

Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, meeting on Thursday, October 29, 2015 at the Red Lion Hotel, Eureka, California.

Present: Lowell Daniels, Marc Rowley, Gary Stone, Chris Ambrosini, Tony Smithers

Guest: John Bartholomew

The meeting was called to order at 12:10 pm by Chris Ambrosini, who began by inquiring whether any additional board members had RSVP's to the day's meeting. Staff was instructed to request RSVPs from board members in the future.

The agenda for October 2015 was approved as presented.

The minutes of the July, 2015 meeting were approved (Daniels/Stone/unanimous).

Tony Smithers gave the financial report for September 2015, which was approved.

A report on the Follow the Magic Campaign was given by Tony Smithers in the absence of representatives from the Misfit Agency. This included:

1. Follow the Magic Campaign—the advertising placements continued in print and online, as per the agency agreement and schedule. The committee suggested that billboards be looked into, especially digital billboards in the SF bay area. Marc Rowley suggested that billboards should be used in-county at the “gateways” to convey a sense of arrival and welcome. Gary Stone agreed that these could become “local icons”. Chris Ambrosini then suggested that street banners could also be used to extend the campaign locally. With regards to the print advertising developed by the agency, Chris Ambrosini suggested that we use a small caption on the photos to communicate where the photo was taken. Marc Rowley said that we could use a disclaimer that “this picture is not a photoshop fantasy—it is real.” Lowell Daniels responded with his own suggested disclaimer that “Magic can be real...and Humboldt County is real.” Marc Rowley also suggested that the photos could be tied into a special “Quest” adventure at each photo location.
2. Campaign Website—is nearing completion. The board would be give a complete presentation by Misfit in the following month; in the meanwhile the agency subcommittee was providing direction and feedback to the agency.
3. Front Desk Kit—the board members felt that location signs for Arcata and Fortuna should be added to the map artwork. They were also interested in developing a “White Rabbit” stuffed toy as a campaign tie-in, and directed staff to research costs and capabilities.
4. 2016 Campaign Planning—In addition to the issues discussed above, the board did some brainstorming on future activities. Both Marc Rowley and Gary Stone felt that a “Steampunk” themed event would be a huge draw. Mr. Stone also stated that a local railway tour would attract many visitors. He requested that Pete Oringer be invited to address a future board meeting about Humboldt Bay Rails & Trails.
5. Also related to the campaign, Gary Stone suggested that the digital banner ads could be repurposed as printed bookmarks; Mr. Stone also opined that more creativity was needed in shooting the social media videos.

The board then briefly discussed the retreat planned for this coming January. Marc Rowley suggested that the agenda should include a discussion of the respective roles of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance and the Convention & Visitors Bureau. He wanted to explore the possibility of the HLA providing funding for hospitality training programs the bureau was working on.

Next, the board was given an update by John Bartholomew, Humboldt County Treasurer/Tax Collector, on the County's progress in penning an agreement with AirBnb, the purpose of which is to name AirBnb as a lodging operator responsible for collection of TOT and Assessments from all of their transactions. Mr. Bartholomew said that their expectation was that AirBnB would remit these tax revenues quarterly and be subject to the same penalties and obligations as other lodging operators in Humboldt County. Marc Rowley shared his knowledge of the difficulties being experienced in Ashland, Oregon with the vacation rental sector, leading to changes in zoning and other disruptions. Chris Ambrosini proposed, and the board approved, the drafting of a letter from the Humboldt Lodging Alliance to the County of Humboldt, expressing the HLA's support of this AirBnb agreement.

With no further time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers