



# CALIFORNIA'S EASTERN SIERRA

MONO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM & FILM COMMISSION

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## MINUTES

### Economic Development, Tourism & Film Commission (EDTFC)

#### Regular Meeting via Teleconference\*

Tuesday, October 26, 2021 – 10:00 A.M.

\*As authorized by Governor Newsome's Executive Order N-25-20, dated March 17, 2020, this meeting will be held via teleconferencing with members of the Commission attending from separate locations. There will not be a physical location of the meeting open to the public. This altered format is in observance of recent recommendations by local officials that certain precautions be taken, including social distancing, to address the threat of COVID-19.

**Commissioners present:** Steve Morrison, Sarah Walsh, Scott Burkard, Erin Wells

**Commissioners absent:** Geoff McQuilkin, Michael Vanderhurst, Wendy Schneider

**Staff:** Alicia Vennos, Jeff Simpson, Liz Grans, Morgan Terrell

**Guests:** Rhonda Duggan

1. Call to order.

Standing in for Chair McQuilkin, Commissioner Morrison called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

2. Introductions and announcements.

No Introductions were made. Ms. Vennos mentioned that she and staff were assisting the CAO office with the community Strategic Planning Presentation, scheduled for November 15, 2021, via Zoom. She developed and coordinated the postcard invitation to be put into every Mono County resident post office box/mailbox. The presentation is to inform the public about the County's strategic planning process. There is also an online survey so that the public may share opinions and input on future county direction.

3. Opportunity for the Public to address the Commission.

No public comment.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the September 28, 2021, meeting.

Sarah Walsh moved to approve September 28, 2021, meeting minutes. Scott Burkard seconded the motion.

Verbal Roll Call: Commissioner Morrison – yay; Commissioner Wells – yay; Commissioner Burkard – yay; Commissioner Walsh – yay. All in favor, no abstentions; minutes approved 4-0.

5. Continuation of remote teleconferencing meetings for the Economic Development, Tourism & Film Commission, per AB 361:

ACTION: Review and approve Resolution of the Mono County Economic Development, Tourism & Film Commission authorizing remote teleconferencing meetings for the period of October 26, 2021, through November 23, 2021, pursuant to AB 361.

Erin Wells moved to approve continuation of remote teleconferencing meetings. Steve Morrison seconds.

Verbal Roll Call: Commissioner Morrison – yay; Commissioner Wells – yay; Commissioner Burkard – yay; Commissioner Walsh – yay All in favor, no abstentions; action approved 4-0.

6. Monthly Financial/Budget report.

- a. FY 21-22 Budget. Ms. Vennos stated she will give a full quarterly report at the November meeting.

