

**Yosemite/Mariposa Tourism Bureau Minutes
Annual\General Meeting
January 13, 2010
Mariposa County Public Library, Meeting Room
4978 10th Street, Mariposa, CA 95338**

Meeting called to order by Dan Jansen @ 2:15 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Donna Brownell, (Arts Council), Treasurer
Brian Bullis (Fairgrounds)
Marilyn Griswold (Redwoods)
Donna Nassar (B&B's Secretary)
Jonathan Farrington (Tenaya Lodge)
Doug Shaw (Yosemite Bug)
Kevin Shelton (Yosemite Resorts)
CherylAnn Schimmelfenning (Hotel Jeffery)
MaryAnn Huff (Chamber of Commerce)
Dan Jensen (DNC), President
Donna Nassar (B & B Secretary)

Excused Board Members:

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Roger Biery
Theresa Castaldi(Coyote Springs Ranch
Candy O'Donnel-Browne

Absent Ex-Officio Members:

Staff:

Jeffery Hentz
Kristine Showalter
Lana Luzcy

Visitors:

Larry Donaldson-Cota-Cole & Assoc.
Kris Casto (Mt. Bullion Vineyard)
Janetta Phillips
Charlie Phillips
Odella Knell
Peter Schimmelfenning (Chamber of
Commerce)

➤ **Public Comments**

Butterfly Festival: Dell Knell spoke regarding the intention of Butterfly Festival as a Destination Spot of Mariposa. Today, Knell requested funds towards their \$10,000 budget. Knell indicated that they spent \$7,000 to \$8,000 in 2009. Knell indicated that they would like to expand the Hat contest at the Fairgrounds, and to pay their entertainment. About 40 classrooms were involved in 2009 to raise butterflies. Kids have a wonderful experience. Donations range from \$1,000, \$500, \$250, \$100, depending on the breed of butterfly. They purchase the eggs for the school. (Information was passed out to members). Knell is hoping for a good turnout, and mentioned Hentz has been promoting them. Knell will request her donation in writing. Jensen asked how donations are solicited. Knell indicated by articles in newspaper, contest, restaurants, businesses, service organizations.

Theresa Castaldi of Coyote Ranch announced that she is running for Supervisor District III and asked everyone to support her by voting on June 8, 2010.

Donna Sisson: Representative of Yosemite National Park: Ms. Sisson introduced herself and stated that she hopes to be a regular at the YMCTB Board Meetings.

➤ Action Matters

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES -

Bullis motioned, motion was seconded by Brownell, and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. TREASURER REPORT -

Bullis recommended approving the report offered by Eric Oster.

Bullis introduced Hentz to speak about the Balance Sheet.

Hentz explained that the County Contract, TIB Collections, and other revenue are generated through Co-op Advertising, such as: Destination of the Week, Travel Trade Shows, Co-op with DNC and Tenaya Lodge. We have generated close to \$50,000 and hope to double by end of the year. Co-op Advertising allows us to expand, sustain and grow. Our cash position is excellent; we have a strong balance sheet. We have money to market. Jensen asked how the November or December Budget, regarding the reimbursement method works. Hentz explained that tourism pays the upfront charges, and then the expense becomes an Accounts Receivable. Lana actually handles our billing for that.

3. B.O.D. MEETING DATES FOR 2010 - (a schedule is attached to the board package)

A short discussion was held and it was confirmed that basically B.O.D. meeting would be held every other month, and that the schedule was set up to not conflict with Trade Events, and travel time. Jensen asked for a Motion to approve the Proposed BOD Meeting Schedule. The Motion was approved, seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

4. MID YEAR BUDGET REVIEW & APPROVAL OF BUDGET INCREASE FOR 2009-2010 -

Hentz requested an increase to the budget by \$100,000 to 1,500,000. He would like to bring in an Independent Contractor to help with work that needs to be done in the next 9 months. The current is \$18,000 to be increased to \$30,000. Hentz requested Radio Ads be increased. Some of the money is production cost for Fall Campaign, Sweepstakes and Destination and requested moving \$15,000 into the Radio campaign. Hentz said TV Promo Spots were a lot of success this year and more affordable for us. Wonderful stuff has been done by CBS TV, we have copies of the show on CD's at the office. We are negotiating with Bay Area TV Stations for some real good deals. Hentz requested Increasing budget from \$45,000 by an additional \$40,000. Hentz asked that Online Media, which was budgeted at \$90,000. We spent \$38,000. He proposed bumping up by \$25,000. Media outlets are now through the internet. This will tie into Spring Campaign. Hentz requested Collateral development be increased by an additional 8,000 to make sure Astone production cost would be covered.

