



YOSEMITE MARIPOSA COUNTY TOURISM BUREAU
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2023

In Attendance:

This meeting was as an in person only meeting.

Directors Present:

Kevin Shelton – Yosemite Resorts
MaryAnn Huff – Northern Mariposa County
Chelsie Layman – Yosemite Hospitality
Scott Randall – Wildhaven Yosemite
Victoria Imrie – Yosemite Zipline & Adventure Ranch
Christian Mueller - The Redwoods in Yosemite
Ron Halcrow – Yosemite Plaisance Bed & Breakfast
Kim Brisack - Coulter Café and Vacation Rental
Douglas Shaw – Yosemite Bug Rustic Mountain Resort

Board Member not in attendance:

Candy O’Donel Browne – Community Member
Brett Archer– Delaware North – Tenaya at Yosemite
Gautam Patel – Foothills Hospitality

Advisors Present:

Danette Toso – Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

YMCTB Staff in attendance:

Jonathan Farrington – Executive Director/CEO
Ellen Bergstone Wasil – Director of Marketing & Creative
Aaron Demery – Operations Manager
Craig Polson – Social Media Content Curator

Visitors in attendance:

None

CALL TO ORDER:

- The meeting was called to order at 1:33 PM by Kevin Shelton

SELF-INTRODUCTION BY THOSE IN ATTENDANCE



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PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THIS BOARD - Members of the audience may address the Board on matters, not on the regular agenda. Brown Act regulations restrict the Board from taking action on any subject presented that is not on the agenda.

MaryAnn Huff- Coyote Fest was a great success, thank you for your (YMCTB) support. As soon as you (YMCTB) promoted us on social, we got nailed with vendor requests. Originally, we weren't sure we would have enough vendors. We are usually the ones having to reach out and ask people to come.

Trunk or Treat will be taking place on the 28th. It is getting bigger. This year they are going to be bringing a huge pirate ship for a show. They swing on ropes and shoot cannons. It's a great show and they have been practicing for months. Criag Polson from YMCTB will attend and shoot video of the event for future promotion.

Kevin Shelton – Octoberfest sausage and suds is also on the 28th. There will be over 100 kinds of beer and smoked sausage. We are also going to have sliders this year.

Chelsie Layman – In the park, we are always trying to think of ways to be more environmentally friendly. Do we need to print out the meeting packets when we have the visuals to look at on the screen?

Jonathan Farrington – We are using a new format for the presentation and wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to view it. In the future we will be getting the packet out earlier so you can look at it beforehand and can just follow along with the screen at the actual meeting.

INFORMATION AND PRESENTATION MATTERS

Yosemite National Park Update

Chelsie Layman – Yosemite hospitality is preparing for winter, there have been a lot of prescribed burns in the valley. We are beginning to downshift some.

Jonathan Farrington – At the YGP meeting it was mentioned that there would be a pilot reservation system in place next year. The program may look similar to previous years. The park is not announcing it yet due to potential changes. There will be a reservation system in place for Yosemite Firefall. I asked the superintendent during the meeting to please keep Badger Pass and Hetch Hetchy accessible by allowing through traffic.



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Chelsie Layman – The Ahwahnee project is delayed due to the previous winter storms we had. The dining room will remain closed until December or sometime late winter, and the kitchen is not likely to be completed until sometime in the spring. Most of the work being done is not surface level. There are a lot of beams being replaced. Most of the work that is being done will not be visible to guests.

Mariposa County Board of Supervisor Update - None

Partner Comments or Updates – None

Treasurer’s Report – Douglas Shaw

Funding Discussion-

Jonathan Farrington – Explanation of the how the County contract used to work and how the current grant works. The current set up for the grant is causing it to be task based which puts a larger burden on our staff and drains a lot of their time. We are also only able to use the funds for the exact thing that has been approved rather than using it to promote the non-lodging businesses in the county as we once we able to do.

