

Yosemite/Mariposa Tourism Bureau Minutes  
April 8, 2009  
Mariposa County Public Library, Meeting Room

Called to order by Chairperson Dan Jensen at 1:30pm

**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)  
Dan Jensen (DNC), Chairperson  
Donna Nassar (B&B's), Secretary  
Douglas Shaw (Yosemite Bug)  
Kevin Shelton (Yosemite Motels), Co-Chair

**Excused Board Members:**

Cherylann Schimmelfennig (Hotel Jeffery)

**Ex-Officio Members Present:**

Roger Biery  
Theresa Castaldi (Coyote Springs Ranch)  
Kevin Cann (BOS)  
Marilyn Lidyoff (EDC)  
Candy O'Donel-Browne

**Absent Ex-Officio:**

Lyle Turpin (BOS)

**Staff:**

Jeffrey Hentz  
Melissa Hernandez

**Visitors:**

Vern Crow, ASTONE Agency  
Mary Darcy  
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Francisco  
Peter Geis  
Derek Morrison, ASTONE Agency  
Andrea Salvio, ASTONE Agency  
Peter Schimmelfennig (Chamber of Commerce)  
Larry Vilott  
Gary Walker

1. YMCTB Advertising Campaign – ASTONE Advertising Presentation
  - a. Dan Jensen ("Jensen") proposes allowing ASTONE Agency to present first, with regularly scheduled agenda items to follow. ASTONE Agency gives marketing presentation. Audience asked opinion on plans for new Destination Vacation Planner ("DVP"). Marilyn Griswold ("Griswold") suggests the cover page include a title with the word "Yosemite"

and not “Mariposa.” Maryann Huff (“Huff”) suggests a key lock artwork to keep with the journal theme. Jensen suggests a personal title/text for cover, such as “My Journal” or nothing at all; Douglas Shaw (“Shaw”) agrees with this sentiment. Donna Brownell (“Brownell”) prefers the front cover blank, with no title or text. Jeffrey Hentz (“Hentz”) advises that the DVP proof will be sent out Friday to the Marketing Committee, for review.

## 2. Public Comments

- a. Comments on current state of lodging in Mariposa County: Jensen advises that DNC has experienced a tough year economically, with the loss of 248 rooms in Curry Village coupled with the current economic crisis. The last three weeks of bookings have been up, although the total number of bookings has been down from the previous year. DNC still net down 130 rooms even after renovations and rebuilding efforts. DNC working with other lodging outside of park to reserve blocks for reservations made a year ago for spots in Curry Village that are now destroyed. Jonathan Farrington (“Farrington”) shared that the first quarter was the worst quarter in many years for Tenaya Lodge. Special rates and promos are paying off; pace is equal to that of previous year. Group activity in September and October looking to be strong. Farrington continues that Congress and Senate starting to be more cognizant of the vital role travel and lodging play in California’s economy; Farrington working with state government agencies on these issues. Shaw asks Farrington if Tenaya has seen a trend of more local interest or bookings, and Farrington replies that he expects international travel to still be strong because of the value of the US dollar, but that not expecting as strong a European presence in Yosemite as previous year. Travel strong among non-corporate group travel, especially those not affected by current economy, as in law, army, student groups, etc. Shaw experiencing a general downward trend of group travel at his property, with less international travelers. Shaw also not seeing as many advanced booking as in previous years. Griswold concerned with what she sees as a “discounting factor,” wherein people are calling hoteliers and lodging specifically looking for bargains and deals; feels people are making destination choices based more on bargains and perceived discounts than location. Griswold also expresses concern over sharing of occupancy levels and other information with Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau (“YMCTB”) Board of Directors (“BOD”) for confidentiality reasons. Donna Nassar (“Nassar”) shares that the Bed and Breakfasts (“B&Bs”) of the area experienced high foreign travel last year; this year, however, many B&Bs not open in winter and many not booked at all for spring and summer. April booking of B&Bs are starting to pick-up. Kevin Shelton (“Shelton”) offers that January and February were okay months for Yosemite Resorts; however, March was bleak. Shelton sees the trending moving up now, with the FIT Marketing coming up strong.
- b. Farrington states that while there are many opinions on plans and strategies for the YMCTB, congratulations are due to Hentz, Melissa Hernandez (“Hernandez”) and

ASTONE Agency for their hard work and accomplishments, especially given the amount of work and accomplishments in a limited time frame. He asks that the BOD and lodging partners not slow down progress with too many small details or personal opinions.