Hentz discussed that based on last year's numbers and what we pick up in Co-op Advertising, it will wash itself. Our goal is to increase by 8%. Hentz said they also are maintaining pressure on the County to get the \$100,000 of the original budget. The Marketing Committee is also reviewing what the Board is looking at. Hentz is feeding the initial programs they were going to do, and they don't want to pull back, but move forward. They plan is to get the Marketing Committee to approve finalizing the Ad Campaigns with Astone.

Brownell made a Motion to approve that the Board extend the current budget by \$100,000 with not more than \$12,000 to go for Independent Contractor as approved by Marketing Committee. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

➤ DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION MATTERS:

5. TBID Updates:

Jeff Hentz said that in November there was a discussion about the TBID Collections. There were questions regarding what was reported and what was collected. There is a huge difference in the two figures. (see TBID spreadsheet from Mary Hodgkin). Patricia Moretti emails Hentz a figure of what was collected for the previous month. When the check actually arrives, 99% of the time it does not match up with what she reported. Hentz compared what was reported with the check received. The attached report matches up with what was reported and what was received for the business month. Hentz plans to have a meeting with Mr. Williams to make sure they are on the same page. Hentz is confident that the revised report is accurate and the numbers fit. He will send out the 2nd report when it has been cleaned up and understandable. It will show the inconsistency.

6. GEOTOURISM UPDATES:

Hentz discussed that Geo-tourism is an important project which has 100% of our support. He said that there was a request from former rep of GeoTourism for a donation. There has not been an official written request, only a verbal. When there is an official written request, it will be brought up at the Donation Committee. There was a question whether there were other Tourism Bureaus who were asked for fund. Janetta Phillips of Geotourism said they met in November and had nominations that have been referred to National Geographic. She also stated that the GeoTourism Website will be in place and that Mariposa was well represented. As far as a donation, she agreed that GeoTourism did not ask anyone else. She explained that they were hurting for money then, but some friends have come through and that they are okay now. She will talk to others about pursuing this. She clarified that the key personnel for GeoTourism are Charles and Janetta Phillips, Bridgett Fithian, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

7. MARKETING UPDATES—Jeff Hentz\Astone Presented the following:

Astone Presentation: Introductions were made by Derek Morrison, (Account Executive). The Astone team presented information and slides on Social Media with a focus on Public Relations. Mark Gendron presented overall public relations strategies, including: Public Relations Media outreach, inquiries that come into the area, going out to the broader audience to tell our story. Gendron gave information about FAM Trips (Host trips for reporters that come into the area), Press Releases and how they are driven. In addition, Gendron presented the following points and tips about how to tailor “stories” to our audience. Gendron indicated that advertising a consistent message, “premier year round destination” is very relevant and that it is important to remind people that there are a lot of reasons to come to this area. Using Favorable stories about Yosemite area: Gendron indicated that the coverage of Yosemite has made Mariposa become more of the Yosemite Story. Gendron stated that we focus a lot on California; our research has shown that California is of great interest. Gendron discussed that what the Journalists contribute, such as writing syndicated stories will show up many publications, as well as their online writings. They emphasize staying closer to home, re-discovering

the Jewel in their own backyard. Gendron further indicated that focus on the winter months, and changing the theme and target a different set of Journalists will produce a story in a different way. i.e, why we should re-visit Yosemite after 25 years.

Hentz stated that we have focused on Mariposa more than just Yosemite. Scott Gediman says a visit to the Park is about a 2 hr stay. Offering other areas extends the stay. Working with CTTC, Press releases, News wire services, Direct to relevant Media, Research the set of Media. Internet use: Search Engines will bring up “Mariposa” now; in the past would have been “Yosemite.” Hentz also stated that other strategies, developing relationships with other sources as we have done with Scott Gediman and his staff. We are in constant communication with Delaware North, Kenny Karst. This is starting to pay off. All 3 are going to Summit in LA to meet with Media Folks, and are working as a team.

a. SOCIAL MEDIA:

Derek Morrison:

Yosemite Nation is very successful, as well as Twitter & Facebook. People share their stories, and create messages about where to stay, etc. We refer them to homeofyosemite.com, which is a great way to put our brand out there. We include photos, activities, and upcoming events. It's free advertising and we create our own story. Our goals are to promote interactivity with people, touch base with them and them with us, this is brand new arm of media. This is a targeted audience, and they have contacted us they are already “qualified.” Hentz commented that we are learning a new frontier, and it's becoming “breaking news” for us all. It is very effective to announce road closures, weather, etc. it is instant communication.

