

**Yosemite/Mariposa Tourism Bureau Minutes  
Board of Directors Meeting  
5-23-2012**

**The Best Western Plus – Large Conference Room  
4999 Highway 140, Mariposa CA 95338**

Meeting called to order by Jensen at 1:37 P.M.

**Board Members Present:**

Sara Zahn – (Hotel Jeffery)

Brian Bullis – (Fairgrounds)

Jonathan Farrington – (Tenaya Lodge)

Donna Nassar – (B&B's) – Treasurer

Douglas Shaw- (Yosemite Bug)

Kevin Shelton – (Yosemite Resorts)- Vice President

Dan Jensen – (DNC) –Chairman

MaryAnn Huff – (Chamber of Commerce)

Donna Davis – (Redwoods)

**Ex-Officio Members Present:**

Roger Biery – EDC

Candy O'Donnell-Browne

**Absent Ex-Officio**

Donna Sisson, YNP

Marilyn Lidyoff

**Staff:**

Julie Hadzega – Administrative Coordinator

Julie Guyton – Administrative Assistant

**Visitors:**

Karen Smith

**Public Comments on items not on the agenda but within the scope of this board:**

Shelton stated that the Fairgrounds will be having a fundraiser on June 16<sup>th</sup>. It is the first annual Mariposa Summer Fest. The theme this year is “Sausage and Suds”. The tickets will be \$35.00 each. Shelton further stated that you can also sponsor a table for \$100.00 and have one or two people work that table. There will be over twenty different kinds of sausage and two hundred kinds of beer. There will be a silent auction and possibly a live auction. This is a very important event to help save our fairgrounds.

Biery stated that the Central Sierra Economic Development District, which Mariposa County is a member, is preparing a 5 year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; and the comment period will end in early June. In that are the conference center and the sports complex. Biery stated that if anyone is interested in taking a closer look at this and making a public comment, let him know and he will get them a copy of the SEDS.

Huff thanked the board for its support of the John Muir Festival. The third annual John Muir Festival is on June 9<sup>th</sup>. Huff further stated that Lee Stetson will be impersonating John Muir. Peter and Donna Thomas will tell stories of their 2006 trek from San Francisco to Yosemite, following John Muir's footsteps. Rick Deutsch (Mr. Half Dome) will also be there to talk about this day hike, which Muir climbed as well. Huff further stated that the history center has launched its first tour of the actual route that he wrote about in "My first summer in the Sierra". The festival will be a very interactive, hands-on nature experience. Huff stated that Ken Pulvino took Debbie Cook and herself to Sacramento to the Sierra Business Council, and a lot of great contacts were made there. Huff stated that we have been getting a lot of attention from this effort.

Jensen stated he wanted an update on the fire. O'Donnell-Browne stated that the Arts Council will be moving into the upstairs of Chocolate Soup on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May. She stated that this move was planned before the fire. She stated that the Art Council moved into the Mariposa Gazette office right after the fire. O'Donnell-Browne stated that all the programs outside the Arts Council office are still happening. She stated that she is very proud of everything that has been done. O'Donnell-Browne further stated that very shortly, they will be introducing the new Executive Director of the Arts Council, Cara Goger. She is a graduate of Mariposa County High School and is coming home to Mariposa to raise her child. O'Donnell-Browne stated that when this happens, there will be a coming out party for her and we will have tables there for people to join the Arts Council. O'Donnell-Browne further stated that we didn't get a lot out of the building. The kids who broke into the building when the fire started only got into the front foyer. There were three pieces there. She stated we lost a lot of Jane Dyers things. Browne stated that she really doesn't know the extent of everything lost yet.

Hadzega stated that the Chamber is raising money for those displaced in the fire. Jensen stated that Joe Rabon came down and participated in a job fair and outreach to anyone who worked in the businesses destroyed by the fire. He stated that 10-12 people will probably be hired to work in Yosemite.

Biery stated that he had spoken to Kevin Cann earlier, and Cann told him that Ron Willey, who owns the Pizza Factory, is planning on a grand opening on the one year anniversary of the fire.

Jensen stated that it was a tough winter with the lack of snow. The park service's car count for April this year versus last year was down twenty percent. January through March was ahead due to roads being open. He stated that the High Sierra is planning an early opening. All of Tuolumne Meadows will be open on May 25<sup>th</sup>; he is hoping that it generates a lot of business. Jensen further stated that the cables go up on Half Dome at this time also.

Farrington stated that the snowfall during Easter break caused a lot of negative press, about traveling in the mountains. He further stated that the overturned truck just past Fish Camp with the sulfur spill, closed traffic for three days really hurt our businesses.