- b. Transient Occupancy Tax reports, and other fiscal metric, as available. Ms. Vennos reported the TOT numbers are not ready yet due to finance waiting on two properties to submit from last quarter.
7. Economic Development and Tourism report – information on current or emerging issues, including but not limited to:
  - a. Report on the American Rescue Plan Act 2021 / EDA grant funds – Economic Development District / Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Ms. Vennos provided an overview on the \$3 billion dollar grant program through the President’s American Rescue Plan Act which is circulating very broadly throughout the country. The funding has 6 notices of funding opportunity, so a lot of people are excited it. The different categories are Build Back Better Regional Challenge with \$1 billion allocated, Good Jobs Challenge with \$500 million, Economic Adjustment Assistance Challenge \$500 million, Indigenous Communities Challenge \$100 million, Travel Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Grants \$750 million, and Statewide Planning, Research and Network Grants opportunities. All of this is funded through the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Ms. Vennos added she and Mr. Simpson met with their EDA representative, Will Marshall, to find out about the grant parameters regarding the Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation funds. A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) adopted by the Board of Supervisors and approved by the EDA is required to apply for the funding. The key is that there needs to be a project on a County owned property to apply. Local nonprofits can also apply for this funding on their own. Mr. Simpson stated he has never seen a more well marketed program than this one.
  - b. Update regarding Local, State, Federal business assistance programs. Mr. Simpson reported there are no new programs out at the Federal level. The CA Rebuild funds and SBA disaster loans are still available, as well as the Employee Retention tax credit in which up to 80% of your employee taxes are reimbursable.
  - c. Update regarding application for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) CARES Act – CV1, 2, 3 for Microenterprise Financial Assistance Program for small businesses. Mr. Simpson reported CV1, CV2 & CV3 have all been approved, and they are currently working with their consultant to get the applications finalized. It’s been over a year and a half since they applied for these funds, with numerous issues. The consultant recommends that a handful of businesses work with the consultant to work through the application process to determine what the hiccups might be to finetune the application before it is circulated widely.
  - d. Collateral Update: 2022 Visitor Guide; Backroads Guide; Fall Color Guide; Fishing Map; Community Maps. Ms. Vennos reported that design of the 2022 Visitor Guide starts this week. Without advertising this year, the Guide should be more compact and less expensive to mail. Paper costs are 30% higher. Fall Color Guide will be on press within two weeks. Mr. Simpson reported he will have the draft South County Map within the week for review. Ms. Vennos added she still needs to reach BLM to go over changes of the Backroads Guide for the reprint.
  - e. Update on Community Support grants; application deadline is November 8, 2021. Ms. Grans stated she is sending out another reminder email to get applications in before the deadline. There are five submissions so far. She reminded Commissioners that the grant applications will be reviewed at the November EDTFC meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup>.
8. Film Commission update. Ms. Vennos reported that she received an email that the Inyo National Forest plans to increase its film application time frame for review and authorization of completed film permits from the current 15 business days to 30 calendar days prior to filming and 45 days for more complex proposals. Ms. Vennos stated this would effectively eliminate filming on the Inyo National Forest for them as the bulk of film productions are commercials that do not have the luxury of 30 to 45 days. She added she has a meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup> with the Forest Service to discuss the issues and offer potential solutions. Mr. Morrison added the film industry in Mono County is about a \$1.5 to \$2 million annually in direct local spend (lodging, food & beverage, location fees, etc.). It is important for the local economy to facilitating filming opportunities. Mr. Morrison reported that MMSA has three shoots coming up in the first couple weeks of November: a fashion shoot, some Christmas movie scenes, and a Nissan commercial. Ms. Vennos reported she has had very few inquiries in the past few weeks but anticipates more interest with snow.

9. Project Status Update, including public relations, advertising/social media, websites, and tradeshow/conferences. Mr. Simpson reported that he and Ms. Terrell represented Mono County Tourism at the first in-person consumer travel show held in Santa Clara in mid-October. There was vaccination screening for attendees and exhibitors; the attendance was light. This was a make-up show from the 2020 cancelation, so paying for it did not come out of this year's budget. Mr. Simpson also said that the fall color campaign is wrapping up. He has been posting fall color pictures and updates every day on social media. With respect to Media and Public Relations, Ms. Grans said she is working on an editorial calendar for winter messaging and releases. For website redesign projects, Ms. Grans added that Book Direct platform and the final configurations of the brand refresh are getting close to complete. Ms. Vennos reported the Film Commission is once again co-sponsoring the California On Location Awards, scheduled virtually on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

10. Commissioner Reports.

- Ms. Wells reported that August was the worst month for business levels in Bridgeport ever. September was not strong either; however, bookings are looking good for next year with a lot of advanced reservations from Europe, and numerous weddings. The Bodie Hotel and Rhinos are in escrow. Sportsmen's Bar & Grill has a potential buyer and the business community and local Bridgeport residents are hoping for these restaurants to reopen.
- Mr. Burkard reported that the Northern Mono Chamber is working on plans for the ATV/UTV Jamboree for next year. August and September were lighter than normal. Everything is getting ready to close for winter. Coachwhip Café is planning to try and stay open year-round.
- Mr. Morrison reported that Mammoth Mountain opens this Friday, the first October opening in a decade. They will have the ribbon breaking on Chair 1 at 8:30am. They are currently figuring out what terrain will be available to guests, but conditions are looking very promising for such an early opening.
- Ms. Walsh reported October was good for June Lake due to the great fall colors and the Mono County Fall Color Report. The Chamber put on the Leaves in the Loop in a modified away with less visitors than typical but still a great event. The June Lake Autumn Beer Fest sold out and was extremely successful. Now business levels are slowing down with a lot of businesses closing or modifying hours for winter. Balanced Rock Cantina opened, and the food is quite delicious.

11. Call for agenda items for next regular meeting. Quarterly budget update for next meeting and update for filming.

12. Adjourn the meeting and reconvene in regular session at 10:00 a.m. on November 17, 2021, via teleconference. Mr. Morrison adjourned the meeting at 10:48 am.