

I-1
Printed for file

Damico, Tracy

From: Kayak Trinidad <reservations@kayaktrinidad.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2023 9:25 AM
To: COB
Cc: Julie Benbow
Subject: Public Comment for Agenda Item I

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Dec. 18, 2023
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
Agenda Item I. Funding Review for HCVB

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing to you today to show my support for Humboldt County Visitors Bureau. As a local small business owner with a strong dependency on tourism, HCVB has been instrumental in our development over the last decade into a sustainable business that employs a dozen local folks. HCVB has connected us with social media marketing opportunities to help promote our Kayak whale watching tours to an audience outside of Humboldt County, attracting not only tourist dollars to my business, but others as well. They understand how to market our area's unique treasures and do it well. When I learned of their meager budget allotment from the millions available from the transient lodging tax, I found it ridiculously inadequate. Knowing our County's budgeting challenges and lack of foresight for the potential for tourism here, I expected it to be maybe a million dollars. I was shocked to learn how small HCVB's budget is in comparison to other areas with similar assets. Considering the woefully inadequate budget they are working with, it's a miracle they've been able to accomplish what they have. Humboldt County has priceless, unique attractions that make it a draw for people from all over the world. Our marketing needs a budget to match. If properly funded, HCVB could accomplish so much more, and Humboldt could enjoy the increase of money injected into our local communities and businesses as a result. We strongly advocate for an increase in HCVB's funding to match the world class draw that Humboldt is.

Sincerely yours,

Jason Self Owner/Operator, Kayak Trinidad

Public Comment
F-1

Damico, Tracy

From: Ara Pachmayer <arapachmayer@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2023 12:25 PM
To: COB
Subject: Concerning Travel, Tourism and Marketing Services Provided to the County by the Humboldt County Visitors Bureau

Caution: This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

December 19, 2023

Board of Supervisors
Humboldt County
825 5th St, Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Concerning Travel, Tourism and Marketing Services Provided to the County by the Humboldt County Visitors Bureau

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I write to share my support for Humboldt County Visitors Bureau's (HCVB). I am a professor of tourism management and a tourism researcher at Cal Poly Humboldt as well as a member of the HCVB board of directors since January 2021.

Tourism is big business and there is a lot of money to be made in the tourism industry. But not only is tourism a means for economic development, it should contribute to improving the quality of life of residents and to building better communities. The Bureau has worked towards not only making sure Humboldt gets a bigger piece of the tourism pie but also in helping to build a better place for the people that live here. By aligning tourism in the county with economic and community development, the Bureau ensures it tells an authentic, inclusive and respectful story about Humboldt County and our communities that resonates with visitors and ultimately results in positive visitor sentiment about Humboldt County. Creating a marketing fund overseen by an ad-hoc committee as referenced in Option B of the Staff Report seems to neglect the important power of tourism to improve quality of life and the places we love in Humboldt.

Everyone seems to understand that we must work together for the tourism industry to continue to succeed in Humboldt County. The HCVB is doing that now! Tourism in the county and the HCVB has performed tremendously under the direction of Julie Benbow on a shoestring budget and staff, under extraordinary circumstances and in the face of the changing landscape of the tourism industry in general and in Humboldt. Defunding the Bureau would set back the progress the Bureau has made in both reviving tourism and uniting the county under a common umbrella that each gateway can use to their best advantage.

Sincerely,

Ara Pachmayer, PhD

Associate Professor
School of Applied Health

By way of introduction I am Carlton Nielsen, a 28 year resident of the City of Eureka, Past Board Chair of the Eureka Chamber of Commerce, and most pertinent to this discussion the General Manager, and now Operator, of 101 Things to Do publications for Humboldt, Mendocino and Del Norte Counties, as well as Southern Oregon. I have worked in these capacities since 2012. All told between our customers, advertisers, and distribution points we see over 1500 visitor facing businesses every single year. There are very few who can say that they have interacted directly every year with more people who operate the businesses that service our tourists than we have.

Governments are good at many things. Groups of concerned citizens devoting their volunteer time to a common cause that benefits all concerned is one of the advantages that our system of governance holds dear. While government is good at the execution functions of its mandate it often falls short when charged with being creative and timely. That is where the proposal before you to reduce/eliminate the Humboldt Visitors Bureau completely misses the mark of how this organization functions, and it is actually one of the most efficient methods of attracting visitors to our area per tax dollar spent.

The HCVB board, because it is comprised of people close to and concerned about our visitor industry, it functions as one of the most plugged in groups of people to how our visitors are utilizing our tourist facing amenities you will find County-wide. There is no way for County Government to re-create the effectiveness of this group and run it through such a small budget with one ED and one office staff person. By moving the goals the HCVB is tasked with into a larger County department, and replacing the current decision allocation process with a committee of appointees, you will lose the speed at which we can seize on promotion opportunities on short notice, lose the carefully curated participating levels of expertise available, and most certainly lose the ownership that this organization exhibits in telling the story of our beautiful corner of the world.

Governments are good at many things, but not what the HCVB does on the \$ it is currently allocated.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to our County,

Carlton Nielsen

I-1

Letter of Support

Brian Applegarth
Applegarth Consultative Services
ba@brianapplegarth.com
615-788-3142

To Whom It May Concern,

Please consider this a Letter of Support regarding the continued funding of the Humboldt County Visitors Bureau.

Humboldt is an iconic global destination for premium craft cannabis and world class nature experiences. Humboldt County is an established cannabis 'place of source' destination (like Napa to wine) and a cultural capital with a compelling back-to-the-land ethos that is inclusive of cannabis cultural heritage and craft. Cannabis permeates throughout the communities and is embedded in the culture and story of Humboldt County.

As of July 2023 the cannabis-motivated travel audience now accounts for approximately 72 million Americans, 37% of the Active Leisure Travel audience in the United States. (MMGY Travel Intelligence)

As the global cannabis industry continues to expand and welcome new consumers, Humboldt is at an inflection point regarding travel strategy, the visitor economy, and the role cannabis plays in the Humboldt County destination experience story.

HCVB serves as a brand steward, destination steward, and marketing engine for Humboldt County, and continuing to invest in the HCVB efforts is not only worthwhile, it is imperative at this juncture. Managing the county-wide Humboldt County destination experience brand, and guiding how cannabis evolves and integrates in a sustainable and community aligned way, is an important strategy to dedicate effort and resources to.

This next era of cannabis legalization and normalization offers extraordinary opportunities for growth and economic impact via cannabis travel and tourism, including heads in hotel beds during shoulder seasons and increased visitation volume, as desired.

I urge the HLA to continue investing in visitor economy strategies county-wide, by providing ongoing funding to the HCVB.

Regards,

Brian Applegarth

