

Yosemite/Mariposa Tourism Bureau Minutes

May 13th, 2009

Mariposa County Public Library, Meeting Room

4978 10th Street, Mariposa, CA 95338

Called to order by Kevin Shelton at 1:05pm.

Board Members Present:

Donna Brownell (Arts Council), Treasurer
Brian Bullis (Fairgrounds)
Jonathan Farrington (Tenaya Lodge)
David Gloor (Mariposa Lodge)
Marilyn Griswold (The Redwoods In Yosemite)
MaryAnn Huff (Chamber of Commerce)
Donna Nassar (B&B's), Secretary
Douglas Shaw (Yosemite Bug)
Kevin Shelton (Yosemite Motels), Co-Chair

Excused Board Members:

Dan Jensen (DNC), Chairperson
Cherylann Schimmelfennig (Hotel Jeffery)

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Roger Biery
Candy O'Donel-Browne

Absent Ex-Officio:

Kevin Cann (BOS)
Theresa Castaldi (Coyote Springs Ranch)
Marilyn Lidyoff (EDC)
Lyle Turpin (BOS)

Staff:

Jeffrey Hentz
Melissa Hernandez

Visitors:

John Chug, Digital Gear, Inc.
Daniel Robles, Digital Gear, Inc.

1. Public Comments

- a. Steve Lach ("Lach") of Mariposa Brewing Company makes comment to Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau ("YMCTB") Board of Directors ("BOD") regarding the recent Mariposa Brewing Company Brews & Blues Festival. Lach stated that weather limited attendance at festival, but that visitors attended from throughout California. CASA, John C. Fremont and Blazin' Hog were all able to raise proceeds at festival. Lach hopes to grow the festival into an annual two-day event. Future marketing endeavors include internet and YouTube.com. Will also focus on promoting Mariposa, as many festival visitors indicated it was their first time in area. These future marketing plans will utilize more advanced planning, and Lach wishes to work with YMCTB to help promote event as well as create lodging packages. Lach estimates an attendance of approximately 4,000 visitors for next year's two-day event. Lach distributed a packet containing information on figures, projections and ideas for next year's event. Next year's event will be held June 5th-6th, 2010. Jeff Hentz ("Hentz") said he is working with

Lach to create two festivals, keeping the existing blues festival and adding a fall festival of some sort. Brian Bullis ("Bullis") commented that though it was Lach and Mariposa Brewing Company's first large event, they were a pleasure to work with. Bullis stated he has been trying to get an event like this in Mariposa for at least six years.

- b. Bullis shared that the Mariposa County Fairgrounds is hosting the Chamber of Commerce Mixer on May 26th, 2009, from 5:30-7:30pm.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- a. In reference to Section 7, Page 4 of previous minutes, Donna Nassar ("Nassar") wishes to note that the original TAC members who are now BOD members were volunteers. Roger Biery ("Biery") notes that the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors appointed these original members on a volunteer basis. Language in future to reflect this volunteerism. MaryAnn Huff ("Huff") motions to accept minutes, Bullis seconds. Motion passes.

3. Treasurer Report:

- a. Biery presents in place of Donna Brownell ("Brownell"), who has not yet arrived at meeting. Hentz comments that the new Westmerica interest-bearing account has been opened. Yosemite Bank is still the YMCTB's primary operating bank. Biery notes that all YMCTB funds are now 100% FDIC insured.

4. Website update – Digital Gear, Inc.

- a. Digital Gear, Inc. ("Digital Gear") presents website update to BOD. They are working on making the new website user-friendly, with easy navigation, and visually dynamic. Digital Gear desires to fully represent the experience of Yosemite/Mariposa County. The Yosemite/Mariposa promo website, www.onlyinyosemite.com, has garnered over 20,000 page views in its limited lifespan; far more page views than previous online campaigns for YMCTB ran in the past. Biery asks if a beta version is available online yet, to which Digital Gear replies that a comp version is currently available but not yet a beta version. Digital Gear continues that the new website will utilize "calls to action" so that a user does not simply visit the site but is enticed to take action once there. The comp version is displayed for the BOD. Navigation pieces of new site to include the following sections/links: "Things to do," "Yosemite," "Gateways to Yosemite," "Mariposa County," and "Calendar." Hentz adds that the new site will have a special spot for last-minute deals from lodging partners. Hentz has seen many Destination Management Organizations moving towards calls to action for specials from their lodging partners. The site will also feature rotating images and messages. An audience member inquires as to how content will appear on website. Digital Gear responds that administrators will have access to generating user content. Audience member modifies question to how will administrators receive such information, as member is worried about calendar of events content, as "Mariposa has not had good history of doing so." Hentz responds

