

Hells Canyon Chamber of Commerce

Minutes for Meeting of February 5, 2019

Held at Pine Valley Lodge • Halfway, Oregon • 1:00-3:25pm

Present: Pres. Becky Kaaen; Vice-Pres. Tami Waldron; Sec. Bill Schuhle; Treas. Lauri Bryan; Whitey Bloom; Jeff Nelson, BMCC Small Business Center, Baker City; Julie Hicks, Baker County Economic Development; Shelly Cutler, Baker County Chamber of Commerce; Lisa Steele, David & Kathryn Moore enterprises; Shelly Wilson, soon-to-be-opened coffee shop; Cindy Thayer & Susan Sciarrino, Valley Girls Long Arm Quilting; Kat Davis, UCP & Pine Fest

Minutes of Last Meeting

December's minutes actions items were reviewed. Valentine hearts were all sold and mounted timely by Whitey and crew. Availability of premium non-alcohol fuel at Cornucopia Lodge not yet confirmed. (It was noted that the Feed & Seed is now open longer hours on Sunday for fuel purchases.) Lauri and Tami conferred on our co-sponsoring the 4th of July band. Tami upgraded our cell phone and, having paid for the service since the switch-over from a land line, declined any reimbursement for those expenditures. She did ask that the Chamber take over the costs as of January which we will certainly do. Answering the phone on a regular basis, she fields numerous questions about all aspects of living and recreating in the Panhandle and sends information packets to interested parties, all on her own time and dime. A huge thank you to Tami!

Cindy Thayer, in addition to doing quilting, works at the Hells Canyon Journal and as part of that job, maintains our Chamber web site. She shared that updating takes place Tuesdays as that's the day the paper goes to press so that deadline pressure is gone for a bit. It's helpful that the newspaper generally has up-to-date information on happenings and events and this can be incorporated easily into the web site.

Bill had been tasked with informing the Cornucopia Arts Council about our unanimous vote to transfer ownership of the MainStreet Stage to the Council. He had done this immediately following the meeting. He indicated that he had recently put together written documentation regarding the transfer and shared it with the group. It included a statement of transfer for both organization presidents to sign as well as a listing of equipment being transferred, photos of the stage and the lighting equipment, and documents procured from the Baker City Building Department documenting our ownership of the Stage at the time of its construction and a note of blessing from Tony and Pat Sowers to place the Stage on their property. Arrangements for storage of equipment summer and winter are yet to be worked out. As it has been for some time, insurance for performances on the Stage is being covered by the Arts Council.

Finance Report

Lauri reported a major hassle with our credit card processor regarding the system we used to accept credit cards at the 4th of July Pie Auction. This is yet to be resolved. The finance report was approved as presented.

Old Business

Promotion of Chamber Web Site: It was obvious from Cindy's description of all the items she keeps current on the web site that it would be great if more folks knew about it and used it for reference. Becky asked for ideas on how we might accomplish this. Lauri said we have a fairly active Facebook page so we could post there. Shelly said the Baker Chamber could post on their page as well. Bill said the page "There Really is a Place Called Halfway, Oregon" would be a good place to post as well (this would be good for getting more locals to be aware of our site).

Hells Canyon Chamber/Baker County Chamber Joint Memberships: Shelly saw a joint membership likely being more attractive to BCCC members than to HCCC members. Though regular HCCC dues for a business are \$60 and BCCC small business dues are \$135, she suggested a joint dues of \$150 with HCCC receiving their full \$60 from that amount. Monthly auto-pay would be available through BCCC if desired. Presence on both web sites would be an advantage to any business. The BCCC printed newsletter goes out to approximately 500 recipients and features member businesses in each issue to good effect.

Kat wondered if an offered benefit of joint membership might be a discount on various trainings and Shelly indicated that this was indeed the case already with BCCC membership.

Becky suggested that HCCC possibly have a March meeting specifically to work out membership questions so that we'd be ready for our usual membership drive meeting in April. This was agreed and was set for Tuesday, March 5th, 1:00pm at Pine Valley Lodge.

New Business

Baker County Economic Development (BCED): Julie said that all of their office's services are free and confidential. Entrepreneurs considering coming to the area can get assistance with financing to fill a gap between their own funding and bank funding. She indicated that their focus lately has moved away from trying to attract new businesses to "What can we do to help existing businesses succeed and expand?". Shelly commented that BCED has been great in helping businesses with succession planning and finding buyers for businesses, ranches, etc., that, for instance, weren't going to be taken over by the owners' children. She recommended letting business owners in that position know of the services along those lines offered by BCED.

Julie told about an upcoming 10-session workshop to be offered on setting up a non-profit organization.

When asked about possible help for a small business with bringing another employee on board, she recommended visiting with Jeff as he is good at finding ways to reduce other costs so as to afford a needed new employee.

BCED financial assistance (loans) can be obtained at rates of 3.5%-7% depending on determined risk factors.

BMCC Small Business Center (SBC): Jeff indicated that funding for the SBC is through the federal Small Business Administration and that the Center's primary mission is to assist folks starting up new businesses. Also available are one-on-one employee training and, through an organization called "Work Source", temporarily free employees who can be trained and later possibly hired. Jeff shared statistics on the accomplishment of the SBC and noted that the biggest problem for employers in Baker County is finding good, reliable employees. He noted that NE Oregon Economic Development offers 3:1 matching grants for business owners who take a business fundamentals course and then make regular deposits into an Individual Deposit Account. Soroptimists of Baker County offers a \$2,000 grant to a woman-owned business and applications are available through April.