Kim Brisack – Has there been any feedback from the county about restaurants and non-lodging businesses about how they would feel about not being promoted? I know that TBID has to be used only to the benefit of the payer. That really does restrict what you can do if there are no county funds mixed in.

Jonathan Farrington – We have heard some, but we need more to speak up. Because we have to use it to the benefit of the payer, I am not sure how much we can keep promoting non-lodging business and be in compliance.

Kevin Shelton – TOT was instituted to help the marketing of that county. Over time, counties have taken that tax as a revenue source. I think that is wrong. The money was not meant for them, and it is a tax that is self-imposed by the lodging businesses in that area. My two frustrations are that the county has decided that the tax should not be given to the bureau even though it is supposed to be, and second that the county views the money that it does give the bureau as money to be used to promote businesses that did not pay into it.

Victoria Imrie – As an attraction, the relationship between lodging and non-lodging properties is vital, I don’t think the county understands how much the bureau helps non lodging businesses



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while putting heads in beds. When someone stays in the area they are going to eat in the area and shop in the area. They want to do things in the area as well. If someone is not promoting the attractions, then visitors won't know about them. They might choose to pack food from home rather than look for a place to eat in a small rural town. I think we need the county to understand that funding the Bureau to where it can legally promote attractions and shops is important. As a business owner I would not want to come to a county that does not understand that. As I look for another location to move our zipline operation, it gives me pause when I hear how the county views tourism and doesn't support marketing.

Kim Brisack – I think it's important to still ask the county for their support even if it feels like it is falling on deaf ears. I agree with Vickie.

MarryAnn Huff – In North County we rely on events and activities far more than the rest of the county does and we need the support of the Bureau to draw in visitors. We need the county to support this. We don't have many lodging options up there. Our hotel is still trying to open. They can't promote us if the county doesn't support them.

Douglas Shaw – I feel like going through the process is like banging your head against the wall. How many counties have TOT checks coming in to cover their cost. Without TOT income it would affect the services this county depends on. I see it as a useless exercise to keep asking when the county has made its position clear.

Danette Toso – How long has it been since the funding change?

Kevin Shelton – Prior to covid we had a contract that was for 3 years at 3.25% of TOT collections a year. Then covid happened and the contract was voided due to the county having to cut costs. We approached again after the pandemic was over and were refused a new contract and instead given a \$50,000 grant. TOT is now higher than it ever was before the pandemic and the county is trying to tell us that they can't afford it when they were able to afford it when TOT was less. It doesn't add up.

Douglas Shaw – TBID was set up to help local lodging businesses. There has always been this argument that people are going to come no matter what, that all visitation is organic because Yosemite is well known. You know what else is well known? Palm Springs, Disney, Universal, The Bay, Tahoe, Mendicino, Yellowstone and many other locations. They will pull attention and we will lose visitors if they are out there on the airwaves getting their product in front of people and we are not. TBID was a way to ensure that funding happens. The problem is that the county sees the amount to TBID sent to the Bureau and says you don't need our funding anymore. I understand that perspective, but it doesn't take into account what those funds legally have to be



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used for. I will say this, that a lot of small to medium sized businesses would not be successful without this organization doing what it does.

Danette Toso – So the current funding is just a grant to be used for a specific purpose?

Jonathan Farrington – Yes. 23.5% of the tax revenue in Mariposa County comes from tourism. We want the public private relationship to work out. I would like to arrange a time with you and Supervisor Poe to go over this in more detail. I apologize I haven't been able to do this yet.

Danette Toso – Thank you. I appreciate all this feedback and history. I would like to sit down with you Jonathan and get a deeper understanding.

Executive Directors Update – Jonathan Farrington

- See presentation for full report.

YMCTB Staff Marketing Update

- See marketing report.

ACTION MATTERS FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION, REGULAR AGENDA

Approval of minutes from August 17th Board Meeting.

Motioned By: MaryAnn
Seconded By: Victoria Imrie
Roll Call: Motion Passes

Closed Session – None

Meeting Adjourned 3:15 PM