- c. Jensen shares that the Yosemite Fund is sponsoring a PBS show on national parks, with Yosemite National Park featured. Will air on public television in September; showing in park in April.
- d. Gary Walker ("Walker") questions BOD on next step, as he brought in his Pocket Focus book and project for sharing at last month's BOD meeting. Jensen advises that Walker needs to submit a formal proposal to the BOD and request placement on the agenda.

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- a. Amendment needed on page 2 of previous minutes: Replace "David Gloor" with "Brian Bullis." Questions arise to listing of Kevin Cann ("Cann") as Ex-Officio member; determined that Cann was previously invited, with hesitation towards him serving on TBID or BOD; determined that he will serve on BOD, and thus previous minutes reflect what was known and believed at time. Huff motions to approve minutes as amended, David Gloor ("Gloor") seconds. Motion passes.

### 4. Treasurer Report

- a. Brownell comments that Hentz is doing a good job with YMCTB Budget. Jensen cautions Hentz and BOD not to spend all of YMCTB Budget as previous discussion on lodging and economy demonstrates that YMCTB receipts may be down in coming years. Brian Bullis ("Bullis") motions to approve report, Griswold seconds. Motion passes.

### 5. Discussion: IRS – Late Filing Penalty

- a. Letter received from IRS passed around for viewing. On March 16, 2009 YMCTB informed of \$7,160 late filing penalty accrued prior to Hentz and Hernandez's arrival. Response letter attached to meeting packet. Shaw inquires as to when the filings were originally due. Hentz replies they filed on November 16<sup>th</sup>, however, two years' worth filed at same time. Hernandez adds that Spinardi & Jones, YMCTB's CPA firm, reviewed the letter prior to submittal.

### 6. Discussion: Cota Cole & Associates

- a. Hentz has identified key areas where the YMCTB and BOD are in need of assistance and education from Cota Cole & Associates ("Cota Cole") regarding the Brown Act (please see meeting packet for documentation). Fees for seminar identified in letter submitted from Cota Cole, at a \$1,000 presentation fee (please see meeting packet for letter copy). Hentz advises BOD allow for 60-day window of securing presentation date by June 2009. Jensen states list from Hentz and Cota Cole letter are within motion of previous BOD meeting, asks if there are any motions requiring further action. Farrington motions to approve and accept Cota's letter and proposal, Shaw seconds. Conversation continues

as Cann advises on professional consultation and formal opinion on Brown Act, as he has witnessed an abundance of misinformation regarding the Brown Act in the public sphere. Jensen calls for ruling on motion on table: motion passes unanimously. Jensen asks for date suggestions for Cota Cole presentation, suggest make part of net BOD meeting. Jensen also offers Yosemite venue. BOD agrees on May 13, 2009 date for Cota Cole presentation.

