

**Yosemite/Mariposa Tourism Bureau Minutes
Annual\General Meeting
March 3, 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)
Brian Bullis (Fairgrounds), Treasurer
Marilyn Griswold (Redwoods)
Donna Nassar (B&B's Secretary)
Jonathan Farrington (Tenaya Lodge)
Doug Shaw (Yosemite Bug)
Kevin Shelton (Yosemite Resorts) President
MaryAnn Huff (Chamber of Commerce)
Dan Jensen (DNC), President
Donna Nassar (B & B Secretary)

Excused Board Members:

CherylAnn Schimmelfenning (Hotel Jeffery)
David Gloor (Mariposa Lodge)

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Roger Biery
Candy O'Donnel-Browne

Absent Ex-Officio Members:

Theresa Castaldi (Coyote Springs Ranch)

Staff:

Jeffery Hentz
Kristine Showalter
Lana Luzcy

Visitors:

Kevin Cann (Mariposa County Supervisor)
Lyle Turpin (Mariposa County Supervisor)
James Rydingsword (Mariposa County B.H.)
Tolly Gorham (Mariposa Properties)
Charlie Phillips (Stone Creek Gallery)
Joy Kitchell- Coulterville Visitor's Center

➤ **Public Comments**

Jim Rydingsword spoke about "Mariposa Works", a welfare to work program provided by Mariposa County Human Services and asked if anyone needed help in their business to consider hiring a "Mariposa works" people at no cost to the Employer, and it is paid through the employers payroll system, and then the employer is reimbursed or there is no out of pocket expense. Tolley Gorham advised that his business has benefited greatly from this program. Rydingsword said that they have placed 20 families since September. Information regarding this program can be obtained by contacting Debbie Smith at 966-3609. Rydingsword also said the workers are covered by Worker's Compensation insurance. Rydingsword updated everyone regarding the new Human Services building and that it will be located on Hwy 49 N. A private company will build and own the building, and County will lease it from them. The 30,000 square foot building will be served by many departments of Human Services, and it will have high-tech capabilities. Rydingsword said it will be a one door policy and accommodate the needs of those coming in to one location.

Jensen announced Yosemite Ski Team on March 20th, 2010 and March 30th, 2010 is the Winter Fest at Badger Pass. Jensen also indicated that Yosemite Renaissance going on in Yosemite and is showing a lot of beautiful art.

Storytelling Festival: Brownell announced that it will be 1 week from Friday. Brownell also indicated that "History Alive!" is part of the festival, and Coulterville is also involved. Brownell indicated that ticket sales

are running ahead of last year, and it was announced that the YARTS Groundbreaking Ceremony will be held on April 5, 2010.

➤ Action Matters

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES -

Page 6, paragraph one should be amended: "Jensen stated that their DNC Budget has grown from 1.2 to 1.5 million and they have seen a "big bang" for their buck through the Tourism Bureau." Change the wording "Tourism Bureau" to "Tourism Industry". A motion to approve was made by Jensen and approved by Shelton, seconded by Brownell, motion passed.

2. TREASURER REPORT -

Bullis recommended the report be approved by the Board. Hentz commented that the Financials will be available early next week, and would clarify the Budget to Actual. Line item on rent paid. Jensen asked for an approval of the motion, a motion made by Brownell and seconded by Huff, motion passed.

3. BEREAVEMENT POLICY -

Draft of Bereavement Policy Discussion:

Hentz asked the Board for suggestions on the wording and structure of the bereavement policy, and the clarification of paid number of days off versus unpaid days off. The need to provide designation of family members was also discussed. The board decided that three (3) days would be paid if the death occurred in state and additional days if the death occurred out of state, as directed by the discretion of the Executive Director. Out of state be no more than 5, would include a weekend which would stretch it to 7 days, 2 days for travel. Leave it as up to 3 days, and leave the rest to a "leave of absence" policy. It was stated that there was no immediate need, but it needed to be addressed and clarified. Brownell moved that we adopt policy of up to 3 days for Bereavement Leave. The board discussed if the additional days needed to be discussed, let's leave it for another time as part of leave of the leave of absence policy.

Eligibility Designation: Death of parent or legal guardian, grandparent, sibling, child, step-child, grandchild, spouse, uncle, aunt, or domestic partner. Up to 3 days of time off for paid leave. Additional unpaid leave would be subject to existing Leave of Absence Policy. Motioned and approved. Hentz said we will send it off to be approved before we include in final minutes.

4. BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL DONATION REQUEST -

The Grant\Donation Committee approved a donation of \$1,500.00 for Butterfly Festival. Hentz said that the annual budget for these donations is \$15,000 set aside for local special events. We are now close to exhausting the budget. Butterfly Festival total annual budget is \$30,000, underwritten by County for insurance coverage. Cann said there is a lot of fuss around town, is there interest for out of town? Hentz: Butterfly Festival is local and only one day event, whereas Storytelling Festival has out of town vendors. Hentz offered that we would do more surveys of Hoteliers during the Events. Hentz indicated that booking codes by Hoteliers should be implemented to track special offers during events. It was also discussed that a donation form should be created to cover details and to give incentive by those requesting donations from Tourism Bureau. Hentz will take it to Grants Committee. A motion to approve the \$1,500.00 donation for the Butterfly Festival was made by Brownell, and seconded by Farrington, the motion passed unanimously.

