

Hells Canyon Chamber of Commerce

Minutes for Meeting of August 1, 2017

Held at Quilts Plus • Halfway, Oregon • 1:10-3:20pm

Action items are highlighted in blue, financial commitments in green.

“MSA” indicates “moved, seconded, approved”

Present: Pres. Ron Hunter, Treas. Lauri Bryan, Sec. Bill Schuhle, Roberta Bryan, Shelly Cutler (Baker County Chamber), Timothy Bishop (Base Camp Baker), guest Cindy Thayer.

Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes of our June 6th meeting were distributed and looked over and Lauri offered to speak to some of the items in those minutes. She indicated that we raised \$2,527 toward next year's fireworks at the 4th of July celebration and that we put out about \$1,000 this year between Brady Goss (\$400), launch trailer repair (\$305), help with miscellaneous expenses (\$350), and donation of proceeds from sale of glow-in-the-dark items (\$100). She thought that most of this should probably be a one-time thing and that maybe the Fair Association could, in the future, help with the “Hearts” fundraiser and we could split the proceeds.

Shelly indicated that the Baker Chamber does not provide funding for events in the way we do, but rather sends funds seekers to the Transient Lodging Tax Committee for grants. She noted that we have a lot ‘transient lodgers’ out here in our area.

Lauri said we now have a couple of credit cards with minimal credit limits so that Becky can boost Facebook events, etc. She also got a “Square” card scanner for her smart phone in time for the pie auction so she could accept credit/debit cards as payment.

The June minutes as presented were MSA.

Finance Report

The finance report as passed out and discussed above was accepted as presented.

Old Business

Chamber Cell Phone: The new Snake River PCS cell phone is working well and saving us a bundle over the previous arrangement with Pinetel.

Chamber Web Site: Cindy (who designed and maintains our web site for us) indicated that, in snowmobile season the site has gotten as may as 680 hits in a week with folks checking out snow conditions and that, even outside snowmobile season, the site gets 200-300 hits a week.

MainStreet Stage: Bill commented on the quality of shows that the Arts Council has brought to the Stage this year and Cindy indicated that the most recent show came close to breaking even with all the money donated. That is not a usual occurrence.

Bill said that one of the Stage's monitor speakers which appeared to be defective was sent to a shop in La Grande for testing and found to be OK. **He will look into cable problems as a possible culprit.**

Ron asked about any upcoming open mic night. Bill said he would be talking with Steve about CAC possibly sponsoring one on the Stage.

The next two scheduled performances are Truckstop Honeymoon tonight and The Wasteland Kings the evening before the eclipse.

Ron remarked on the later event start times this year which has reduced the overheating of performers in the late afternoon sun. Increased shade from tree growth has also helped. He also related how every performer has commented on how far away people are sitting and wished he there were way to change that.

Ron also expressed concern about Bill's being the only one ‘holding down the fort’ at the MSS and Bill pointed out that Terry Beyer is apprenticing – quite enthusiastically – on the sound system which met with approval all around (though it was pointed out that possibly an apprentice younger than Bill might be a good idea as well!).

Bill reminded folks of the Stage's web site (www.themainstreetstage.org) and **Cindy said she would make sure that Stage events on the Chamber web site calendar are linked to the MSS site. Bill said he would also place a link back to the Chamber site on the MSS site.**

Events Flyer for Businesses: Bill wondered what might be happening with the events update flyer for businesses that we had discussed in the past. Apparently Becky Kaaen was going to work on that and Ron said we need to get in touch with her to see what is happening.

Hells Canyon Info Wayside Display: Ron wondered about the display at the wayside out by the wigwam burner, asking about updating the business info as we have discussed in the past. Lauri said Kathryn Moore had taken that on, but didn't know of any progress on the project. Ron suggested making a poster sized copy of the recently completed brochure to place in the space so that current information would be available to visitors coming for the eclipse. This met with all-around enthusiastic approval and **Bill instructed himself to make such blowups.**

Live Brochure Links Online: Ron mentioned how helpful it would be **if the web site addresses listed in the new Chamber brochure could be live in the online edition. Bill said he could do that,** but that he's like to be paid for the work which might take up to three hours at \$20/hr. He asked for a vote on that, but it appeared there wasn't a quorum present, so he said he'd proceed anyway, anticipating that remuneration would be O.K.'d in the future.