7. Discussion: YMCTB Board of Directors – Date of Appointment Roster

- a. YMCTB Board of Directors – Date of Appointment Roster submitted in meeting packet for review and discussion. BOD advises that Mariposa County Board of Supervisors Meeting minutes will have documentation regarding formation of original Travel Advisory Committee (“TAC”) and transfer of some TAC members to YMCTB BOD (January 2007 meeting or prior to). Jensen advises that the original TAC members were “appointed” to the YMCTB BOD, whereas YMCTB BOD members arriving after February 11, 2007 were “elected.” Hernandez will change roster to reflect so, changing the entries of Griswold, Jensen and Farrington. Jensen reminds the YMCTB BOD that Farrington’s terms were not set at his election. Roger Biery (“Biery”) believes the YMCTB BOD Bylaws call for three-year terms. Brownell believes that appointments or elections to vacant seats fulfill the remainders of the original three-year term of seat, with a new vote at end of three-year term for a new three-year term of said seat. Jensen states all of the YMCTB BOD should update their information on roster and that a smaller group should convene to determine terms and interpretations of YMCTB BOD Bylaws regarding BOD seat terms. Jensen also advises that the YMCTB BOD should examine termination dates to see if a high turnover rate of BOD seats is ahead.

8. Discussion: YMCTB Marketing Activities Update

- a. Spring Inaugural Media Familiarization Tour: the YMCTB is currently working on a great Media Familiarization Tour (“FAM Tour”) scheduled for April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009, outline of itinerary included in meeting packet. Theme of FAM Tour is to showcase entire Mariposa County and introduce journalists to other wonderful attraction in County other than Yosemite National Park. Shaw asks how to get his destination on this or subsequent FAM Tours; he has had difficulty getting on any. Hentz reminds Shaw and BOD that this is the first such tour for YMCTB; Shelton supports this sentiment, states that other companies, operations, county bureaus, etc. have had FAM Tours, but first for YMCTB. Shaw asks if itinerary is based on upon requested stops. Hentz replies that the itinerary was assembled based upon a combination of requested media stops and areas of interest as identified by the YMCTB advertising agency, ASTONE Agency. Hentz explains particular weekend selected for FAM Tour because of multitude of events occurring in county that weekend, including the Butterfly Festival and Mariposa Brewing Company Blues and Brews Festival; believes will leave a great impression in journalists’ minds of Mariposa County. Griswold asks if the scheduled FAM Tour dinners are funded

by the YMCTB budget. Hentz answers affirmatively, reminding BOD that there is a line item on the previously-approved budget for such tours, and that he is working with hoteliers and accommodations to secure deals and assistance. Jensen inquires as to if the guest list is targeted. Hentz answer yes and that he and ASTONE Agency are working closely with Kenny Karst of DNC Parks and Resorts at Yosemite, Inc. and Scott Gediman of National Park Services. Jensen states that guidelines and rotating partners need to be established for such future events, so that others may know how to offer their services and become a part of future YMCTB FAM Tours. Hentz hopes to make this event an annual event with other FAM Tours planned throughout the year. Jensen encourages YMCTB to look for characters in town that could be introduced to journalists for future events, and Brownell suggests that meals scheduled at non-hotel establishment could be changed to hotel venues to allow for more lodging partner participation. Hentz states that this inaugural FAM Tour will be a learning process and seconds the call for establishing guidelines for future FAM tours and events. Griswold asks if there is the opportunity for lodging partners to offer free lodging during the FAM Tour and extended pre-FAM and post-FAM rates. Hentz advises that an email will go out to the lodging partners with the opportunity to advertise post-FAM rates to journalists.