SBC has access to sophisticated software to assist in business plan creation and presentation. BMCC offers various workshops in software use including QuickBooks. Kat Davis offered that UCP makes small grants that could go toward paying for such training for a group that would like to go under the auspices of, for instance, the Hells Canyon Chamber. Grant applications are accepted quarterly with quick turnaround on funding decisions. (Visit www.unitedcommunitypartners.org).

Becky recalled that in the past we had discussed branding and Greg offered that the main thing about branding is consistency – consistent use of a logo in all media. He said that Facebook is a great place to offer different designs and get feedback on what people like.

Shelly said that the Baker Chamber partners with SBC on things like front end staff training as well as management training.

With regard to promoting and expanding a business, Greg said the SBC offers marketing workshops and also personalized consulting on the use of social media for business.

BCCC's Annual Banquet: Tami complimented Shelly on the BCCC's annual banquet and awards program which she had attended and found to be a delightful evening. BCCC membership has increased from 126 businesses to 315 in the three years since Shelly took over as director and this is being reflected in the enthusiasm present at the banquet. Greg credited the increase in membership to Shelly's attitude of "everyone working together" which has been a refreshing change. Tami noted that in the future, it would behoove us to get our nominations for the various award categories in to Shelly in a timely manner. This year the closest winner to Halfway was Copper Belt Winery in Keating.

BCCC Newsletter: Shelly said that anyone who wishes to receive the newsletter need only provide her with their mailing address.

New Coffee Shop in Former Quilts Plus Building: Shelly Wilson said that she hopes to carry on a similar operation to what Quilts Plus had in place for many years, opening sometime this spring. They are still working on a name, logo, etc. After years of concentrating on her husband's cabinet business, most of which is out of the area, she's looking forward to once again being "in the know" and able to help visitors with recommendations of where to go and what to see while they are here. They also plan, eventually, to add a retail element to the business, offering home décor items that her husband Bill makes.

Shelly Cutler offered that BCCC would be happy to help with a ribbon cutting celebration to be hosted by HCCC when the business is ready to open officially.

Timothy Bishop's New Post: Shelly Cutler shared that Timothy Bishop is now the Eastern Oregon Visitors' Association Board President. Also, Alice has officially retired as Director and whoever is hired to replace her will be a salaried employee rather than a contractor and their office will be wherever that person is currently residing.

Snowmobile Poker Run: Whitey said the Poker Run is a go, Sunday, Feb. 17, 9:00am at the Lions Hall. No need to have snowmobile to participate – tickets are available to anyone interested and will be carried over the course for non-riders by participating snowmobilers. Approximately 300 riders are expected. The purse this year is \$4,000 with \$1,600 and \$1,000 going to first and second places respectively. The money will come from ticket sales of 450-500 at \$5.00 each and from donations from various businesses. The way the poker run works was explained, much to the surprise of many present who weren't aware that non-riders could buy tickets and participate in that way. Tickets for both the poker run and the many raffle items that are donated by area businesses may be purchased from 9:00-10:00am and the drawing for raffle items and announcement of poker run winners starts at 6:00pm, all at the Lions Hall.

Kat suggested for future poker runs that there be a write-up in the paper explaining how non-snowmobilers as well as snowmobilers can have the fun of participating in the event.

In response to Becky's question, Whitey indicated that annual membership in the snowmobile club, which includes both the local club and the state association, is \$45/yr. Benefits include a free dinner at the club's meeting/pot luck the second Tuesday of every month. The club supports local little league teams, cleans up roadsides, helps with installation and removal of the Valentine's hearts, 4th of July flags, and Christmas stars along Main Street, grooms the snowmobile trails all winter long, and donates to charitable causes, most recently helping Abbie Graven's folks with her medical expenses in the amount of \$1,000. They also publish the area snowmobile map and, without question, bring volumes of vital business to the community during what would otherwise be the very deep doldrums of winter. Whitey talked about the "snow pole" that the club has planted near Fish Lake and pictures of which are shared on Facebook so that potential riders can see what the current snow depth is. This is a very popular item on FB with over 2,500 views of a recent shot. Having this information immediately available online has significantly reduced the number of phone calls that have had to be fielded by Whitey and three other club members whose phone numbers are listed on the snowmobile map. He also noted that winter at Fish Lake doesn't end until around April 1st and that springtime snowmobiling is some of the best due to the settling of the snow and the ability to go anywhere – even when it's "brown in town", there's still great snowmobiling up high.

Lions Crab Feed: Comments were shared about how clean the Lions Hall is now and this was credited to Bill Shields who, in his retirement, has taken on the role of maintenance person for the hall, giving it the attention it has needed but lacked for a long time.

In response to a question about ticket sales for the Crab Feed, Bill Schuhle, who is the club treasurer, said that they are OK, with a slow start but picking up. Susan, who is also a Lion, said that confidence is slowly building since the fiasco three years ago. Bill said that though there are a lot of repeat customers orders coming in, he's also seeing quite a few new ticket buyers which is encouraging.

When asked about bookings for Crab Feed weekend, Tim Chism with the Pine Valley Lodge indicated that both the Lodge and The Main Place Hotel are already fully booked.

Note from Timothy Bishop: Bill said that Timothy was currently at a conference on the west side, but had emailed him information that the "Go West" tour operators trade show was going to be well represented from our area by Cornucopia Lodge and Hells Canyon Adventures. He's working on a volunteer schedule for the Boise Outdoor Expo.

MainStreet Stage Transfer: Lauri indicated to Bill that the Chamber's Idaho Power account for the Stage needed to be transferred to the Arts Council and said that she would take care of that. She also gave Bill a check for approximately \$250 for the Arts Council that was the balance present in the Chamber's MainStreet Stage account.

Next Meeting: Following our March 5th membership work day, our next regular meeting will be on April 2nd, 1:00pm at the Pine Valley Lodge.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Schuhle, Secretary