Jensen stated that the Park Service has a lot of planning going on. People have become interested more in terms of public input and outreach, and he encourages everyone to stay engaged. Park Service had a draft planning workshop recently and received over 400 comments on it. It wasn't an official comment period; there were five ranges of alternatives for Yosemite. It was a range of options. There were some actions common to all, at some point they will release a draft of the Merced River Plan. This will provide a basis for proposed alternatives. That should be in July. They have done a Half Dome environmental assessment that was out and came back for public comment and they will be releasing their document on that, and it calls for a redo of the Wilderness Act. The way they administer the Wilderness Act in Yosemite, should be of interest to people because it does have an impact on access to High Sierra. You may have seen in Sequoia, the Board stated that there could be no commercial use of the High Sierra in Sequoia Kings Canyon, this included outfitters and guided hikes. That was in response to the Court's interpretation of the Wilderness Act, that commercial services were very secondary opportunity in the wilderness. This would impact small business operators mostly on the East side of where we are, such as livestock, packers, guided hikes on foot and hikes up Half Dome. The Tuolumne River Plan is also expected to be out in June or July. Jensen stated he encourages everyone to participate in it. The park service does monthly open houses, this month; the focus is on the Mariposa Grove. They are in process of doing studies on the Mariposa Grove to understand what the plan for Mariposa might look like. At some point they will be doing formal public comments on the Mariposa Grove. This is a lot less controversial and easier to understand than some of the others.

The sesquicentennial planning is continuing. Many of the people in this room are active in the planning. Park service has a lot on their plate. On top of all this, they are working on the document that will be an RFP for Yosemite.

O'Donnell-Browne stated that the Yosemite Grant 150<sup>th</sup> comes up in 2014. The Park's anniversary committees are gearing up and very shortly there will be event applications distributed. The Park would like everyone in the surrounding communities to consider events that they might want to have and to take advantage of the fact that we are all celebrating this together; it's just not an in-park thing. Browne also stated that Hentz chaired the marketing committee, and it would be really nice once we hire a new Executive Director, to fill his place on the committee.

Jensen stated that he wanted to thank Julie Hadzega for everything she has done. He stated that various people have commented to him about how great she has been.

## **INFORMATION AND PRESENTATION MATTERS:**

**TREASURERS REPORT:** Biery stated that the Finance Committee normally gets the General Ledger, but didn't get it this time. The Finance Committee consists of Biery and Nassar. Hadzega stated that she will email the GL to the Finance Committee. Jensen stated that Hentz had verbalized before he left that there were no commitments made after he left, so what the spending shows are fulfillment programs that were in place before he left. Biery stated that it's worth double checking the general ledger to make sure bills weren't paid twice, since we are over budget.

Shelton stated that there was a project between the Tourism Bureau, DNC and San Francisco Travel. They have a place on their website called Beyond the Bridges, which encompasses areas outside the San Francisco area. It draws attention to people coming to San Francisco, but wants to see places outside the area. Hentz had agreed to a \$30,000 commitment. Shelton stated that \$15,000 would come from the Tourism Bureau, \$15,000 would come from DNC, and we would split the web presence 50/50. In addition to the web presence, we would have the ability to send out specials to their members which would be anyone in the San Francisco area who is a part of their visitor's bureau. Shelton further stated that we also get opportunities from some of their marketing ventures. This is a significant opportunity. This was supposed to have been completed in April, and was never signed off and checks have not been written. We need to make sure this gets done.

### **TOWNSEND PUBLIC AFFAIRS:**

Biery stated that he has a meeting with them tomorrow to get a full update. There are two noteworthy things. The first is we are working aggressively to get the park authorization to acquire that land on the corner of Hwy 140 and 49N. Congress is holding us up. The second is that we lost the grant for the gymnasium. We had applied for a \$5 Million dollar grant to build our field of dreams site and we did not get awarded the grant. They are applying for another grant for sidewalks in town. Biery stated that the decisions are often political. Congress claims they are not political, but they look at voting populations, and the money ends up going to go to urban sites. No one in the foothills got a dime.

**MARKETING UPDATES & DISCUSSION:** Jensen stated that there are not any formal marketing updates or discussion. Farrington stated that we have an international representation in Australia, Germany and UK. He stated that we spent a lot of time with Avia Circle at the POWWOW. We have a call tomorrow with them. Farrington further stated that Avia Circle has been waiting for a marketing plan approval, and that he would like to propose a marketing plan of \$76,550. Farrington further stated that he wants the board's approval to give them the opportunity to move forward with three of the four areas, trade, consumer and PR plan and hold the rest until the new director comes in. This would give them \$53,200 worth of approval to continue the work they are doing. A lot of this work will be adjustable as we go forward, so they can do their education, create marketing materials that they need to move forward long term. Jensen stated that we cannot take action today. Farrington stated that this shows up on the budget, under the representation, and portions fall under the FAMS area and other areas of the budget. Biery stated that looking at the financial statement from April, there is account 6005-International Sales office. We budgeted \$70,000 and we spent \$53,000. Farrington stated that this is the actual agency fee, does not include the actual costs for activities. In talking to Hentz, he broke it down to trip, travel, trade, trade shows, FAM trips and others. Biery stated that if this was already approved by the marketing committee, that we should go ahead and do it. Jensen stated he agreed, that if the marketing committee makes a recommendation, that he would sign it. Jensen stated that DNC has been recently investing quite a lot in international endeavors. Brian Wright, from our marketing department, is on several international boards and travels every year to the UK and Germany. The park is heavily invested in representation from there. Jensen stated that before the meeting, he tallied the hits on the park's website in terms of source, and virtually all markets are up 50% in the last two years from foreign sources. Jensen stated that he feels that this increase is a result of the overseas marketing.

