



CALIFORNIA'S GREAT BEYOND

MONO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM & FILM COMMISSION
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MINUTES

Regular Meeting via Teleconference*
Tuesday, March 29, 2022 – 10:00 A.M.

*As authorized by Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-25-20, dated March 17, 2020, and continuation pursuant to AB 361, this meeting will be held via teleconferencing with members of the Commission attending from separate locations. There will not be a physical location of the meeting open to the public. This altered format is in observance of recent recommendations by local officials that certain precautions be taken, including social distancing, to address the threat of COVID-19.

Teleconference call-in information for Commissioners and members of the public is as follows, via Zoom:

<https://monocounty.zoom.us/j/7632864762> Meeting ID: 763 286 4762

If you are experiencing technical issues trying to connect to the meeting, please contact Jeff Simpson: jsimpson@mono.ca.gov / 760-924-4634 or Alicia Vennos: avennos@mono.ca.gov / 760-709-1149.

NOTE: The public will be able to comment during the meeting; instructions will be provided. If you wish to make a comment on a specific agenda item *before* the meeting, please submit your comment via email to Lgrans@mono.ca.gov or Jsimpson@mono.ca.gov before 9:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. Thank you.

NOTE: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact us. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the County to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (See 42 USCS 12132, 28CFR 35.130).

1. **Call to order.** Chair McQuilkin called the meeting to order at 10:02am.
2. **Introductions and announcements.** Introductions were made. In attendance:
Commissioners: Walsh, McQuilkin, Wells, Burkard
Staff: Vennos, Simpson, Grans
Other: Supervisor Peters, Ralph Lockhart (June Lake Chamber)
3. **Opportunity for the public to address the commission** on items of interest of the public which are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. Speakers may be limited in speaking time depending upon the press of business and number of persons wishing to address the Commission.
No public comment.
4. **Findings Relating to the Holding of Remote Meetings Under AB 361**
Find that: (1) The Proclamation of State of Emergency issued by Governor Newsom on March 4, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic remains in effect; (2) Local Public Health Officials have recommended measures to promote social distancing; and (3) As a result of the emergency, meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees. Accordingly, meetings of the Economic

Development, Tourism, and Film Commission may be held remotely in accordance with the requirements set forth in subdivision (e) of Section 54953 of the California Government Code.

Motion made by Wells, Second by Burkard.

Verbal Roll Call for the vote: Commissioner McQuilkin – yay; Commissioner Wells – yay; Burkard – yay; Commissioner Walsh – yay; All in favor, no abstentions; findings approved 4-0.

5. **Commission Meeting Format.** Discuss format of future meetings – in-person, virtual or hybrid. Supervisor Peters offered an update on the Board of Supervisors Commissioners’ plan for in-person meetings. The Commission discussed options and agreed to revisit this topic at the April meeting.
6. **Monthly financial/budget report.**
 - a. **Quarter 1 and 2 Transient Occupancy Tax report:** Ms. Vennos reported that there has been an increase in TOT receipts year over year (2021 vs. 2022): about 9.4% in Quarter 1 and 14.7% in Quarter 2. These TOT numbers compare to numbers from roughly 2017-2018 so not back to the 2019 record breaking figures. She noted that it will be interesting to see what happens this summer with high gas prices, international market recovery being undetermined with the war in Ukraine, as well as the evolving nature of the pandemic.
 - b. **FY 21-22 Budget:** Ms. Vennos reported that the department’s budget is on track for both the Economic Development and Tourism units. For the first time ever, the County is holding a 3rd quarter budget review on May 3rd for any departments that have late budget issues. Staff are preparing the necessary documents, but Economic Development has no adjustments.
 - c. **FY 22-23 Budget process:** Ms. Vennos noted that budget narratives and proposals for the 2022-2023 fiscal year will be due May 6, with County budget process taking place through June with the goal of adoption on August 16th.
7. **Economic Development and Tourism report – information on current or emerging issues, including but not limited to:**
 - a. **Update on the Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) program and next steps.**

Mr. Simpson reported that after the initial public comment period, staff is still waiting for details on the program but expects to apply for this funding as a member of the “Eastern Sierra Region.”
 - b. **Report on regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program** sponsored by the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC).

Mr. Simpson reported that RCRC through its funding sources will be assisting the Town of Mammoth Lakes, City of Bishop, Inyo County, Mono County, and possibly Alpine County to develop a regional CEDS. It will be a great benefit as the CEDS process is very expensive and time consuming. If all partners agree to participate and cost share, it will be about \$4,000 each – the CEDS development can be upwards of \$50-75,000. In addition to being useful now, a CEDS will allow eligibility to apply for other EDA funding programs in the future.
 - c. **Update regarding Local, State, Federal business assistance programs**

Mr. Simpson reported that the CA Dream Fund for new small businesses is still available, although there has not been much interest. Applicants agree to participate in ten training courses through Business Development Center, then will have access to \$10,000 grants.
 - d. **Update regarding Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) CARES Act – CV1, 2, 3 for Microenterprise Financial Assistance Program for small businesses.**

Mr. Simpson reported that the CDBD grant program has been running for a few weeks now with \$5,000 grants and \$35,000 forgivable loans available to small businesses in unincorporated Mono County. Three businesses have so far applied for and received \$35,000 loans. There has been no applications or interest in the \$5,000 grants (CV-1), so staff is working on rolling that grant money into the forgivable loan program (CV 2-3) for total available funds of approximately

\$320,000. There are few more pending applications in the queue, and staff expects all all funds to be distributed to eligible local businesses in the next two months.

