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MINUTES

Special Meeting of Thursday, August 15, 2019 - 10:00 AM

Bridgeport Health Department Annex
199 Twin Lakes Rd., Bridgeport, CA 93517

1. Call to order.

Chris Long, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order at 10:07am

2. Introductions and announcements.

Commissioners: Chris Long, Sarah Walsh, Erinn Wells, Michael Vanderhurst (Absent: Wendy Schneider, Steve Morrison)

Staff: Alicia Vennos, Jeff Simpson, Liz Grans

Guests: April Sall, Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership; John Peters, Mono County Supervisor.

3. Opportunity for the Public to Address the Commission.

April Sall reported that a pre-application proposal was received for a gold mining operation on the eastern side of the Bodie Hills. The mining company still needs to complete the application and appear before Mono County Community Development LANDTAC.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the June 25, 2019 meeting.

MOTION: Michael Vanderhurst, SECOND: Sarah Walsh. APPROVED: 4/0, no abstentions.

5. Monthly Financial/Budget Report.

With a month into the new FY budget, Alicia spoke with Gerald Frank earlier, who reported that the 4th quarter transient occupancy tax (TOT) is down by 7% year-over-year, but that he still waiting on a few operators to report. Last year was the largest TOT by far, this year is about \$100,000 less than last year. Both shoulder season quarters were up. Two main factors for the slight decrease include wildfire smoke during Quarter One and the late opening of the seasonal road closures in Quarter Four.

- a. Tourism Marketing Reserve Fund: Discussion of policies for the fund and possible action. Conservative TOT projections over the past decade have resulted in \$130,000 in the tourism cash reserve. The Commission discussed how the fund could be used. Staff will work with the Director of Finance to draft a policy.

6. Economic Development and Tourism Report.

- a. Key Data Dashboard – Review and discussion of services provided. Possible action to approve contract. Jeff Simpson explained that Key Data Dashboard is a company that provides software for reporting average daily rate (ADR) and occupancy and may work well with the lodging properties in our area. Currently, the only metrics available are TOT reports which come after the fact and do not allow for projection or planning. There would be no cost for lodging properties to report, it would be anonymous, and any type of reservation system would work with the KDD platform. Staff will start surveying businesses to make sure there is interest and willingness to opt-in.
- b. Update on research projects, including Economic Impact of Tourism and Visitor Profile Study, Business Retention and Expansion Survey, and Advertising Conversion Study. Staff received the final Visitor Profile Study report and has a call this afternoon to go over it in fine detail one last time before releasing. Staff will compile a one-sheet of the trends with some recommendations for businesses.

The Advertising Conversion Study, measuring the effectiveness of the MonoCounty.org website and other marketing efforts, is still underway. About 400 people responded to the first survey indicating that they would take the next longer, more in-depth survey.

- c. Report on Rural Infrastructure Financing Grant, sponsored by California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED). CALED consultants are working with three rural counties to identify one or two projects from each to explore financing options. Staff is currently compiling a list of County owned properties that have infrastructure issues that could be addressed if financing was available.
- d. Report on Community Grant Program application process – Liz Grans
Fillable applications for the three community grant programs will be available soon.

7. Mono County Community Development Department Update/Report – Michael Draper/Bentley Regehr, Community Development Planning Analysts.

This item was tabled.

8. Mono County Fish & Wildlife Commission Update – Jeff Simpson

The fish stocking schedule for 2020 is currently being drafted. No update on the proposed California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife regulation changes.

9. Film Commission Update – Alicia Vennos

Several inquiries and productions recently. The feature film, *Triple Frontier* starring Ben Affleck, is out on Netflix, and features extensive scenes filmed at Obsidian Dome and Ellery Lake.

10. Project Status Update:

- a. Collateral: Working with Unicycle Creative upgrading and redesigning the Mono County Tourism marketing elements. Alicia Vennos noted that the 2020 visitor guide ad sales campaign will start this week, slightly ahead of schedule.
- b. Public Relations: Several FAMS scheduled with media, travel trade/Visit California.
- c. Advertising/Social Media/E-Newsletter: @MonoCountyTourism hit 40,000 followers on Instagram
- d. Website
- e. Tradeshows & Conferences: Alicia Vennos will once again be attending the Top RESA show in France in October on behalf of the High Sierra Visitors Council.

11. Commissioner Reports: Time permitting, Commissioners may share EDTFC-related information, community items, etc.

Michael Vanderhurst reported that work has started on a new commercial/residential development on Old Mammoth Road (small offices with housing units above, and 13 individual housing units). The new Yotelpad will be breaking ground next year. Winter United flights have been finalized - same routes and cities for the coming winter season. Chris Long said that the community is gearing up for the Eastern Sierra ATV UTV Jamboree in September. Newly opened is the Walker Coffee Company – part coffee shop, part fishing gear -- goal is to be open year-round, and expand to provide guided hiking and fishing excursions.

Erinn Wells shared that Bridgeport has been very busy and believes it will continue into September. Founder's Day coming up Labor Day weekend. New person – Nick Way - taking the event over. Autumn Festival and Ridge Rambler end of September, going strong. Tattoo and curiosity shop, Sierra Strange, recently opened. Real estate seems to be strong; 1881 coffee shop is for sale. Length of stay for visitors seems to be consistent and stable.

Sarah Walsh reported that the 65th Annual June Lake Fireman's BBQ went well. Southern California Edison has been doing a lot of work in the area. Power was shut off all day causing some businesses to lose business and food unfortunately. Summer has been very busy. Planning is underway for fall events, including June Lake Jam Fest, the June Lake Autumn Beer Fest, and the new event, Leaves in the Loop.

12. Call for agenda items for next regular meeting. Draft policy for tourism reserve, executive summary for businesses from three surveys/reports.

13. Adjourn the meeting. Reconvene in regular session at on Tuesday, September 24, 2019 at the June Lake Community Center (90 W. Granite Ave., June Lake, CA 93529).