

The Mammoth Museum

Southern Mono Historical Society

Annual Report

Robert L. Joki – President of the Board

Board of Directors

Kevin Green

Dan Lyster

Tony Rojas

Stu Welsh

Town of Mammoth Lakes

Attn: Town Council Members

September 21, 2022

Dear Council Members

As you know, The Mammoth Museum (SMHS) has made great strides forward in the last few years to create a facility that not only serves the residents of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, but also to create a destination for visitors by its promotion of cultural tourism. The efforts of our volunteer Board of Directors, and our small but talented staff, have resulted in:

** A daily operation of the Hayden Cabin Museum and the accompanying grounds, which are open to the public from 10:00 – 6:00, Memorial Day through mid-September.*

** Paid Museum docents work in the cabin during open hours to give presentations and stories on the history of the Hayden Cabin, and the history of the Mammoth Lakes area to visitor and residents, as well as providing historic photographs and other documentation to the public. These staff members are also responsible for maintaining order and safety to a variety of outdoor recreational activities including bocce-ball, table tennis, badminton, croquet – as well as monitoring any creekside activities which include trout fishing and wading in Mammoth Creek.*

** The Museum's Interpretive Programs are ongoing throughout the season – both onsite at Mammoth Museum and offsite, including the*



highly acclaimed “History Trolley” program, which just completed its 4th Season - where trained storytellers entertain visitors with stories and songs from our town’s history by riding along on the Lakes Basin Town Trolley system on Friday, Saturdays, Sundays, with extended hours on holiday weekends.

* Special Programs for residents and tourists have included – Fly fishing demonstrations, Summer Children’s Art Programs, Guided Tours of The Consolidated Mine, Old Mammoth, Mammoth City, & Pine City sites.

* Annual events have included the “Story Telling Festival”, “The Mammoth Book Faire”(which in 2023 will include a regional Writer’s Conference as well), public entertainment such as “Music & Moonshine”, “Blues by the Creek”, the “Pioneer Party” - and the hopeful return in 2023, of the highly popular summer one-day Jazz Festival “Jazz by the Creek”, “Genny Smith Day” every Labor Day weekend, the annual July 4th “Family Day” – and the Museum is a proud host of the annual “Mammoth Yoga Festival”.

* The Museum staff receives and considers for accession, numerous items per week to add to Museum exhibits, or to the permanent collection of the Southern Mono Historical Society. It is the job of the paid staff to properly preserve these important items which document the history and development of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

Museum staff also performs ongoing digital scanning of our extensive photo and archive collection, as well as digital preservation of our significant collection of taped and written Oral Histories.

Over the past three years, nearly 2000 items from the museum archives have been catalogued and submitted to the State of California’s “California Revealed” project. The items submitted by our museum are then scanned and recorded by the State, as part of a larger project to digitally preserve items of historical importance from within a variety of California Museums and Historical Society archives. The original items are returned to us at the museum, along with a copy of the high-quality digital scans for our own use, as well as the State retaining a copy of everything scanned to become part of a State Archive that is available to the general public on the “California Revealed” website.

** Fundraising events and daily donations at the Hayden Cabin in June, July, August and September bring in a limited amount of money and new memberships – but most often only bring in a few hundred dollars a week – not the amounts necessary to keep the museum doors open.*

** In addition to their jobs as docents, our small staff is also responsible for the development of new exhibits.*

** Grounds maintenance and improvements - The area the Museum manages for the Town of Mammoth Lakes lies within the area designated by the Town of Mammoth Lakes as Mammoth Creek Park East. It lies along the banks of Mammoth Creek, and is one of the most beautiful, easily accessible, and often visited park areas in the downtown area.*

The Museum Grounds and buildings sit on land that is part of the Inyo National Forest, and as such, the use is permitted through the Mammoth Ranger District's Special Use Permit Program. The Forest Service however does not contribute to the maintenance of the buildings or grounds – rather instead, collects a fee from the museum for its use. As the Museum sits within the Mammoth Park East designation, the Town of Mammoth Lakes should work with the US Forest Service to place the overall management of this area within the Town Park system, much as what was done in negotiations regarding the maintenance and management of Shady Rest Park. The Museum Grounds are used by residents and visitors for outdoor recreation and are a valuable part of the Town of Mammoth Lakes Parks & Recreation System. The Grounds provide the public with a place to stroll along the creek, a picnic on the lawn, a peaceful place to sit and relax, and it may include a visit to the Museum as well.

The Museum grounds serve the public as an entertaining, educational, and enjoyable part of the overall public park system, and should be funded and maintained by the Mammoth Lakes Parks & Recreation Department rather than being the financial and physical responsibility of the Museum.

