (moved by Caldwell). Then, the current meeting agenda was approved (Caldwell/Stone/unanimous).

The October Financial Statement was reviewed and approved (Porter/Daniels/unanimous). Smithers presented a report of Community Fund balances, and was directed to develop a report which included which projects had been funded. "Make it a living document which reflects all the Community Funding activity" he was told.

Next, the issue of Event Coordination was addressed. Gary Stone said he would like to see an event coordinator available to professionally help people start something. "There are a lot of passions and interests out there that could lead to great events, but a lot of events don't do a good job. They need help putting it together," he said.

Mike Caldwell agreed, and reported on a meeting with Debi Farber-Bush of Greenway Partners in which a new event for Shelter Cove was discussed. This Plein Aire Festival in October of 2014 could be a countywide event, he said. Caldwell suggested that Greenway Partners could be the HLA's event contractor.

Raul Ainardi said that an event coordinator should also work to bring in events from outside the county.

Lowell Daniels said that the HLA board needs to set parameters for event coordination, to provide a go-to place for those looking to hold events in Humboldt County. As an example, he mentioned the Victorian Holidays in Ferndale.

Gary Stone said the event coordinator needs to be a contractor, not an employee, and that HLA funds including Community Funds could be used to jump start events—for example, support an event for the first three years after which it is on its own.

John Porter agreed that this role needed to be contracted out.

Mike Caldwell asked to have Greenway Partners come in present a full-blown proposal. Gary Stone said the HLA had three years in which to test this idea. Lowell Daniels cautioned to be careful of who the HLA hires for this role, reiterating that it should be funded partly by HLA marketing funds and partly by HLA Community Funds.

That's part of the discussion we need to have, said Gary Stone, who then made a motion to invite Greenway Partners to make a presentation of 30 minutes, including question & answer, at the earliest opportunity. The motion was seconded by Mike Caldwell and approved unanimously.

Next, the committee discussed production of tourism videos and the proposal that had been received from Malcolm DeSoto and Don Banducci. Mike Caldwell advised following the "four seasons" concept proposed by Banducci.

Chris Ambrosini said that he liked Banducci's creative eye, and that his direction would be needed for producing the HLA's videos. Mike Caldwell suggested that DeSoto and Banducci be invited back in to hammer out the details of their proposal.

Gary Stone said that if we're going to do this, we have to make sure it is good. Lowell Daniels stated that we must make sure no one is left out—and that we have to move on this project. Mike Caldwell expressed his preference for activity-based videos. John Porter suggested that each committee member could provide input on suggested topics/shoot list items for their region of the county.

The committee then decided to invite DeSoto and Banducci to come and present their final proposal to a special meeting of the Executive Committee (Stone/Ainardi/unanimous). In discussion it was agreed to combine this with the Event Coordination presentation. Staff was directed to schedule and plan the special meeting.

Next, Winter advertising was addressed, beginning with a staff report on metrics and results of the Fall 2013 campaign. Smithers reported that the \$300,000 campaign had generated over 50 million advertising impressions, but there was as yet no evidence of any bumps in business for the Fall season. The committee was universally unimpressed by the creative produced for this campaign, though they were somewhat more pleased with the media buy.

Lowell Daniels said that we need continuity of the Getaway campaign. "It's a long-term thing" he said. "The ads need to be repetitive." Daniels also suggested that the winter campaign could reach into the central valley, Redding and southern Oregon.

John Porter said that winter in Humboldt is about fishing. He also said the RV business is surprisingly good in winter but has room for growth.

Chris Ambrosini suggested that the campaign should include a value-added offer such as a free upgrade.

John Porter promoted the idea of Valentine's Day Packages, which will market a three-day holiday.

Raul Ainardi suggested a promotion in which each property comes up with its own value offer or package that gets listed on the campaign website.

The discussion was tabled with no action taken.

Finally, the January board retreat was discussed. The given dates are January 8 and 9 at the Inn of the Lost Coast in Shelter Cove. Mike Caldwell suggested that board members should plan to stay the nights of January 7 and 8 to get the most work in. The dining options were discussed and John Porter offered to bring salmon and steaks for a barbeque one night. Other points discussed:

Lowell Daniels said he wanted to hear stories about what other successful BIDs have done.

Gary Stone said that he wants the facilitator to pick our brains about what we want to see happen, rather than foist his own agenda on us.

Mike Caldwell said the major goal of the retreat should be to produce a plan for the HLA to follow.

Lowell Daniels said we need to drop our personal focus and think bigger for the entire county.

The committee asked staff to research a list of other TBIDs so they can do some homework prior to the retreat.

With no further time, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers