

Hells Canyon Chamber of Commerce

Minutes for Meeting of April 3, 2018

Held at Quilts Plus • Halfway, Oregon • 1:10-2:10pm

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

Present: Treas. Lauri Bryan, Sec. Bill Schuhle, Whitey Bloom, Timothy Bishop, Shelly Cutler, Lisa Steele. Lauri Bryan presided.

Minutes of Last Meeting

Bill had emailed out copies of the February minutes. They were accepted as emailed.

Action Items Report

Bill suggested a moment of silence in honor and remembrance of Richland Mayor Dick Pederson who passed away recently. Shelly commented, "He was a good man."

Lauri was to take care of paying for the MainStreet Stage's domain name and web hosting for the year and that was done.

Bill fulfilled his promise to email info to Chamber members about the Boise outdoor expo and seeking volunteers to man our area's booth. That was done and, according to Timothy, good coverage was provided and with much interest in the area expressed and lots of materials handed out including about 300 of the Chamber's visitor's guide. He also mentioned that the bulk of booth visitors were families looking for weekend getaways vs. the traditional hunters and fishermen.

Becky was to put the Hells Canyon Relay folks in touch with Timothy regarding marketing. She was not present to report, but Timothy said he had not yet heard from the group.

Finance Report

We cleared over \$2,000 on the Valentine Hearts project this year, half of which would normally go the fireworks fund. Since there is currently some question about whether fireworks will be happening this year, we need to look into that. The finance report was approved as presented.

Old Business

Baker County Marketing Strategic Plan: Timothy reported on the upcoming strategic planning process, looking at tourism overall as its own industry for the first time and including branding, infrastructure needs, and collateral (brochures, etc.). Getting a better picture of the expanding non-traditional lodging market – including Air B'n'B, guest houses, and VRBOs (vacation rental by owner) – is an important part of the process and has already begun. Community meetings will be held around the county in early May to gather information and input with Halfway's meeting being on May 8, 10am at City Hall and Richland's at 1pm the same day at the Richland Community Center. Timothy urged us to make sure that all relevant organizations are personally invited to attend these meetings and offer their input and perspective. The results of these meetings and others will be compiled and will shape the direction of the marketing of Baker County beginning in the near future. Some items already coming to the fore as important are bicycle tourism, ag tourism, and the arts along with way-finding signage and collateral such as ATV and bicycle trail maps. A new emphasis as well will be on marketing of the sub-regions of the county, each of which have their own distinct personality, scenery, and activities.

New Business

Hank Kramer Concert Series: In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the filming of "Paint Your Wagon", the Baker County Chamber is planning a series of concerts by Hank Kramer featuring music from the film with plans for performances in Halfway, Cornucopia, Baker City, and Anthony Lakes.

Hells Canyon Junior Rodeo: Timothy is looking to push this event which should be a great addition to the Fourth of July weekend as being planned by the all-new Junior Rodeo board.

Tourism Advertising: The new Eastern Oregon Visitor's Guide out of Pendleton has been published and Baker County has the back page on that as well as on the Southwest Idaho Visitor's Guide out of Boise, both ads being rodeo-oriented and promoting the contests in Baker County.

Halfway Lions Crab Feed: There was a bit of discussion about this year's Crab Feed which saw ticket sales of about 750 vs. 900 last year and 1,200 the year before. Timothy related that he started hearing rumors that tickets were sold out in mid-February. Whitey had, too. Bill had not heard this and asked what could be done about *that?* The answer was "online ticket sales." Bill said the Lions were discussing that and had members who could implement it. Whitey suggested also making reserved seating times available to help reduce standing-in-line time.

Wi-Fi Hotspot: Becky had asked that we discuss the possibility of the Chamber paying for a "sure connection" hotspot so that visitors would not be subjected to spotty or non-existent service. Lisa Steele, who worked at Pinetel for many years, said they provide two hotspots in town, one near Claudia's salon and one near Tami's funeral home. These provide 15 minutes of free service to non-Pinetel customers after which they are required to pay. **Lauri will look into what service might be offered free to the public and at what cost to us.**

AirB'n'Bs: Becky was also curious about how many AirB'n'Bs we have in the area. Timothy said there are approximately 70 in Baker County at present, about a third of which are out in this end of the county. Numbers are not firm, but once a recent state law goes into effect, requiring AirB'n'B and VRBO sites to report and remit Transient Lodging Tax, the numbers will be firmer.

Welcome Sign Re-painting: Wix Covey has agreed to do the re-painting on the sign (paid or volunteer to be determined) and Whitey has agreed to take it down, transport it to Wix's studio, and then re-install it when completed. Bill talked about what to have up in its place while it is gone, suggesting a banner or smaller signs that he could make and laminate. Lisa suggested VistaPrint as an inexpensive source for a banner. Timothy pointed out that the "directional" sign in the Info Wayside, which he said is an iconic picture-taking opportunity for many visitors, is in dire need of re-painting as well.

Camo Netting for Fairground Shade: Whitey said his brother, who is with the National Guard Armory in Baker City, said it shouldn't be any problem to get use of some of their netting for events at the Fairgrounds. Lauri indicated the dates we could use it would be the 4th of July, Junior Rodeo, Fair weekend, and Pine Fest. Since the first two are contiguous and the last two are only a week apart, it might involve only two installations if the netting can be left in place for the necessary lengths of time.

Baker Help for Local Events: Shelly offered, on behalf of the Baker County Chamber, to provide helping hands if needed for events out here in the Panhandle. They would also be happy to put up flyers in Baker and give out information at the Visitors Center. She also said that there were classes and organizations in Baker looking to raise money who would come out to Halfway to help with Cycle Oregon should our local groups come up short-handed.

Effective Meetings Training: United Community Partners (UCP) is proposing to host an effective meetings training sometime in August and would like to know who might be interested in attending. Contact Steve White for more information. (His new phone number should be available via the Hells Canyon Journal.)

Joint Membership Option: Shelly suggested we consider offering a joint membership with the County Chamber for the convenience of those who would like to support/participate in both.

Race Through Hells Canyon: This will be taking place on May 19th with registration at 2:00pm Pacific, marathon at 3:00, 10K at 3:30, and the 5K at 4:00.

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be on June 5th, 1:00pm at Quilts Plus.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:10pm and was followed by a brief work session to prepare the annual membership renewal mailing.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Schuhle, Secretary