The Museum Grounds and the Hayden Cabin itself are truly one of the very last places that people can experience the authentic Mammoth – and they provide one of the only remaining places in our town that can balance the new growth and development. When the Museum is gone, much of what we have all come to love about Mammoth itself will also be gone.

** The Museum works to protect Mammoth's sensitive cultural assets - and works directly with the Federal and State agencies that are responsible to oversee construction projects and environmental clean-up action such as the current high impact action about to begin on the unrecorded historic Townsite of Mill City which is adjacent to what is known as "Old Mammoth".*

The Mill City Townsite is just one of the fragile sites in and around the Mammoth Lakes, which could eventually contribute to a broader understanding of our own human history in the Mammoth Lakes vicinity. The history buried in these sites disappears quickly and permanently when we do not insist that the procedures required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act are not fully implemented by the contractors who perform work for these Federal and State agencies. It is our role, as your Town Museum, to be the front-line protectors of these cultural and historic assets on your behalf.

NOTE: Sadly, I must report that all but one of the 14 historic cabins in the Mill City Tract have been repossessed by the Federal Government without a single penny of compensation given to the families that owned these cabins, some for generations going back as far as the 1920's.

** The Museum's long-term goals include the eventual management and preservation of The Consolidated Mine Site, which we feel is a missed opportunity for the Town as a tourist destination. It is our "Bodie" and it is quickly disappearing under the neglect of current management. Onsite projects completed include the replacement of the roof on all three buildings at the Hayden Cabin site during the 2018 summer season. Now with a new (and expensive) roof, it is a goal of the museum to complete the weatherization of the back two shop buildings and to turn them into viable exhibit spaces as well.*

These are just a few of the accomplishments and goals that we, as a viable organization, bring to the Town of Mammoth Lakes - as we strive to build a bigger and better Museum from its humble roots. We now provide a true asset to the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and our civic leaders and Town Council should be quite proud of these accomplishments and count them among their own.

As you also know, our yearly expenses are very small, and we rely heavily on the funding provided by the Town, which is the primary source of our annual operations.

The current funding level that the Museum receives from the Town of Mammoth Lakes (\$15K) and Mono County (currently zero) is barely above the combined \$10K that the Museum received thirty years ago in 1992, when the museum received \$10K dollars in funding, at a time where its annual expenses were only \$13K.

Thirty years later, in 2022, the Museum received \$15K at a time where its annual expenses are **TEN TIMES** what they were in 1992, but thirty years later, the Museum only receives an additional \$5K dollars in actual funding.

Some Actual Yearly expenses from the last 12 months include:

\$ 5,954.80	5 months Grounds and Sanitation Expenses
\$ 49,535.00	One year museum staff labor @ avg \$20/hr
\$ 11,750.00	History Trolley labor @ \$25/hr
\$ 11,192.00	One year Employment Costs
\$ 13,315.61	One year Office, Utilities, and Misc. Expenses

Some Capital Improvement Needs:

\$15,000 Expand the exhibits into the back shop buildings including weatherproofing walls etc (Emmitt's Workshop)

\$ 18,000 Replacement of the Temple of Folly Exhibit Canopy Tent

\$ 25,000 Replace plastic Honey Bucket outhouse with a rolling full-service bathroom which to be owned and maintained by The Town.

Despite this severe under-funding, the Museum has continued not only to survive up until now but has grown into a viable and beloved public institution. Most of that can be credited to our volunteer Board of Directors, whose non-paid support, both financial, and “hands on” work has been the reason that the Museum has continued to exist up until this time.

However, the Museum has reached a critical place in its existence. Any attempt to justify the discrepancy in its \$15K funding verses its current expenses at around \$130K –must lead one to the only conclusion is that the museum is in an unsustainable financial position. Memberships and private donations can not make up the difference. If the Museum is fully funded by the Town, the Membership and private donation money is what will allow the Museum to continue to move forward into the future but will not sustain its present.

We would like to ask the town to recognize the value of the Museum as a community asset, and to begin fully funding the annual expenses of the Museum. Please consider a line-item contribution of \$150,000 to the Museum for its 2023 operational expenses, and to continue to fully fund the Museum as a line-item in subsequent years.

Properly funded, our board can then go forward with confidence toward our future, and we can continue to provide a high level of service to the community through job creation and cultural tourism, as well as to properly maintain the important historic archives and cultural assets that have been placed under our trust.

Maintaining the Status-Quo, or even a slight token increase in funding is not going to be a solution.

