

Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce

Meeting Minutes

Fall Meeting: Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021, 10am, Lee Vining Presbyterian Church

Welcome (Kim)

Five folks in attendance at the fall meeting: Kim (Yosemite Gateway Motel), Margie (Beaver's Sporting Goods), Claire (Mono Lake Committee), Robin (Mono Basin Historical Society), and Kelly (El Mono).

Recap of membership (Claire)

- How many members, income from dues

15 members this year, up slightly from 2020. Welcome to new members High Sierra Brine Shrimp, Mono Inn, and DeChambeau Creek Foundation

Total income from dues was \$2300

- Reminder about timing for 2022 membership renewal

We'd decided last year to shift membership renewal to the fall, so renewal requests will be going out in the next week or so—heads up!

Budget overview (Claire)

Total income from dues = \$2300

Total expenses so far this year, not including fish stocking = 833.26.

A chunk of that is the phone bill (~\$56 per month); I will see if it's possible to change providers to save money on that. It is currently with Frontier because that's consistent with the MLC service, but since it's VOIP it may be possible to have a different provider and still ring through to the MLC lines.

Other major expenses were Squarespace (\$216), for our web domain and website, and our PO Box renewal (\$76).

In spring we voted to spend \$1500 on fish stocking.

Contact Claire if you'd like the full accounting summary document.

Report on fish stocking (Margie)

So far we've received \$7,729 in donations, and have two more checks in hand to deposit. Hoping for a couple more.

We've paid for four stocks from Summer Lake, \$2155.50 each for a total of \$8622. We have one more invoice to pay out of the few checks, and there should be \$273.50 left available from the Chamber's contribution.

Additionally Mono County put three rounds of stocking in LV Creek because Saddlebag lake was too low.

We're trying to decide whether we should try for one more stock so that some fish will winter over, but because year-round fishing is now allowed, we're thinking we'll instead wait till early spring, just before normal fishing opener.

CDFW has changed the license rules so that now licenses are good for one year from date of purchase, rather than only for the calendar year. That's really good news.

Report on social media and advertising (Kim)

At spring meeting we voted to spend \$150 on social media advertising as an experiment. I spent that on three different "boosted" posts on Facebook. Tried one at \$10, which was free from Facebook, one at \$50, and one at \$100. The boosted posts ran for a week each, and I chose for them to target folks from California, Nevada, Arizona--- those were the primary visitors we were seeing this season at our motel as our international visitors had not returned yet. Next year we will expand to target more of the US and also international guests. We reached 16,000 people with the \$100 ad and 12,000 people with the \$50 ad, which seems like a really strong positive response. The FB page gained new followers.

This seems like a good way to spend our advertising money. Let's vote in the spring on how much we want to spend, but for now let's tentatively plan to boost ads for:

- Fishing opener
- Tioga Pass opening
- Full summer swing
- Fall colors
- Perhaps a winter one for tree lighting or ice climbing
- Maybe one for each member's business feature, a small boost at like \$5-10?

Discussion & voting items

- Season reports/summaries from members
- Spend fish stocking funds
 - We'll put off vote till spring meeting
- Spend advertising money
 - Decide amount and vote in spring
- Buy new Christmas lights – plan to install and light?
 - Existing strings of lights are dying or in bad shape, it would be nice to refresh them for the winter season
 - There are 26 trees in town, plus 18 more past the high school. We could light every third tree by the HS.
 - We could put together an installation team and put them up together right after Thanksgiving and plan to take them down in late February or early March.
 - Quick look at costs, ~\$30 for a two-pack, so if we want about 32 strings, we'd need ~\$480. Vote to allocate \$500 from 2022 budget to buy lights: passed 5-0. Margie will shop for lights.

Discussion of items not on the agenda

Can we engage the USFS folks around the forest closures? (Margie) They were so tough this year, and there was no communication from the Inyo to the community. It would be nice if we could remind them how important the forest lands are to the local businesses and encourage the Inyo to consider a tiered closure system for future years. Agreed that we could draft a letter, ask other Eastern Sierra Chambers to sign on—similar to the letter drafted for Tioga Pass Road opening in 2019-2020. Claire will write a first draft and send to interested members for review and comment, then we can circulate to other Chambers.

Should some of the Chamber functions be separated from the MLC? (Margie) There's a perception among some businesses that joining the Chamber of Commerce is the same as joining the Mono Lake Committee or aligning with the MLC politically—a worry that the MLC controls the Chamber—and that may be a reason why some local businesses decline to join the Chamber. Perhaps we should consider moving the Chamber headquarters out of the MLC.

(Kim) Seems logistically untenable to move the Chamber out of the MLC—we can't afford to rent space elsewhere in town and none of us have time to answer the Chamber phone line, much less staff another location. We should work on changing the false perception that the MLC is running the chamber and remind everyone that they are just members of the chamber like the rest of us. I for one am more than happy to graciously accept the help that they do provide to us. If we could work on increasing membership and get input from more businesses in town, that would help with this.

(Kelly) The MLC does a really good job of providing information to visitors. As businesses we are all points of information for visitors too, but when we get overwhelmed we just send people over there. They do a good job of having all the up-to-date information. Do you know of specific businesses that haven't joined because of the MLC?

(Margie) I can think of one that used to be a member but no longer is because of the MLC affiliation.

(Kelly) The loss of one member doesn't seem like it outweighs the benefit of the contribution from the MLC for hosting the information center, answering the phone, and all Claire's time.

(Claire) It's good to have these conversations about how to grow the Chamber and make it more efficient. The MLC does feel it's a mutually beneficial system as is, but it's right to reassess periodically and affirm that it's working for everyone. In years past when this was a more divisive issue in town the Committee would prepare a report on the number of phone calls and emails, in-kind contributions, and staff time the MLC gave to the Chamber each year. Happy to do that again if it would be useful to the community.