Heritage Square Maintenance: Bill wondered if the Chamber should contribute to the City to help with bathroom supplies for the upcoming eclipse crowds. Lauri said that Old Pine Market buys those for the City, so no need.

Eclipse Update from Tim Bishop: The Brownlee Pan Fishing Tournament, already postponed from earlier in the year, has been canceled due to low water levels. Tim ran down the numerous musical events scheduled for eclipse time in Baker, Sumpter, Huntington, Halfway, and Weiser. Basecamp Baker has purchased thousands of eclipse glasses and will be distributing them around the entire area. Baker County is still expecting about 50,000 eclipse visitors. (Ron said Eagle Valley EMTs have put together individual "go kits" so each person can respond to disparate emergencies.) (Cindy told of plans for a two-day pop-up restaurant in the Three Color Building as a fundraiser for the Clear Creek Music Festival.) Tim told of folks planning to stay in Wallowa County then come over 39 Road Monday morning for the eclipse. He has spent a lot of time discouraging folks from driving unfamiliar vehicles over unknown roads, some of which are gravel and quite winding. He's also discouraging use of Google Maps in favor of printed maps which he is distributing.

Shelly indicated that, when the governor opened up the use of National Guard personnel for eclipse-related duty, Baker County lobbied persistently and as a result will have some Guardsmen in our area should they be needed.

Tim said that Baker County Tourism's main thrust at this point is not getting more people here, but pushing the available activities and events to those who are already coming so they'll have things to do over the weekend in anticipation of the eclipse on Monday.

Ron suggested a possible information booth in the triangle coming into Richland from the west. He also emphasized the importance of all of us being good hosts, even in the face of being inconvenienced by an unusual set of circumstances.

Marketing Discussion: Shelly said that our new brochure is being very well received and they are sending it out to all persons interested in the area. Tim said there will be a full page ad in the Sept./Oct. issue of "1859" – the glossy, subscription Oregon travel magazine – plugging upcoming area events including the Panhandle Fair & Rodeo and Pine Fest. Also, the Northeast Oregon Arts Trail Map, that was published earlier in the summer, includes information on relevant area attractions. Cindy asked about possibly plugging Quilts Plus's being featured in the September issue of Quilt Sampler magazine. Tim said that could certainly be done on social media.

Tim related an incident around the 4th of July which indicated that the Fair Board and the Chamber might need to work a little more closely together as there was conflicting information being given out regarding just what was happening on the 4th. It appears that a liaison between the Chamber and the Fair Board would be a good idea, possibly a Chamber member who could attend Fair Board meetings on a regular basis.

Richland Parks: Ron indicated that Hewett and Holcomb parks were only funded through yesterday and their future availability is iffy at this point.

Community Information Channels: There was discussion of the best way to get the word out about goings-on in our communities. Some folks pride themselves in never having touched email, Facebook, etc. For others, the old standby

of the newspaper has fallen by the wayside. Halfway's chalkboard seems to be a good information venue and Lauri suggested that when no event is listed there, we could advertise the Chamber web site for up-to-date information. Shelly suggested applying for Transient Lodging Tax funds for signage on approaches to town that could advertise the Chamber web site. Timothy said the TLT Committee will soon be addressing long-range strategic planning and issues such as wayfinding signage in the county and will be meeting with community representatives in Halfway and elsewhere regarding specific local needs. He has for years been pushing Travel Oregon regarding more investment in Eastern Oregon tourism and TLT's strategic planning should help pinpoint how that investment might best be made. He also mentioned that many rural homes being purchased in Baker County are not being bought to live in, but rather to rent out to tourists!

Ron asked about a possible community meeting of representatives of all our various organizations to facilitate communication and awareness of, e.g., the Chamber web site, challenges of Air B'n'B, etc. Lauri suggested the Chamber host such a get-together. Shelly described a 'community night out' event that happens in Baker where organizations set up booths that folks can visit and meet the people involved and learn more about what's going on in the community. It could take place at the school and involve school clubs and display of kids' art and activities for children to stimulate involvement of parents and grandparents. She said that the Baker County Chamber would be happy to help promote such an event in Halfway. Ron urged action toward such an event prior to our next meeting. He also urged us to promote the idea that the Chamber 'belongs' to everyone.

Our next meeting will be on October 3rd, 1:00pm at Quilts Plus.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Schuhle, Secretary