**UPDATE ON SEARCH COMMITTEE STATUS AND FINALISTS** – Jensen stated that the majority of this will be discussed during closed session. He stated that it will be easier for the candidates to book their own travel for the interviews, but this cannot be a blank check, there must be limitations. O’Donnell-Browne stated that there was a lot of interest in the position and it now narrowed down to three candidates. Hadzega stated that the dates have been scheduled for the three candidates. Hadzega further stated that all three candidates will be staying in town and that an itinerary needs to be discussed with the board so that everyone can find time to meet with them. Hadzega stated that if anyone on the board has anything special they want the candidates to see or do, to let her know as soon as possible. Jensen stated that anyone on the search committee would have preference in terms of doing interviews, but that anyone on the board is welcome to participate. O’Donnell-Browne stated that she wants to thank Joe Rabon for all his help in this process.

### **ACTION MATTERS, REGULAR AGENDA**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Jensen asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 22, 2012 meeting. Farrington made motion, seconded by Shelton.

### **AUTHORITY TO MAKE OFFER TO SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT -**

Establish the terms and conditions which the search committee is authorized to make an offer to a new Executive Director. Jensen stated that the next board meeting is scheduled for August 15, 2012. Because of this, we need to figure out a motion to decide how the terms of the offer will be handled. Shaw stated that he wants to get this done because he won’t be present at the next board meeting. Biery stated that he figures the offer will be made by the third week of June, after the three interviews. He further stated that he likes the word “consensus”, because it may not be unanimous, but as long as there is consensus it would be legal. Biery stated that the search committee cannot consist of a majority of the board members. The search committee consists of Jensen, O’Donnell-Browne, Cann, Raven, Shelton, Shaw, and Nassar. Jensen stated that a format for the people conducting interviews needs to be established, so they can provide input to the search committee. Jensen further stated that an evaluation form will be filled out, so the search committee can see the board member’s comments after an interview is completed. Farrington stated that he has confidence in the search committee to make the right decision. Jensen stated that he needs a motion to state how the offer will be presented to the new candidate. **Farrington made a motion to provide authorization to the search committee to extend an employment offer to final**

**candidate for the executive director position. The search committee will receive feedback from the general membership, via interview evaluation form. Once consensus on the final candidate is made by the search committee, the President of the Tourism Bureau is authorized to then provide a written offer to the final candidate with a salary of no more than \$150,000; moving, travel and relocation interim living expenses not to exceed \$30,000.00 and a bonus program not to exceed 25% of the base salary. The candidate will also receive health insurance benefits through the existing plans. Shelton seconded the motion. Motion passed.**

### **COMMENTS FROM BOARD AND STAFF -**

Shelton stated that Hentz had applied for a grant, the Gateway Community Grant. Hadzega stated that the grant will not start for a couple of weeks. She stated it is called the Mariposa Experience. Hadzega stated that we were granted \$32,000.00 from Yosemite. We have a weekly conference call with them to keep updated. She stated that there was going to be a trolley that was going to give rides through town, but that isn't going to happen. There will be more activities in the center of town, where the open field is, including pony rides, a marketplace, and kids' activities. Hadzega further stated that as for the monetary part, it will all be reimbursed after the fact. She had to get a DUNS number in order to get reimbursed from Yosemite. Jensen advised that if Hadzega needed help, to let the board know. Jensen stated that the park has started a traffic plan for entry into Yosemite; they are trying to get more people in the park without the traffic. Jensen stated that last year during the summer, there were many days that would have been a bad experience for travelers. He stated that the effort is in the right place, but it could be very impactful for employees, or someone trying to get to a wedding, for example. It will be a single line of traffic starting from the El Cap straightaway going backwards, with another lane open for buses and mass transit. Employees going to work will have no preference; they will not be able to go in the bus lanes. This started last Monday, and the park hopes to have all the problems figured out. They have expressed that this will be an experiment, and if it doesn't work, they will stop. Since last summer, they have identified 200 more parking spaces in Yosemite Valley. They don't want to turn people away.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn public meeting and move to closed session was made at 2:35 PM. Next BOD Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 15, 2012 at 1:30 PM. (Location to be determined).