



## **Mammoth Lakes Tourism Board**

### **Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**August 4, 2021, 1:00 p.m.**

**437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z, Mammoth Lakes**

Members Present: Chair Jeremy Goico, Vice Chair Pat Foster, Treasurer John Morris, Secretary Jess Karell, Board Member Michael Ledesma, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Mendel, Board Member Larry Crabb

Members Absent: Board Member Eric Clark

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#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Jeremy Goico called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. in the Council Chamber located at 437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z.

#### **2. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS**

Executive Director John Urdi spoke about MLT's increased focus on responsible recreation and the positive educational marketing campaigns they had created such as the popular Hug What You Love and Mammoth Love Song campaigns. Mr. Urdi discussed the recent Don't be a Bleephole campaign which had received negative feedback from the community. He said that the intent of the campaign was to be playful rather than offensive and that it was a small piece of their marketing. Mr. Urdi reported that the billboard would come down soon and that the Bleephole campaign had been replaced with the two more popular campaigns.

Board Member Pat Foster arrived at 1:07 p.m.

Chair Jeremy Goico apologized to the community for the Bleephole campaign. Mr. Goico said that the campaign was in response to the feedback that had been received regarding the increase in irresponsible visitations over the past year and that he was sorry that it was offensive to some members of the community and that MLT would continue to market in a more responsible fashion moving forward. He said that the members of the Board were all volunteers and said that he volunteered because MLT made a positive impact in the community. He spoke about the changes to their marketing strategy when COVID hit and discussed their efforts at the food bank during the pandemic and the assistance they had provided at the vaccination clinics and said that he felt MLT had continued to have a positive impact on the Town as well as its budget. He reported that there had also been some positive feedback on the marketing campaign and said that members of MLT's staff had been threatened and that that needed to stop.

Board Member John Mendel said that making a mistake was one thing, but recovering from it was another. He spoke about the feedback the Board had received from the community over the past year regarding irresponsible recreation as well as comments he had received from tourists about impolite locals and said that he felt there was work to be done on both sides. Mr. Mendel said that everyone needed to be respectful, leave a good impression with our visitors and continue the educational process.

Board Member Lynda Salcido apologized to the community about the Bleephole campaign and said that she felt somewhat responsible for the campaign as the Board had previewed it prior to its release and did not offer input on how it may negatively affect some members of the public. She said that she appreciated Mr. Urdi's letter of apology to the community and that it was well written. Ms. Salcido spoke about how she voted during the Town Council meeting last week with regard to MLT's budget and said that she would continue to advocate to find a way to better determine what a good budget amount for MLT would be going forward.

Board Member Michael Ledesma agreed with Ms. Salcido with regard to sharing ownership on the campaign after having previewed it and apologized to the community. Mr. Ledesma said that it was a mistake and said that handling it respectfully to correct it afterward was important. He spoke about the mask mandate that was coming back on Friday and reported that he had spoken with other restaurant owners and had concerns about how it would be received.

Mr. Ledesma asked about acquiring additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hand sanitizer due to the cost of those items and appreciated the PPE assistance from the Chamber in the past. He said that restaurant staff was exhausted, and that he was worried about staff being made "mask" police and said it felt more aggressive this time. He said that he hoped for guidance on how to handle potential push back.

Board Member Larry Crabb reported that he had heard visitors in his stores comment that they had received negative vibes from locals about being in Town. Mr. Crabb asked about visitors counts going forward and voiced concern regarding the recent surge in visitations. He discussed the recent increase in personal income which he felt Mammoth Lakes was currently a beneficiary of. He said that he was glad that the Bleephole campaign had been reversed and hoped we would not end up begging people to come back in the future.

Secretary Jess Karell said that the Bleephole campaign had been in response to requests from the community to assist with irresponsible recreation. Ms. Karell said that she felt the community should be kind and supportive of MLT staff and said that she was sorry that they had been attacked for the campaign which they were told to move forward with by the Board.

Vice Chair Pat Foster spoke about the campaign and his concerns when he first heard it. Mr. Foster said that due to the beating the Town had taken over the past year maybe it would be helpful in taking a more firm stand. He apologized to the community for not speaking out about the campaign and said that the Board and staff had taken responsibility for letting the campaign move forward.

Treasurer John Morris said that he had received several phone calls in favor of the campaign and that he saw the humor in it but was sorry that it was offensive to some members of the community, and that was what marketing did at times. Mr. Morris said that he was upset with how MLT's staff had been personally attacked regarding the campaign and that the Board was just as responsible for it. He asked members of the community to please stop cyberbullying the staff and said that they could call or meet in person with the Board and have a civil conversation and reminded everyone that we are all neighbors and friends. Mr. Morris reported that there had been a discussion at the Mono County Board of Supervisor's meeting yesterday regarding the upcoming mask mandate being for protection of our frontline staff. He reported that he wanted Mono County Public Health to consider the mental health of the frontline workers in addition to their physical health due to the fact that at times staff would be confronted by combative guests who did not want to mask up.