that interested parties can submit calendar information to the YMCTB for inclusion on the calendar, if it is tourism-related and within scope. Peter Schimmelfennig ("P. Schimmelfennig") of the Mariposa County Chamber of Commerce questions how hoteliers will submit deals and specials – will hoteliers be allowed to directly input such information? Furthermore, he inquires as to how will dates be entered and changed? Hentz responds that the site will eventually feature own booking engine, where hoteliers may upload price and inventory directly to system. Kevin Shelton ("Shelton") comments that the advantage of the YMCTB featuring its own booking system versus including a link to the hotelier's own booking engine is that the website user can view all available properties for a given date range rather than being lead away from website to individual lodging websites to search each site for date availability. Hentz expands that the goal of the YMCTB online booking engine is to shorten the booking time so that the visitor can book quicker. Digital Gear continues that the new website will utilize social and visual marketing techniques such as Flickr, Twitter, and Facebook. Hentz comments that social and visual marketing is a new medium that travel industry and Destination Management Organizations need to explore. With this technology integrated into the new website, the YMCTB will be ahead of the pack at a low maintenance cost. Digital Gear announces an e-newsletter is in the works, and will be sent out via e-blast. Biery asks who will submit and/or write content for the e-newsletter, to which Hentz answers that it will be a combination of YMCTB and other companies that are currently being researched. Hentz says another idea is to pitch the newsletter as a Yosemite fan club, which will help generate more leads and contact information. Digital Gear continues with outline of new website, explaining that a sitemap will be featured at the bottom of the site, allowing users to directly access links or information versus going through the site navigation buttons featured within website text. Hentz adds that press kits will be available on the new site and access allowed via approved request. BOD documents will also be available through the site. Additional site features will include a gas and mile converter widget and possibly a live/feed video camera. Biery asks when can the BOD expect a beta version, and Digital Gear expects to be ready in four weeks. P. Schimmelfennig inquires as to the possibility of allowing businesses in featured section directly submit information and content for site versus submitting information and content to YMCTB, with YMCTB subsequently monitoring and posting. Biery comments that some monitoring is necessary for the site, and Hentz replies that there will be a function built in to allow for easy-changing and updating, but that content will still have to be submitted to the YMCTB. Digital Gear explains that functions will be in place for YMCTB to easily update site content, and that the YMCTB will be able to send field templates to participants to ease application. YMCTB will have final approval of site content. Biery asks Digital Gear how adaptable the new site will be to transfer to a mobile site. Digital Gear replies they are excited to hear such a question, and that more research and a separate project would be necessary for complete transfer. The site will not be mobile ready, but certain content and site pieces can be moved to mobile site if

so desired. Furthermore, as built, the site will be viewable on most mobile devices. Jonathan Farrington ("Farrington") would like to have a separate discussion regarding ad revenue generation for website. Farrington comments that some of the original supporters of the BID may find pay-to-play functions to be against the original concept or idea of the BID. Biery remarks that there are some companies and businesses that will benefit from the site and YMCTB efforts that are not part of the BID and that the opportunity for them to participate and pay should be available, such as restaurants, shops, and the like. Farrington also questions the role of YMCTB and its employees' workload in the new website, with the user-generated content, calendar, lodging, etc. Farrington asks how this will be addressed. Hentz replies that the YMCTB is currently set to hire more employees to help with the workload and projects. An audience member asks that given the amount of foreign visitors to Yosemite National, will there be any work on having materials accessible in other languages. Hentz answers that as YMCTB moves forward, material will become multi-language accessible. Plans would most likely be to start with Spanish-language material, with market review of other languages to follow. Digital Gear comments that they have completed translations and language applications previously for other sites and companies, so it is a possibility with their software and company.

5. Discussion: YMCTB BOD – Date of Appointment Roster:

- a. Hentz asks that those who have not previously done so to please submit date of appointment and election information to Melissa Hernandez. Shelton recommends requested Mariposa County Board of Supervisors minutes to obtain records of certain BOD members' (volunteer) appointments. Brownell says dates not as important as the year. Shelton advises of changes to be made in roster to his dates. Marilyn Griswold ("Griswold") would like her information to say "elected" instead of "appointed." BOD members advise that November 2006 was when TAC members were appointed to the BOD by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, and that November 29, 2006 was the first BOD meeting in which positions were set.

6. June BOD Meeting:

- a. Biery suggests that, given Hentz's and other BOD members' traveling schedules, the June 2009 BOD meeting be moved to July 2009, which would have been the annual meeting. Biery also suggests that as the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors has delayed their review and approval of the YMCTB Budget until October, the BOD move its annual meeting to September. Nassar motions to move annual meeting to September, Bullis seconds. Motion passes. Farrington moves to postpone June 2009 BOD meeting and carry to July 2009, Nassar seconds. Motion passes.