The Two Possible Solutions:

- 1.) The Southern Mono Historical Society can and will continue to exist and serve the public without the Hayden Cabin and Mammoth Museum as its base of operations.

SMHS owns the items and archives, and many Historical Societies around the country operate without having a museum building. However, we believe it is in the best interest of the Public, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and of the Southern Mono Historical Society to remain together in keeping door of the cultural institutions known as the Mammoth Museum at the Hayden Cabin open and thriving for the future. Fully funding the Museum is the logical way forward.

- 2.) The alternative would be to have the Parks & Recreation Dept take over the full maintenance of the grounds themselves, as well as providing and maintaining public restrooms and waste facilities – and having the Town of Mammoth Lakes hire and pay the staff as Town Employees, as well as providing the utilities and office requirements to run the museum.

Indecision or inaction by the Town Council at this critical juncture will only doom the Museum at the Hayden Cabin facility to close for good.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Joki – President of the Board

INVOICE

DATE

July 25th, 2022

Mammoth Museum / SMHS

PO Box 65

5489 Sherwin Creek Rd.

Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

TO:

Town of Mammoth Lakes

PO Box 1609

Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

SHIP

TO:

* Please Hold Check
at Town Office for
pickup by Robert Joki
503-775-0978 (text)

**BOARD
PRESIDENT**

JOB

**SHIPPING
METHOD**

**SHIPPING
TERMS**

**DELIVERY
DATE**

**PAYMENT
TERMS**

DUE DATE

Robert L. Joki

Due on
Receipt

Quantity	item #	Description	PRICE	discount	Line Total
		Town of Mammoth Lakes Annual Funding for the: Mammoth Museum, AKA: Southern Mono Historical Society FY22-23 Per Letter of Agreement dated 7/20/22			\$ 15,000.00

Sales Tax
Total

NA
\$ 15,000.00

REAL ESTATE Q&A: ELECTION SPECIAL

Learning from history?

By Paul Oster

Q: We are second homeowners in Mammoth and spend considerable time here in the summer. We've enjoyed the Mammoth Museum/Hayden Cabin both inside and out and often take visiting friends there, and even envision hosting a party or event there someday. But we understand that the community, both publicly and privately, is not adequately supporting this fine property and facility. That seems wrong. Why is this?

A: This is so typical "Mammoth." Over the decades I've been questioned about the community's short-sightedness so many times. I've tried to figure it out, but it has become a recurring theme. It reminds me of the saying "common sense isn't so common." But the timing of this question is good because we are less than two months away from a critical Town Council election here in Mammoth.

The question (and the answer) reminds me once again why Mammoth has survived through the decades, and it has little or nothing to do with anything manmade. Most of our manmade stuff is pretty mediocre. Without the spectacular natural environment that surrounds us, we truly are what one long-time local refers to as a "glorified bus stop." And we keep missing the opportunities to change this. The evidence is all around us; a great ski area with ancient mobility, a 30% finished faux alpine village, a downtown full of parking lots, and weeds growing everywhere.

But Mammoth is evolving into a more mature resort (it has been a long haul). As it does, it is critical that it chases fewer "shiny objects." Like focusing on flashy marketing while ignoring the variety of desperately needed workforce housing (thankfully that era is coming to a close). Or building fancy public transit stops and not maintaining the one that gets used the most and is the most visible (that thing is disgusting). New adventures are great, but we have to maintain what we already have. And maintain it well.

So here we are. For the most part we have a lame-duck Town Council; there are three seats up for election, and more importantly that could form a new majority. We have six candidates including only one incumbent, and one former Council member. It is great to have

these candidates - activism appears to be alive and well in Mammoth. But it is time to dig into what and how they think, and the Town's dubious commitment to the Mammoth Museum is a perfect type of question to start some (hopefully) intelligent dialogue.

The question made me contact Robert Joki who is president of the Board of Directors for the Southern Mono Historical Society (SMHS). They don't own the Cabin/museum building but they own the contents. The museum is technically on Forest Service land, but it is part of the Town's Mammoth Creek Park plan. This distinction is apparently one of the "problems" that keep the bureaucrats

from making greater commitments to the Museum. Everyone thinks it should be a fantastic amenity, but there are more excuses than solid commitments to help SMHS get it there. I'm visualizing old episodes of the Three Stooges.

None of this makes sense in the real world. A successful business owner would certainly find a way to solve the problem or rationalize the right decision. Our community leaders should also be able to (more delusions on my part?). This is why putting the question to the Council candidates could be so enlightening. We need strong leadership now and in the future. We don't need more excuses. Or rubber-stamping what "the staff" thinks is best.