➤ INFORMATION AND PRESENTATION MATTERS:

5. DISCUSSION - Mariposa County Mid-Year Budget Review:

Hentz: Yesterday we requested the BOS for remaining \$100k of budget. We were approved to receive \$50,000, and we are glad to receive it and will be applied toward Marketing. Goal is to establish a firm commitment of funding in the next fiscal year. We will reach out to each Supervisor.

Hentz passed out TOT Collection Sheet, January amount is blank. Hentz indicated that there was doubt that the numbers were correct. To receive the totals from January, on March 1st, is too early and very premature. It showed we were down 23% from last year. Some of the hotels have not reported their sales yet. Hentz is discussing this with Patricia Moretti, and Hentz said that normally we get the numbers on the 7th of the month. Some of the Lodgings combine payments from other months, so the numbers are even more unclear. Hentz said he will have a meeting to discuss the way the records are kept. Hentz asked Patricia to revise those numbers, so there would be a more correct total. Hentz showed another report of BID collections, and columns show what is reported by the tax office, and the actual amount we received, in addition to what was received last year for the same period. Cann indicated that the reason the TOT is not exactly 10% is because of the fines. (There is also a 10% fine for late payments). Cann indicated he asked Patricia about the very low number in January as well. Many hotels had not paid yet. Hentz asked about the under 10% payments, perhaps there is a fee attached to underpayment?

Hentz talked about the Smith Travel Research to keep track of hotel occupancy average daily rate and for accurate reporting.

Hentz discussed that it is hard to determine if a spring campaign only gives results in spring. We can target certain dates, and those we can determine if that advertisement produced higher occupancy, but generally it can't be that closely determined. Jensen said their advertisement is mostly for general awareness. Hentz said, "If we try for awareness branding through the website and through the DVP". The buying habits of consumer's changes so rapidly and tracking is more and more difficult. We attempt to keep the advertisement in their face all the time. Griswold said their revenue through TravelZoo brought them \$10,000. We are continuing with TravelZoo because it was so successful. VIA magazine co op ad was very good for us as well. Hentz said that this is why a booking code is so important so you can trace it. Otherwise, it becomes an "awareness campaign" which is not working.

6. DISCUSSION - John Muir Highway:

Jeff Hentz spoke about J132 Highway from Modesto to Greeley Hill. Mariposa County has approved the designation of the John Muir Hwy, and we are working closely with Tuolumne Tourism and County to designate Tuolumne's portion as John Muir Hwy. On June 5th, 2010 is the ribbon cutting ceremony as the renaming event. The committee is in place to get the event off the ground. The media event will bring a lot of eyeballs to the history of John Muir. This will be good for Coulterville and the whole area. Location is by Coulterville History Center in the center of Coulterville. There is a lot of local buzz and

activities centered on this event. There are lots of opportunities to get creative and draw attention to the event.

7. DISCUSSION - Mariposa Visitors Center:

Hentz discussed the Mariposa and Coulterville Visitor's Center. YMCTB asked to take over the management of the Visitor's Center and we have talked to Rick Benson. We are beginning a thought process on the operations and assets.

Currently it is managed by the Chamber, \$158,000 budget. Turpin asked me to look at a new location in mid December. Coulterville History Center is a great facility and well-laid out. The Coulterville Visitors Center is tucked away and not all that visible. History Center will need to be managed by a different group. We would need to make that decision by June, if we are to take over the Visitor's Center.

Yosemite's acquisition of property in Mariposa: Kevin Cann said there were some legal issues to overcome before they could proceed with the project. They need Democratic support, from the Democratic Congress. Feinstein supported it, until a new superintendent was announced. Cong. Radanovich's wife passed away, and much of it was put on hold. The congressional bill would give the Park Service authority to build, and also authorizes them to work with Mariposa County. Hentz said that groundbreaking is probably 3 years away.

Hentz talked about the element of Coulterville's Visitor's Center being run by a third party and by a board. Chamber staffing requirements, would bring changes.

Cann: The County has had no dissatisfaction and we have had zero complaints about the Chamber. Mariposa Tourism has become a viable force, and Visitor's Centers are usually run by Tourism Bureaus--that is the only reason why we are having this discussion.

Discussion about additional staffing, long range plans of Visitors Centers, tying in with Discovery Center, location, a lot of variables. This is purely discussion and we will request a decision at a future time.

Jensen: What are the Benefits of this? Let's have someone figure out the moving parts, the impact to the community, involvement of local politics and issues. We need fact-finding. We should have committee meeting request, to look 3 to 5 years ahead, promote brainstorming. Hentz: Continue collaboration and appreciate your feedback. Jensen solicited those that would like to be part of a committee. Timeframe is crucial because the fiscal year ends in June, to request funding for new budget. Jensen: If there is an interest, put that on the Agenda in May meeting. Hentz: We need to identify elements today so they can be taken to committee. Biery commented that obvious long-term goal is to have Tourism run Visitor's Bureau.