- e. **Visitor data – update on Visa Vue.** Mr. Simpson explained that for the last 6-7 years, the department has subscribed to Visa Vue, a program that accesses Visa credit card data to track visitor spending by community, etc. The cost has been affordable, thanks to a partnership co-op program through Visit California. We include all unincorporated County zip-codes and receive quarterly reports on all spending from domestic and international travelers (all local resident cardholders are removed). Mammoth Lakes Tourism (MLT) purchases the data for the Town of Mammoth Lakes zip code. The Visa Vue subscription price is increasing from \$5,000 to about \$6,300 this year, along with another increase expected next year. Staff is exploring other data options and had a meeting with Key Data Dashboard, who provides reservation and actual stay data from Airbnb, VRBO, and Booking.com platforms to track real-time reservations and adapt marketing strategy in response.

Ms. Vennos attended a meeting with City of Bishop and Inyo County regarding the new Business Resource Center in Bishop. Grant program covers the renovation to the building, which will be a brick-and-mortar location for regional businesses to connect and receive support services. Planning is still underway for a virtual component, as well as staffing needs.

8. Film Commission update on film production in Mono County, permitting issues, and other film-related updates – Alicia Vennos/Steve Morrison

- Ms. Vennos reported that film inquiries were slow in December and January, but things have been picking up in the past few weeks. Ms. Vennos will follow up with Sheila Irons (Inyo National Forest) regarding training our staff on assisting with permit application intake to alleviate Forest Service staff workload.
- Ralph Lockhart shared that Dicks Sporting’s Goods is filming on the Blacks Pond property, and that a well-known celebrity filmed a music video at Mammoth Mountain and Black’s Pond.

9. Project status update, including collateral (Fishing Map, South County Community Map, Backroads Guide), public relations (update from Liz Grans), advertising/social media, websites, California’s Great Beyond brand video, and tradeshow/conferences.

- Staff shared that the fishing map was revised and being reprinted now; final review and edits are being done on the new South County community map. The paper shortage and increased fuel prices are affecting printing prices. Ms. Vennos will reach out to BLM Acting Director for the Bishop Field office about edits to the Backroads Guide.
- *Camp Like a Pro* Education Sub-Committee will be meeting this Thursday to review content and marketing efforts before upcoming summer and camping season.
- Ms. Grans gave a brief update on public relations efforts, including recent releases and the change over from Cision to a subscription with the Meltwater PR database.
- Social media strategy evolving with decreasing Facebook engagement and usage, Tik Tok growth.
- Tradeshow: Mr. Simpson is attending IPW in June in Orlando, FL. Staff has attended a few other shows this spring: ISE in Sacramento, the LA Travel Show, and the CA Powersports and Outdoor Adventure Show. The Fred Hall Long Beach fishing/boating show was unfortunately cancelled.
- Ms. Vennos added that summer air service schedule has been announced. Partners continue to work on shuttle service and car rentals. Staff also have been unable to reach Kore Mining for information on the Long Valley project.
- Mr. Simpson made the Commission aware of a proposed moratorium on short term rentals; the Board of Supervisors will be discussing the issue further at the upcoming meeting on April 5th.

10. Commissioner reports. Commissioners are invited to share EDTFC-related information and reports, announcements, and updates from their respective districts/communities.

- Commissioner Walsh reported June Mountain has done very well with grooming and snow maintenance to allow the season last until the upcoming closing date on April 10. Things seem to be quieting down in June Lake, and many businesses are adjusting hours.
- Commissioner Wells reported that businesses in Bridgeport are slowly reponing ahead of fishing opener. Reservations are looking great for upcoming season, and several weddings are booked in Bridgeport. With no housing, there are many staffing issues: businesses fighting over staff, staff working three different jobs, etc. but there is still optimism for a good upcoming season. Mr. Simpson noted that Napa Auto Parts just sold and will close in two days. The new owners are planning to open a new Napa and tire shop.
- Commissioner Burkard reported that most restaurants and businesses in Walker/Coleville have reopened or will be very soon; all are expecting business to be picking up with the fishing opener and passes reopening.
- Commission McQuilkin also reported that after the quiet winter, many Lee Vining businesses are now reopening. Mono Lake is low and below a key April 1st measuring point, which may decrease the amount of water LADWP can divert this summer. Grant Lake is also extremely low and hit the minimum level allowable; LAWDP has halted water removal.

11. Call for agenda items for next regular meeting. None.

12. Adjourn the meeting and reconvene in regular session at 10:00 a.m. on April 26, 2022.