- b. Website update: New special promo website, [www.onlyinyosemite.com](http://www.onlyinyosemite.com), assembled quickly by ASTONE Agency and Digital Gear, Inc. Original plans with Simpleview did not work out – too costly. New features to be added to new website plan include a gas mileage converter application, wherein visitors can input zip code and application will identify average gas costs and use.
- c. AMGEN update: Specifics of 2010 race still in the works; 2010 date will be different than 2009 with possible change of late spring. High interest in Mariposa County and Yosemite National Park for race locations. If this occurs, will require level of work and participation county has never seen before. Costs and return will have to be evaluated. Bids for host and end cities even stronger this year, as word spread throughout state of size and return of event. To host event would be very time and money consuming but could be the genesis of cooperation and off-season sustainability for Mariposa County.
- d. Email campaign update: Peter Geis is working on aggressive email campaign. Database of email addresses is approximately 13,000, with a low attrition/drop-out rate. Hentz currently in negotiations with database group that specializes in national parks. Biery asks if BOD members should be on email list. Interested BOD members to email Hernandez if they desire to be on email list.
- e. CTTC Mobile Welcome Center: The CTTC Mobile Welcome Center attends twenty-six (26) high-profile shows, such as NASCAR, Sunset Weekend Celebration, among others. Eight (8) sponsors are showcased in the center, and a representative may attend several of the shows with additional collateral. YMCTB has joined with a \$5,000 sponsorship. Two million expected attendance. Many shows cost \$2,000-\$3,000 alone to participate, therefore, CTTC Mobile Welcome Center sponsorship was a great bargain. YMCTB secured the last sponsor spot. Pictures of mobile center passed to YMCTB BOD, along

with two picture candidates to represent the county. Biery asks if someone has to attend each show from YMCTB; Hentz replies attendance not necessary as CTTC promoting on our behalf. Hentz would like to send a representative to the larger shows. Of the two photo candidates, many prefer the winter-photo taken by Ira Estin, however some worry of the winter-setting.

- f. Los Angeles Times Travel and Adventure Show 2010: going to have the first Yosemite Destination Pavilion in conjunction with surrounding counties, including Mono County. YMCTB leading the charge on this endeavor.
- g. Pow Wow International: To be held this year in Miami, FL, May 16<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Over 1,200 buyers from 70 different countries expected to be in attendance. This is a pinnacle event in the international travel industry. YMCTB will have a double-booth next to the California booth.
- h. UK and Germany Media Days: Attendance at these events was key for locking down market share. Hentz feels Mariposa County needs representation in key international markets: Germany, the UK, Asia, Japan and South Korea. For Japan, California is the number one destination, with Las Vegas, NV quickly gaining. Japan/South Korea, UK, and Germany are three key international markets for the YMCTB to focus on. The current year will not see as high a rate of international travelers as the previous, but YMCTB and the BOD should keep an eye on 2010 and remain positive, as early prediction for 2010 remain positive. Walker asks how the Italian and French inbound markets are faring. Hentz responds that the French inbound market is not high in the US, or at least Mariposa County is not. In similar trend is the Chinese inbound market to the county; this market is considered a niche market among many destination operators. Walker states that the French and Italian markets may seem niche, but he has observed times in August where their presence seemed abundant.
- i. New Area Marketing Representative position: The YMCTB has posted ads for a new position: Area Marketing Representative. These ads have been posted in *The Mariposa Gazette*, *Sierra Star*, with Mother Lode Job Connection, and online at IHireHospitality.com. Huff asks if posted on Craig's List; Hentz responds that there have been problems among employers seeking employees on that site. Hentz hopes to have position filled by end of April. Huff asks when opening will close and Hentz replied open until filled.
- j. YMCTB Newsletter: Newsletter still in works; will communicate tourism-related topics, news and material. Development currently under way, with topics to include TOT numbers, visitation numbers, with lodging partners, etc. able to submit ideas. Newsletter will be distributed electronically and hard-copy.
- k. YARTS Ridership Information: Information on YARTS ridership provided to Hentz by Dick Whittington. Ridership down in January and February. Ridership numbers up in March, could possibly be employee-related. Brownell adds that the Mariposa County Arts Council promoted ridership for the 2009 Storytelling Festival.

- I. TOT Collections: January and February 2009 TOT numbers better than previous year's; however, March TOT forecasts bleak (see TOT Collection document in meeting packet). Biery asks if numbers on document represent month collected or posted. Hentz replies chart indicates month collected. Shaw, Shelton and Griwold question reporting method utilized in chart (if chart actually reflects payments received for given month versus collected based on occupancy).
9. Closed Session
    - a. No action taken by YMCTB BOD.
10. Adjourned at 5:30pm.