7. Discussion: YMCTB Marketing Activities Update:

- a. Destination Vacation Planner (“DVP”): Hentz shares that the DVP is currently print-proof ready, and that hopefully, circulation will be available in two to three weeks. Hentz asks the BOD if YMCTB should print a smaller run first, to get through the summer and so that any additional or new changes can be made, or if a larger run should be ordered. Hentz also comments that several potential advertisers have come forward and would like to buy advertisements in a next print. Shelton inquires as to the cost differentials between a smaller or larger run first. Hentz replies that YMCTB’s public relations agency, ASTONE Agency, is securing costs from three different printers. Shelton is in favor of a smaller run if price difference between smaller run versus higher run can be offset by addition of new advertisers. Griswold asks how long advertising rates will last for. Hentz answers rates last for one year, and states that this year’s rates were 60% lower than previous years. Griswold believes the rates were great.
- b. FAM Tour: Hentz announces YMCTB kicked-off its inaugural FAM tour. YMCTB will make this an annual event. The tour started off at Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite, and visited Shelton’s Yosemite View Lodge, toured a houseboat at Lake McClure Marina, visited and stayed at Hotel Jeffery, could not gold pan because of weather but group thoroughly enjoyed night in historic Coulterville, and were very impressed with the Mariposa History Center and Stamp Mill demonstration by Sandy. The group also enjoyed the Mariposa Brewing Co. Blues and Brews Festival and remarked that they wish they had additional time to spend in Mariposa. Hentz shares that the feedback has been positive and that the journalists seemed to understand the trip message – that there is so much to do in Mariposa County outside of Yosemite National Park. One article was already featured on www.petergreenberg.com, a leading website, with more planned articles and features to follow shortly. Pictures of event to be posted online.
- c. PBS: Hentz was recently interviewed by PBS for a feature on Mariposa wildflowers.
- d. CTTC Mobile Welcome Center: CTTC attended its first show with the CTTC Mobile Welcome Center, of which we are a partner. Attended the Asparagus Festival in Stockton, CA, with an expected attendance of 100,000. Lots of collateral dispensed.
- e. Sunset Celebration Weekend 2009: YMCTB was able to secure, last-minute, a booth at Sunset Celebration Weekend 2009. Hentz is inviting other stakeholders to participate in booth; coordinate with Melissa Hernandez if interested. Farrington shares that the demographic of Stanford/Palo Alto area is great, with \$.25 million average household income. Farrington suggests that other stakeholders either try to secure a booth or send collateral and giveaways for distribution at this event. Hentz would like giveaways from lodging partners to drive traffic to booth and help generate leads.
- f. Pow Wow International, Miami, FL – Hentz to embark soon for Pow Wow International, where over 1,200 buyers are anticipated. Hentz overbooked due to flaw in Pow Wow booking system. YMCTB Booth next to California State Booth and near Yosemite Resorts. Farrington says he had a few appointment changes and offers to help cover booth if needed.

- g. Foreign Travel: Hentz apprises BOD of upcoming South Korea/Japan Sales mission. Hentz hoping to tie markets together with tour operators. Trip and mission will allow him to better judge these markets and how to target in future plans.
 - h. Gold Country and High Sierra meetings: Hentz states that YMCTB has been a part of these groups in the past and that he is currently attending these meetings to get YMCTB voice and message out. Hentz notes the presence of Madera County's Yosemite Sierra's Visitors Bureau and its marketing tactics and states that he is working on letting all know that Mariposa County is the "Home of Yosemite." He explains that he is trying to find a careful balance in YMCTB's role in these groups; a role that benefits YMCTB without diluting YMCTB's cause of more heads in beds and feet on the streets of Mariposa County.
 - i. Gateway Partners Marketing Committee Meeting: June 16, 2009 will be the first official Gateway Partners Marketing Committee Meeting. The new Sunset Gateway piece will be discussed. Consensus so far is to not change too much of current piece, as it has received great reviews. Several previous participants might not continue with this year's piece due to economic reasons. The meeting will be held at The Ahwahnee from 1:00-4:00pm. Advertisers of current piece are encouraged to attend.
8. Cota Cole & Associates – Scott Huber, Brown Act Seminar
- a. Scott Huber of Cota Cole & Associates presents a seminar to the BOD on the Brown Act
9. Adjournment
- a. Farrington motions to adjourn, Shelton seconds. Motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.