The Mammoth Museum/Hayden Cabin is a grand opportunity, but is being starved. The Museum should balance out the enormity and ugliness of the Ice Rink structure along the Mammoth Creek parkway. The Town prides itself on the trail system and there is already a lovely trail segment linking the two, including a nice bridge spanning the Creek. It could all be enhanced. It is a perfect opportunity to create what planners call the "processional effect." And the electric car owners who are

using the new charging station will have time to stroll over to the Museum and hang out. That is if they don't think old things and history have no value.

The SMHS Board has elevated the entire Museum experience in the past few years. But it is not sustainable with the current, measly support from both the public and private sectors. But most importantly the public sector. It functions like a quasi-government program with little funding, big expectations and grossly untapped potential. My readers know I hate seeing wonderful assets squandered. The location, site and structure are pure Mammoth. Certainly far more than anything Sprung.

Joki estimates that 5,000 visitors per year actually log-in to the Museum's interior. Another 25,000 hang out in the exterior (sounds like Covid numbers). On the lawn adjacent to the Cabin there is the tattered canopy tent known as the "Temple of Folly" (a reference to the long forgotten 1880s Mammoth City saloon). Folly is appropriate for this discussion. But this is where daily visitors relax in the shade and watch videos of Mammoth history including "The Dave McCoy Story."

The entire venue has been used for wedding receptions and other sizable parties and gatherings. A new \$20,000 tent could probably secure that amount in forward bookings for the following summer. It's like having an STR and not having beds; only the desperate would rent it. Some upgraded portable restrooms would be nice too. Plastic "honey bucket" outhouses aren't that appealing.

The proposed operating budget to make the Museum truly viable and vibrant is a small fraction of the annual maintenance funding for the new Ice Rink facility. And the Museum may have a bigger fan base. And all of it could easily be absorbed into the Town's massive Parks & Recreation budget (check your SCE/electric bill, we are all paying into it every month). But the suggestion of that just brings more excuses. Maybe we should consult with the Three Stooges.

The Parks & Rec people like to point

out the the new Ice Rink structure is "fully programmable." That essentially means it can be used for all sorts of things (do kids really want to play inside in the summer?). So why shouldn't the Museum be fully programmable? With a decent bit of funding from the Town the SMHS has made the History Trolley Summer Program a success. In its first year. With appropriate funding and a stable staff, the Museum has all sorts of possibilities.

What do the numbers really look like? In 1992 (30 years ago) the Museum received \$6,000 from the Town and \$4,000 from the County. That year it had expenses of \$13,000. This year the Town contributed \$15,000 to the Museum and the operational expenses are around \$140,000. This includes approximately \$60,000 in payroll. The whole thing is being run on a shoestring. And nobody seems to be placing any value on the volunteer president of SMHS, who is by far the most experienced and capable person the community has ever had in this role.

While many of Mammoth's original and old-time structures (many of them log cabins) are long gone, the Mammoth Museum/Hayden Cabin provides present and future generations a glimpse at the authenticity of Mammoth. Local museums are supposed to do many things for their visitors; to learn about the area and its history, to spark curiosity and make people smarter, and to encourage critical thinking skills in children (or Council candidates). They should be feel-good environments and help guide the future of the community and the inevitable changes, and much more.

One compelling question that needs to be asked of our Council candidates is: Do you value making a stronger commitment the Mammoth Museum to make it viable and let it flourish, all at a relatively small cost? And if not, why?

And if you have read this far, what would you like to ask the candidates??

Paul Oster is the Broker/Owner of RE/MAX of Mammoth (celebrating 30+ years). For other timely real estate information you can go to www.MammothRealEstateBlog.com. For legal, accounting, or construction advice, please seek out the appropriate professional.

Without the spectacular natural environment that surrounds us, we truly are ... 'a glorified bus stop.'

-Paul Oster



JUNE
LAKE
BREWING

MINARET CINEMAS
is DPLACE
437 Old Mammoth Rd

Movie Info Line
(760) 934 3131

Buy Tickets Online
DPlaceEntertainment.com

AT THE MOVIES

Movies Starting This Friday 09/16 to 09/22

(PG-13) 2h 14m
Friday Sunday
4:15pm 7:15pm
Tuesday
7:15pm
Thursday
7:00pm



(PG-13) 2h 26m
Friday Sunday
7:00pm
Tuesday
7:00pm



(R) 2h 03m
Friday Sunday
7:15pm



(PG-13) 2h 42m
Friday Sunday
4:45pm