Jensen: Stated that we need information about additional funding from TOT, what programs are benefited; leverage, timing, details and we need a committee. This is not the appropriate venue to do that. Committee volunteers: Candy O'Donnell-Browne, Donna Brownell, Mary Ann Huff, Jeff Hentz. We will report back at the next meeting what are the topics and elements of due diligence.

8. MARKETING UPDATES AND DISCUSSION -

Hentz presented information regarding co-operative efforts with our hoteliers. He showed the 2 page ad in the VIA Magazine, including 6 partners on one page, and Yosemite on the opposite page. It makes us look like a bigger destination than we are, so we are not thought of as a one-horse town. The cost was \$8500 and \$7200. This VIA Magazine targets homes that have an annual income of \$75,000 or higher.

Hentz presented another “coming out” party was the Destination of the Week Online Campaign on Travel Zoo for several weeks in February. This was in conjunction with an email campaign going to millions of recipients. We were competing with Orlando, Barcelona, and London as a Destination of the Week. Destination Yosemite kept pace with the other big destinations, and we did a good job. We took the consumer to a Winter Page to have them explore Yosemite in the winter time. We branded ourselves as a multi-experience product and took the consumer to pages that explored our wineries, spas, and our gold rush history. Travel Deals was another feature and were sold to partners for a fraction of the cost.

Hentz passed out maps of markets we are pursuing internationally and the sources. Travel Zoo and Google were the top engines, and that’s where we are. We are taking back from Mammoth and Lake Tahoe as vacation spots.

Hentz presented the spring multi-media Campaign with CBS TV and Fox. We are also partnering with Clear Channel that will put postcards on Papa Murphy’s Pizzas. Marilyn Griswold said the Home away Commercial on SuperBowl mentioned her Redwoods Vacation; it was a national plug for her lodgings.

Hentz said we are working with Direct mail, physical and electronic. We have leads of 30,000 to 35,000 names developed the last 3 years. We will market these for our Spring Campaign. The \$50,000 that we have picked up and we would like to put it into Direct mail. Tourism has added 20,000 names to the leads. We are looking for thousands more lists from the Campaign we have going.

Hentz clarified that our Website always features the latest festivals and events. In chronological order: Storytelling, Badger Pass, Civil War, Butterfly Festival, and a huge presence for the John Muir Hwy Event. Six page rotations will feature Butterfly images and other special events. Images are the way we promote our destination on the Website. The images have to be approved by the group putting on the event.

Hentz requested images and events to be sent to Tourism Bureau so we could put them on the website. Properties are not featured in the rotation, just the events associated with the property, ie: Braceburg Dinner and Chef’s Dinner.

Hentz said UK Telegraph journalists spent a lot of time in our County. Their article will be published in a few weeks. Hentz indicated that we have made a lot of inroads in the UK, and the timing for this is perfect. Hentz indicated that there are articles in LA Times (Yosemite Experience). We have a UK FAM coming in April 16th-20th, 2010 and we are partnering with San Francisco to split costs and time. The last week in April, coincides with the Butterfly Festival for a family-focused FAM to experience our destination with the whole family.

Hentz also talked about the in-state corporate planners, in April—S. California, Irvine, San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento.

Hentz talked about Powwow, the biggest Travel Show we have and will be in Orlando May 15 to May 21st, 2010 and a post FAM will fall on Memorial Week-end.

Hentz stated that “we just finished the GO West Summit”. Mariposa Brewing Company came and poured beer for our co-sponsors, another plug for our destination. There were 62 people at the dinner.

Hentz discussed other shows that he participated in: Bank-Travel Show, Australia CTTC, a market that many are going after—Las Vegas, New York, and other California participants--Hollywood, Irvine. Australia is healthy financially and growing. ITB Event in Germany/France, Kevin Shelton will be part of it too.

Hentz gave an update the “Yosemite Experience” at LA Times Travel Show. Hentz indicated that “we stole the show”, and we represented so many destinations. We had banners, bags, including fourteen (14) different booths, and the Pack Station, with its roping demo was a great display with their campfire and split rail fence. Hentz explained that Zephyr had a set back; Bob Ferguson’s van was stolen in Bakersfield on the way to the show. Ferguson still came to the show and displayed a raft. Hentz reported that there were 20,000 consumers at the show. Shelton said that it was very busy both days. The “Yosemite” destination was a strong presence, unified, and organized destination. Shelton stated that “the show was packed, and we got a lot of leads from it.” Shelton said he would do the show again. The “Yosemite Experience” provided a great draw and the cooperation was great even among the competition.

➤ COMMENTS FROM BOARD AND STAFF

The board members comment about a video of a Tenaya rock wall climber, and someone stated that Lake McClure and white water rafting are in for a good year.

➤ ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:20 pm. The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 5th, 2010 @ 2:15 pm (Mariposa County Library).