

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance meeting
Wednesday, May 8, 2013
Adorni Center, Eureka, CA

Present: John Porter, Gary Stone, Mark Rowley, Jeff Durham, Donna Hufford, Chris Ambrosini.

Staff: Tony Smithers

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Stone at 2:05 pm. The minutes of the April meeting were examined and approved (Porter/Rowley/unanimous).

The agenda for the meeting was discussed and approved (Hufford/Durham/unanimous) with the following changes:

1. Add a line item for board member comments
2. Move item #2, Community Funding Program, to #1 under Action Items

Under Old Business, a brief report on market research being conducted by Catalyst was given. Staff reported that nearly 1,000 completed surveys had been received and that Catalyst was preparing to give an online/phone presentation of the initial findings.

Under Action Items, the first item under discussion was the Community Funding Program. Staff reported that the first funding request had been received from the Arcata Chamber of Commerce, with a request to fund expanded visitor center hours and upgrades of computer equipment. The request had been reviewed and approved by the Arcata subcommittee (Stillman, Cutshall and Patel). Chris Ambrosini wondered if there was a potential legal issue to approving a grant request when the HLA had not officially "gone public" with the community funding program. John Porter felt that the HLA has no legal requirement to give notice or advertise the program, while Gary Stone felt that the city subcommittees fully represent the HLA board in these matters. Jeff Durham agreed that while "we want to be on the up and up, it is the hotels who get to decide" the community funding requests. Marc Rowley, specifically commenting on the Arcata request, noted that visitor information centers are generally becoming less popular and less valuable to destinations, and that "we need to have a long conversation about the future of visitor information services." Donna Hufford said that only a few people know that money is available and that we need to clean up the application process. She reiterated that the requests are not for full Executive Committee or Board approval. Gary Stone then commented that since this is the first application being considered, the committee needs to make sure the process is right and fair.

At this point, John Porter made a motion to ratify the decision of the Arcata subcommittee to accept the Arcata chamber request. The motion was seconded by Marc Rowley, and passed unanimously.

Conversation about the Community Funding Program continued, with John Porter saying that everyone in Southern Humboldt knows about the available funds and that applications are expected any day. He said he had no legal concerns about the program, and reiterated that the funding decisions are for the

local committees to make. Marc Rowley agreed saying "It's Arcata's money, let them take the risk." Gary Stone said that the concern was not over legal issues but over fairness. He just wanted to have the process discussed publicly so that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. Donna Hufford said that other entities and individuals need to be made aware that the funding is available, whereupon Mr. Stone suggested that the committee instruct staff to prepare a communications campaign to inform potential partners about the Community Funding Program.

Further discussion about the Community Funding Program ensued, in which Gary Stone stated his preference that funding requests come before the Executive Committee for information and review, while keeping decisions in the hands of the subcommittees. Board member Diane Cutshall was in attendance, and she raised the question of an audit procedure for community funded projects. Donna Hufford was of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the community committees to track results. Marc Rowley agreed that the "onus is on the committees." Chris Ambrosini asked whether the board should somehow regulate these funding requests, for example, by providing guidelines as to what activities put heads in beds. The sense of the committee was that this is up to the individual subcommittees. The funding applications need only the signatures of the city subcommittee members for approval. The idea of a semi-annual report on Community Funding was suggested and agreed to, with this and all the above recommendations being put into a policy statement for staff to prepare, and the above approved motion amended to approve these subsequent decisions and staff direction.

Next, the April 2013 Financial Statement was examined and accepted (Porter/Rowley/unanimous).

Next, an administrative payment of \$9,968.14, being five percent of the 2nd quarter TBID assessment, was approved for the HCCVB (Hufford/Porter/unanimous).

The committee then decided, with reference to the HLA 2013 board elections, that the Executive Committee shall serve as the board nominating committee. Staff was directed to place this item on the June agenda.

Next, under Public Comments, Judy Hodgson appeared to report on progress of the Humboldt Bay Trail along the NCRA right of way. She said she favored the "Raid AND Trail" option. Hodgson also spoke about efforts to arrange public tours of the Carson Mansion in conjunction with the Humboldt Bay Tourism Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.