

DEPARTMENT: Administration BY: Greg Iturria

PHONE: 966-3222

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION: (Policy Item: Yes ___ No X)

Provide direction to staff regarding the immediate and long-term future of the Visitors' Bureau and its mission.

See the attached staff report.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

The Visitors' Bureau Director has submitted his resignation effective July 31, 2001.

LIST ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

- 1) Approve
- 2) Provide alternative direction

COSTS: (X) Not Applicable

A. Budgeted current FY \$ _____

B. Total anticipated costs \$ _____

C. Required additional funding \$ _____

D. Internal transfers \$ _____

SOURCE: () 4/5ths Vote Required

A. Unanticipated revenues \$ _____

B. Reserve for contingencies \$ _____

C. Source description: _____

Balance in Reserve for Contingencies, if approved: \$ _____

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
List the attachments and number the pages consecutively:

CLERK'S USE ONLY:

Res. No.: 01-223 Ord. No. _____

Vote - Ayes: _____ Noes: _____

Absent: _____ Abstained: _____

() Approved () Denied

Minute Order Attached () No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date: _____

ATTEST: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
County of Mariposa, State of California

By: _____
Deputy

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:
This item on agenda as:

Recommended

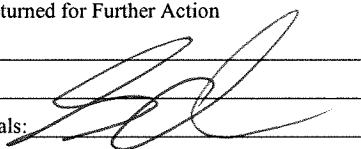
Not Recommended

For Policy Determination

Submitted with Comment

Returned for Further Action

Comment: _____

C.A.O. Initials: 



COUNTY of MARIPOSA

P.O. Box 784, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 966-3222

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MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: GREG ITURRIA, County Administrative Officer

FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board *MW*

SUBJECT: Direction to Staff Regarding the Immediate and Long Term Future of the Visitors' Bureau
Res. No. 01-223

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,

ADOPTED THIS Order on July 24, 2001

ACTION AND VOTE:

11:30 a.m. Greg Iturria, County Administrative Officer

Provide Direction to Staff Regarding the Immediate and Long Term Future of the Visitors' Bureau and its Mission

BOARD ACTION: Greg Iturria presented his staff report and recommendation.

Input from the public was provided by the following:

Candy O'Donel-Browne, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, read her statement relative to tourism and marketing, requesting that the current Visitors' Bureau marketing program be continued for the next full year and that there be an increase in community collaboration in terms of our approach to the community and its economy. She requested time to work with the Board and suggested a series of workshops involving the Board and the business community to consider changes in the structure of the Visitors' Bureau.

Susan Crain stated she supports Candy's statements, and she feels the Visitors' Bureau should be kept as its own entity and should not be included with Administration. She feels this is a separate area of expertise. She agrees with forming a non-profit organization. During the General Plan Update process, she feels there will be a lot of issues addressing this function. She further stated she agrees with having more time to study the matter and obtain input.

Kevin Kelly, Yosemite Concession Services, stated he supports Candy's comments. He stated he feels the Visitors' Bureau is a "brand" for the County and we should retain it. He feels we are a geographical challenged County and businesses are spread out and communication is important. He stated he feels we need to spend some time on this decision.

Kim Van Meter, Film Commissioner, stated she does not agree with the County Administrative Officer's vision. She presented statistical information on activities of her function and the revenue brought to the County. She stated she feels this function is helping the community and many contacts have been

made. She advised that she is on the California on Location Awards Committee and is on the subcommittee for commercials. She stated she feels she has worked hard and come too far to not have the function continue.

Don Weston, representing the History Center, stated he agrees with Candy in a lot of her statements. He noted the History Center depends on tourism, and he feels we need the advertising. He commented on the consistent tourism attractions that are offered such as the Museum and History Center, the Mining and Mineral Exhibit, Music on the Green; and he stated he feels there is a lot of other potential. He stated he strongly supports the amphitheater and commends the Rotary for their efforts with this project. He stated he feels one can help another. He commented on the number of fundraising events and the need for better communication in coordinating the timing of the events. He also noted that he feels the business community is hurting right now.

Kay Mickel stated she used to work in the travel industry and is a businessperson in the community, and she understands and believes that her business in real estate is impacted by tourism. She stated she also supports the amphitheater project. She agrees that we should keep the "brand" for the County. She noted that people from Japan and other foreign countries were visiting this weekend and they were hoping someone would be able to show them the County – no one was available at the Visitors' Bureau. She noted that if we were a larger area, there would be a large staff to take care of these things. If we were smaller, it would be handled informally – but we are in between. She urged the Board to not disband the Visitors' Bureau, and to give more time for input to make some new and better decisions; and that the contracts be continued.