There was discussion between Mr. Urdi and members of the Board.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Stacy Corless thanked the Board for their service on the Board during the pandemic and their financial support related to stewardship efforts and educational marketing to promote responsible recreation. Ms. Corless spoke in favor of MLT's positive Hug What You Love campaign and thanked them for quickly taking down the more recent campaign and for their apology for running it. She requested that MLT speak with the Town and the community to find a way to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and find a balance between sustaining our economy and protecting the quality of life for our residents. Ms. Corless said that she was disappointed by the comments made by MLT staff and Board Members at the July 21st Town Council meeting regarding the Town's proposed reduction to their budget.

Allen Pietrasanta thanked MLT for their past efforts promoting tourism, supporting the community and for their apology regarding the Bleephole campaign. Mr. Pietrasanta discussed his opposition and disappointment with the Bleephole campaign.

**4. CONSENT AGENDA**

Moved by Treasurer John Morris  
Seconded by Vice Chair Pat Foster

Approve the Consent Agenda

For (8): Chair Jeremy Goico, Vice Chair Pat Foster, Treasurer John Morris, Secretary Jess Karell, Board Member Michael Ledesma, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Mendel, and Board Member Larry Crabb

Absent (1): Board Member Eric Clark

Carried (8 to 0)

**4.1 Approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 7, 2021.**

**5. POLICY MATTERS**

**5.1 Introduce new Director of Marketing Brian Wright**

Executive Director John Urdi introduced new Director of Marketing Brian Wright.

Mr. Wright said that he was happy to be part of the MLT team and spoke about his professional background.

There was discussion between Mr. Wright, Mr. Urdi and members of the Board.

## **5.2 Quarterly MLT Board and Town Council Workshops Discussion**

Chair Jeremy Goico spoke about the last Town Council meeting and the Town's request to pull back \$334,000 from MLT's funding. Mr. Goico discussed the challenges the community faced during 2020 due to being closed for three months, COVID restrictions, the Creek Fire and lodging closures. He said that he felt that there needed to be more communication between MLT and the Town and said that he would reach out to Town Manager Dan Holler and Town Mayor Bill Sauser to propose quarterly meetings between the two organizations with a formalized agenda to discuss marketing, budgeting and workforce housing solutions.

Executive Director John Urdi reported that there had been conversations regarding infrastructure between MLT and the Town in the past and that there needed to be discussions around responsible recreation in addition to housing during future joint meetings.

There was discussion between Mr. Urdi and members of the Board.

## **5.3 Air Service Update**

Executive Director John Urdi outlined the information in the Air Service PowerPoint presentation.

There was discussion between Mr. Urdi and members of the Board.

## **5.4 Upcoming Executive Director Performance Review**

Treasurer John Morris explained the process for conducting the Executive Director's annual review.

Treasurer John Morris, Chair Jeremy Goico and Secretary Jess Karell volunteered to be on the Executive Director's Review Committee.

There was discussion among members of the Board.

## **5.5 Financial Reports**

Executive Director John Urdi outlined the information in the financial reports.

There was discussion between Mr. Urdi and members of the Board.

## **6. DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

### **6.1 International Sales**

Director of Sales and International Marketing Michael Vanderhurst gave an update on international sales activities as well as a COVID update related to international travel restrictions.

There was discussion between Mr. Vanderhurst and members of the Board.

### **6.2 Communications**

There was no communications report given.

### **6.3 Marketing**

This item was taken out of order.

Director of Marketing Brian Wright outlined the information in the Marketing PowerPoint presentation.

There was discussion between Mr. Wright and members of the Board.

### **6.4 Digital Marketing**

Content Marketing Manager Meghan Miranda gave an update on recent website activity.

There was discussion between Ms. Miranda and members of the Board.

### **6.5 Special Events**

Special Events Manager Dakota Snider gave an update on recent special events and social media activity.

There was discussion between staff and members of the Board.

### **6.6 Social Media**

This item was combined with Item #6.5.

## **7. OTHER STANDING UPDATES**

### **7.1 Discussion regarding adding additional standing updates. (Restaurant Association, Lodging Association, others?)**

Chair Jeremy Goico requested adding Lodging and Restaurant updates on a quarterly basis to the monthly MLT agenda.

Treasurer John Morris and Board Member Michael Ledesma agreed to provide the requested updates.

### **7.2 Mammoth Resorts Update - Eric Clark 5 minutes**

There was no Mammoth Resorts update given.

### **7.3 Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce Update - Jeremy Goico 5 minutes**

Chair Jeremy Goico reported that businesses in need of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) contact Ken Brengle or Brianna Goico at the Chamber for assistance. Mr. Goico discussed the recent decline in customer service in Town and announced that the Chamber would provide a customer service training series in November. He announced that there would be an in-person Power Lunch on August 17th at Dos Alas CubaRican Café featuring a guest speaker from the Forest Service who would discuss wildfire mitigation efforts.

Board Member Pat Foster left the meeting at 3:12 p.m.

### **7.4 Town Council Update - Lynda Salcido 5 minutes**

Board Member Lynda Salcido spoke about the weekly Community Updates provided by Public Information Officer Stuart Brown and discussed the items that would be on the agenda for tonight's Town Council meeting. Ms. Salcido spoke about the mask mandate that would take effect on August 6th and encouraged members of the community to get vaccinated.

There was discussion among members of the Board.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 p.m. to the next regular meeting with a date to be determined at a later time.

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Angela Plaisted, Assistant Clerk