Facebook: Luke Moritz

Luke explained about posting daily events, news, and engaging conversation on Facebook and that we currently have 1,250 fans, who are sharing with Friends. Luke stated that we have a big community of people interested in Yosemite and Mariposa County. Fans post pictures of a favorite memory, etc. and the purpose is to interact with people already interested in the area.

Twitter: Luke Mortiz

Luke explained that Twitter was not as popular, but it is more news breaking, and there is no need to subscribe. Luke indicated that general questions can be asked, and that we monitor conversations regarding the area. There are currently 882 followers and still growing. He introduced the concept of “Re-Tweeting,” where other organizations will say what we have said and pass it on, and then credit us. In addition, they monitor conversations: There are also search columns that include; Yosemite, Badger Pass, Mariposa County. We can respond as a “friend” when we see these words come up.

Flickr: Luke Mortiz

Luke explained that Flickr on Yosemite Nation has pictures of Yosemite and other area photos, including 230 approved photos uploaded by people who have traveled to the area. The Half Dome Club posts pictures of themselves at the top of Half Dome, this is very exclusive. It sets a goal for someone to get “to the top” to get their picture posted.

Blogging: Luke Mortiz

Luke explained what blogging is: It is a collection of stories and notes located on the homeofyosemite.com website. Luke also explained that he could delete a post if it was inappropriate for example.

There was a general discussion regarding Facebook. It has a great way of tracking fans as “friends” and easily sees which group they are involved in. Facebook involves responding throughout the day. Twitter is lengthier to respond. News media gets on there to get information for their newspapers; it can be followed by your phone. All involved can know what’s going on to the very moment. One group can be a “friend” with another group, and after a big event, they can send photos of the Event and entice folks to come to the area. Mariposa County is recognized because everything is linked back to our Tourism Website. The site itself is then increased in rank on Google. The key is in embedding the links into the Twitter and Facebook.

Luke: We are the voice for Mariposa County. It is playful and fun, yet informational and professional voice. It is Free Advertising when we get in a Mariposa Gazette article or on KFSN in Fresno.

MARKEING UPDATES:

Jeff Hentz discussed the TourismBeat Newsletter. The next one will be in April. 2010. Everyone in Tourism Business, our government staff is on the mailing list.

California State Visitors’ Guide: Yosemite is on the Front Cover—this is a free Ad for us. It is a great compliment to our work in the Tourism Business and seen by millions.

The Insert inside the California State Visitors’ Guide:

- b. Airstream: Tourism is working with Bob Warren of California State to distribute 50,000 of the Visitors guides during the Airstream campaign. State tourism officials will make funds available instate to support traveling road show. The Insert is part of the campaign.
- c. Photos are seasonal shots. The Map was redone, ideas came from our Visitor’s Guide. Mining Museum and History Museum are also placed here and to spend a night or two outside the Park.
- d. There’s a lot of Mariposa County in here. The cost is just over \$100,000; we are responsible for 30%, the rest were co-oped with DNC, etc.

AAA Publication: We are bringing Partners in as Co-ops: 6 partners to fulfill a 2 page Ad in VIA Magazine, AAA Publication. The Magazine goes 500,000 homes in California, with 1.2 million readers. This is branding our “Destination in a Spring” Ad. The Magazines will be sent out Feb 25.

Seasonality: We have a fantastic attraction in the Park: Badger Pass, Family Package. Stay and Snow Play Campaign. Stay and Lift tickets Package. Working with Hoteliers. Dedicated Micro-Site on our Website. Next 4-6 weeks. Hope to drive a lot of business to Badger and our hotels.

Billboards: Stay & Snow Play. Supported online, Pay per Click. Re-vamping website to create a new page. Packages are the first step to a concept on how

we package and to get people to stay 2, 3, 4 nights. Jensen stated that their DNC Budget has grown from 1.2 to 1.5 millions and they have seen the bang for their buck through the Tourism Bureau. They have upgraded their operations and equipment to keep up with the Tourism Bureau to promote their activities that take place in the Park. Yosemite contributes 50% to the General Fund.