Jan Mennig, retiring Chamber of Commerce Executive Director and Chairman of the Tourism Advisory Council, suggested that more time be given. He stated he feels we are on a threshold of great opportunities versus disaster. He stated he feels that Candy could assist with the Visitors' Bureau duties through the transition. He referred to reports that have been presented to the Board through the Visitors Bureau, and he recommended that a Board member be a part of the Tourism Advisory Council.

Nancy Radanovich, owner of the Vault, recommended that more time be given to consider the changes that are being proposed. She noted the businesses have not recovered from the flood, and this year does not look as good as they were hoping for. She noted that eighty-percent of the County's payroll is dependent on tourism revenue and she does not feel that is healthy. She feels we are using a small pie and trying to do too much with it. She commented that in smaller towns in the mid-west, recreational activities are available and the private sector helps support those activities and facilities. She stated she feels we need to make it easier for people to do business here. She also stated she feels we have changed back and forth too much on where the funding goes.

Elaine Seymour, Chocolate Soup, stated she agrees with Nancy. She stated she has worked hard with her business and supports retaining the Visitors' Bureau. She feels we need something that is stable and that businesses can depend on.

Jerry Fischer, Yosemite Motels, stated he feels that most of the people are here today in response to the first draft staff report. He stated he feels we need time for the business community to come back to the Board with suggestions for moving forward. He commented on the room vacancy rate this year, noting it is higher than in 1996, and its affect on the rest of the business community. He stated the visitation to Yosemite is dwindling, and there is a lot of competition for using "gateway to Yosemite" advertising. He stated he supports Candy's proposal. Supervisor Parker asked about the declining room occupancy, which has occurred during the time the County has had a Visitors' Bureau. Jerry stated he feels three things have impacted this year's visitation: 1) the international market is down; 2) the energy crisis in California; and 3) a turndown in the economy.

Discussion was held. Supervisor Pickard stated he feels the budget should remain status quo. Supervisor Balmain stated he feels the County should continue with the contracts and he agrees with the request to hold a workshop.

Barry Brouillette stated he feels the industry has been remiss in having the Visitors' Bureau Director carry everything to the Board, they should have had a more intimate contact with the Board. He stated he would like to see the staff person in the Visitors' Bureau continue, and he agrees with the budget going through Administration. He encouraged the Board to create a format and agenda of points to consider and an ad hoc committee to make recommendations to the Board, with the committee having Board member representation.

Susan Crain suggested the Chamber of Commerce execute the day-to-day business and oversee the Visitors' Bureau services during the interim time.

Tony Radanovich stated he feels the complex issue of capital investment and marketing the County is a tough one. He stated he feels there is a blind spot on the part of the community as to what the Board goes through and its day-to-day activities; and he feels there is a blind spot on the part of the Board in regard to the perception of people in the community that want to do things. He stated it would be nice to have more pro-activity. He urged better communication and stated he feels we should have both capital improvements and Visitors' Bureau.

Discussion was held relative to the input received. Supervisor Reilly commented on setting priorities for where the funding goes and the need for better coordination; and she stated she would like to see an expanded role of what presently exists. Supervisor Stewart commented on the County's relationship with Yosemite National Park and YARTS and the pressure the Board receives and how difficult some of these issues are. Supervisor Parker stated he supports the recommendation of the County Administrative Officer, with continuing discussion on the overall and long-range of this function; and he stated the list of things in Candy's statement that were not funded did not come to the Board for direction – it was a decision made by the Visitors' Bureau Director. He stated he supports retaining the Visitors' Bureau in some form, and with continuing with the current contracts. He also commented on the need to finish projects such as the vault at the History Center and the amphitheater, and to have youth facilities. He stated he would like to have the visitor support services spelled out and whatever is decided will occur after more public input; and he is interested in seeing the alternatives for furthering/improving the communication between the County and the lodging industry.

Further discussion was continued for action to be taken on the following items.

(M)Parker, (S)Pickard, Res. 01-220 adopted authorizing Chairman to sign Lease Agreement for the Mining and Mineral Museum with the 35-A District Agricultural Association/Ayes: Unanimous.

Consent Agenda items 1 and 2: (M)Parker, (S)Pickard, items 1 and 2 were approved, with the wording change in the California State Fair Exhibit Statement of Purpose/Ayes: Unanimous.

(M)Parker, (S)Stewart, Res. 01-223 adopted approving County Administrative Officer's recommendation as presented relative to the Visitors' Bureau:

1) direct and authorize the County Administrative Officer to oversee any transition activities for the Visitors' Bureau, as recommended;

2) direct the County Administrative Officer to prepare a recommended budget for a community/economic development budget unit that includes proposed appropriations for many of the expenses traditionally charged to the Visitors' Bureau;

3) direct the intention to allocate a "community development/economic support coordinator" position to be hired by and reporting to the County Administrative Officer, and begin to phase out the Visitors' Bureau as a separate County department, with direction to staff to provide a detailed recommendation to the Board prior to Final Budget hearings;

4) direct the intention to transfer the remaining Visitors' Bureau staff to a County department to be determined at a later date; and

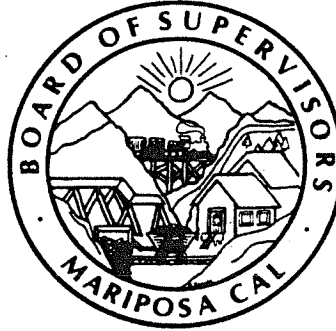
5) direct the County Administrative Officer to explore alternatives for furthering/improving the communication between the County and the lodging industry, and direct staff consideration of changing the Tourism Advisory Council or dismissing it for some other forum for communication; and

with those suggestions that Supervisor Parker made during the Board's discussion relative to continuing discussion on the overall and long-range of this function; with the need to finish projects such as the vault at the History Center and the amphitheater, and to have youth facilities; and with having the visitor support services spelled out and whatever is decided will occur after more public input/Ayes: Unanimous.

cc: Jeff Green, County Counsel
Sandra Laird, Personnel
Ken Hawkins, Auditor
File

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

District 1.....PATTI A. REILLY
District 2.....DOUG BALMAIN
District 3.....ROBERT C. STEWART
District 4.....GARRY R. PARKER
District 5.....BOB PICKARD



GREGORY G. ITURRIA
County Administrative Officer

MARGIE WILLIAMS
Clerk of the Board

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Date: July 24, 2001

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Greg Iturria, County Administrative Officer

Re: Recommended Action on Today's Board Agenda Item Regarding the
Visitors' Bureau

Many individuals, including Board Members, have asked what I recommend for action by the Board regarding today's Agenda Item on the Visitors' Bureau. Please find below a specific staff recommendation covering the minimum direction needed by staff to proceed during the vacancy and for the development of the recommended budget. It is followed by a specific staff recommendation to proceed with creating a community and economic development unit within County Administration.

Minimum Recommended Action

- 1) Direct and authorize the County Administrative Officer to oversee any transition activities for the Visitors' Bureau, including making operating decisions for services traditionally performed by the Visitors' Bureau, so long as financial commitments do not exceed last year's budgeted amounts. This also includes authorizing County sponsorships at the Rural CalTIA Conference hosted by Mariposa County this October and participation in traditional marketing projects.
- 2) Direct the County Administrative Officer to prepare a recommended budget for a community/economic development budget unit that includes proposed appropriations for many of the expenses traditionally charged to the Visitors' Bureau. This includes appropriations for marketing expenses and contributions to non-profit organizations.

Additional Recommended Action

- 3) Direct the intention to allocate a "community development / economic support coordinator" position to be hired by and reporting to the County Administrative Officer, and begin to phase out the Visitors' Bureau as a

separate County department. Direct staff to provide a detailed recommendation to the Board prior to Final Budget Hearings.

- 4) Direct the intention to transfer the remaining Visitors' Bureau staff to a County department to be determined at a later date.
- 5) Direct the County Administrative Officer to explore alternatives for furthering/improving the communication between the County and the lodging industry. Direct staff consideration of changing the Tourism Advisory Council or dismissing it for some other forum for communication.

Rationale for Staff Recommendation

The first two recommended actions are largely housekeeping in nature to provide for continued tourism support operations and budgeting for tourism related expenses. A new budget unit is recommended to account for all tourism and community support related expenses that County Administration will be at least temporarily responsible for administering.

The proposed community development / economic support coordinator position (specific title and duties not yet specified) would have a much broader role than that of the Visitors' Bureau Director position. In addition to coordinating marketing efforts, the position would also assist in the identification and coordination of community services and projects that benefit visitors, residents and our economy. The position could eventually assist in accessing Economic Development Block Grants and other project specific funding for infrastructure. The position would also be able to assist in the coordination of County services related to community and economic development.

The proposal for intent to transfer the Senior Office Assistant currently allocated to the Visitors' Bureau to another County department is to assure the incumbent that her job won't be eliminated even if the functions of her department are transferred elsewhere.

The proposal for staff to explore alternatives to the TAC (or its current makeup and role) is desired to foster better communication between the tourism industry and the County. Particularly, to better coordinate investments into our community and its economy. The County has much more in common with the tourism industry besides current cooperative marketing services: They each share the same infrastructure, they each serve the same visitors, and the industry's employees are the County's constituents. It is mutually beneficial for tourism industry leaders and the County to work together to support our economy and further the development of our community.