Travel Zoo: “Destination of the Week”: Hentz continued his report on Marketing Updates and said that Travel Zoo was pushed back to 2/18/2010. He said that Mid February is a dynamite time period. Travel Zoo is the leading Travel site portal that connects the product to the buyers. It’s been around a long time, and produces great results. We are aligning our growing destination with a major travel portal. There are 11 million subscribers around the US. Destination Yosemite/Mariposa County will be the Destination of the Week. Yosemite replaced Barcelona. 11 millions subscribers will be emailed that Yosemite is the Top Destination of the month and will link back to us, homeofyosemite.com. It will be supported through DNC, Tenaya, Yosemite Experience, spas, and beautiful getaways, as best deals from Hotels on an ongoing basis. It is not cheap, but good and productive. Farrington commented that Tenaya went with Travel Zoo, and within 4 days they had a 4 to 1 ROI, and that it has an immediate effect. Farrington further stated that it replaced doing big San Francisco Ads that were rate driven, now they geo-target their audience. Hentz indicated that Trip Advisor, Travelocity, Expedia, others that we will consider in future.

Pay Per Click(PPC) will be launched late January, Hentz said and we are purchasing keywords. We will drive out competitors. Keywords like: California Getaways, California Vacations, and Family Ski (15 to 25 keywords). Google, Bing, Yahoo. Digital Gear will kick this off.

TRADE & CONSUMER EVENTS:

- a. LA Travel Show: Hentz said we have 14 Booths, calling ourselves the “Yosemite Experience.” We are the first destination to do a “Pavilion”: includes Rock Climbing, Pack Station (Roping for kids), Jet skiing, All Gateways, Rafting. We have Grand Prizes to generate leads. 70 to 80% of attendants will come through the Pavilion and half will register for Prize. It will be on Feb 13 & 14, 2010. Any one with brochures for hotels & special events will be represented in the rack, Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau.
- b. Menlo Park Show—Thru Sunset Magazine—YMCTB will have our own booth. Hentz said he met with Sunset to make inroads with them, to make a way into the show.
- c. Go West Summit in February: 140 buyers will be coming to Sacramento from around the world and will be meeting with me and Kevin Shelton. We will sponsor an evening event, bringing in Mariposa Brewery as the beer of choice. Another way to brand Mariposa as a great destination. We have our UK & German Offices reps coming over here to GO West on our side. Steffi from Berlin Office will bring tour operators and major buyers; we will meet all together for dinner in Sacramento. They will be here January 24-27.
- d. State of California in Australia, Feb 13. It is the off-season for us.
- e. ITB Show: in Germany & Paris, we will meet with tour operators and then to ITB Show. German Show will bring 100’s of thousands of people. We are partnering with the state of California and Kevin Shelton will be there.
- f. Bank & Alumni Travel Market—400 buyers. We will bring back databases.

- g. Other: Affordable Meetings, Spring Glamer Shows, (our Independent Contractor will help with these shows). Bus groups travel from Sept through May. We will aggressively pursue this Market.
- h. Sales Blitzes for AAA: Sales Mission to UK, does exclusive Sales Blitz to meet with their Travel reservationists in June.
- i. Yosemite Experience: Ultimate Road Trip. Hentz passed out picture of 40 ft moving Billboard on all sides of RV. It becomes a road show. The RV can park in traffic areas and then travels to different festivals. Hentz will bring up at next board meeting to approach funding. Perhaps split the cost with other tourism bureaus. Initially, it will be \$150,000 to keep on the road for 200 days a year. Imagine the number of brochures and people we can reach: at Superbowls, Amgen Races, anywhere where there is a lot of people. Hentz said we have the cash position to bring this to the front burner and that he will take it to the state of California and have them fund it.
- j. Second Life Website—A Social Media where a person can take a virtual trip to Yosemite. Unique opportunity for kids to influence where families go for vacation.

Comments from Board and Staff:

Questions: Billboard of Mariposa County on 140 needs maintenance. Who is responsible? Owner cannot be found. Hentz said he would like to replace the Billboard, including the Community Sign at Chevron Station.

Thanks from Board to Jeff and staff for all their hard work. Hentz requested a 4th person on July 1, to help with the overload.

Brownell suggested a Community Committee to over-see our hotels, and asked if there were marketing dollars that could go to upgrade them? Farrington asked if there is education & training dollars to go towards hotel maintenance. Nassar commented that B&B's have strict regulation imposed on them, why not the hotels? Jensen concluded that it is not our business to monitor the hotels; it is to get business to them. They need to work it out between the hotel businesses to compete for the guest.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:20 p.m.