

## **Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes**

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

April 26, 2023

**Present:** David Cooper (Chair), Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), Scot Addis, John Brass, Jim Harris, Gary O'Neill, John Hodge (BLM), Ryan Cooper (BLM), Cressant Swarts (Gift Shop Manager)

**Absent:** Veronika Kocen, Jodie Nelson (BLM), Bre Brown (BLM)

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

### **Reports:**

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. The minutes of the March 22, 2023, minutes were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 2. Harry will be moving the \$50,000 donation received in March to the reserve fund, which will make the total in the Victorian/Keepers Reconstruction Fund \$151,000. He will also be moving \$15,000 to the operating fund; the board previously approved this transfer via email.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 3. Cressant has been ordering gift shop stock in preparation for summer. We had run out of several items that were last ordered in bulk a few years ago, leading to some large orders to take advantage of bulk discounts. Sharon is trying to schedule a meeting of the gift shop committee. She thanked Scot for following up with State Parks and FES regarding selling our gift shop items at the elephant seal overlook parking lot. Jodie is checking on BLM's liability for volunteers working off-site. David encouraged the gift shop committee to continue thinking about increasing sales and what is necessary to make that happen; Jim asked about the possibility of gift shop space in the Victorian reconstructions.
4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – See Appendix 4. Ryan has started a detail in the California Desert District as part of his leadership academy; it will last through mid-summer, but he will be able to do most of his work remotely and will still be involved in projects at the light station. Interviews for an interim manager will be conducted tomorrow.

Bre and gift shop volunteer Azul represented the light station at an Earth Day event at the Charles Paddock Zoo in Atascadero; Ryan hopes that more events like this will be possible with the addition of Bre's position.

Progress has been made on the parking lot and the chip seal will be done on Friday. Ryan has started talking to the manufacturer of the planned restroom in the parking lot. Ryan is working to set up a meeting with BLM engineers to get their approval for tasks in the MOA that have not been addressed.

Upcoming events include Del Mar School on Friday, hike-in tours in July and August, and programs about astronomy and navigation that Bre will present at the San Simeon Campground in conjunction with State Parks.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 5. There was discussion on Jim’s proposed motion to send a memo to BLM regarding the delays in approving Component 3 in the MOA. Jim noted that some information can only be obtained through the exploratory phase laid out in the MOA.

Jim made a motion: The PBLSA Board endorses the following position and recommendation and requests that Ryan Cooper transmit the statement to the BLM for action. (See Appendix 5). Harry seconded.

Further discussion followed. BLM engineering approval is still required for Component 3 in the MOA, which involves exploratory work on the south window to determine the extent of known issues and whether the proposed solution is adequate for rehabilitating all the windows. David noted that approval has been received for the first two components identified in the MOA, but approval for Component 3 is overdue by one month according to the agreed timeline in the MOA. He also said that this motion will send the signal to BLM that PBLSA is committed to meeting the deadlines in the MOA; introducing delays may lead to increased construction costs and the need to renegotiate the MOA.

David called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The statement will be sent to Ryan with the request that he pass it up the chain of command.

6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 6. Nothing additional to report.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 7. Nothing additional to report.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – See Appendix 8. The Keepers Cottages’ Workgroup met on April 19 via Zoom. David has asked architectural historian Amber Long to meet with the workgroup and BLM representatives at the light station tomorrow to give an overview of the process for a historical reconstruction, as well as what services she can offer and how much her services would cost. David told the board to expect a conversation about hiring Amber Long as a consultant at the next board meeting.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – See Appendix 9. The Cambria Tourism Board, which had been considering a proposal to fund the lens enclosure repair for \$155,000, met on the 25<sup>th</sup> and denied the application due to concerns about the connection between the lens and increasing tourism in Cambria. Scot was asked for statistics on the number of visitors to the lens, whether they came to Cambria to view the lens, and other usage information that has not been collected before. The tourism board discussed the possibility of authorizing \$50,000 if the Pinedorado Lions Foundation or another organization can provide the remaining funds. The PBLSA board discussed new strategies and who should take the lead to secure the funding. There are no appropriate grants available from the county, but board members and Cressant will also look on Instrumentl. The suggestion was made to approach the San Simeon tourism board as well. David and Scot will work to identify additional partners and single donors. Veronika suggested a sign at the lens with a QR code leading to a survey to ask visitors how

they heard about the lens. John Hodge suggested looking at National Parks Service grant opportunities for historic preservation.

11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 10. Cressant thanked board members for passing on ideas for content for social media and *The Beacon*. Veronika suggested using Instagram Live at events like the Hike-Ins to talk to visitors; Cressant will look into it. David encouraged the board to check out our social media regularly.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Discussion Items:** None

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on May 3, 2023.

## **Appendix 1: Secretary's Report 4/26/23 – Cressant Swarts**

### **Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes**

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

March 22, 2023

**Present:** David Cooper (Chair), Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), Scot Addis, John Brass, Jim Harris, Gary O'Neill, John Hodge (BLM), Ryan Cooper (BLM), Cressant Swarts (Gift Shop Manager)

**Absent:** Veronika Kocen, Jodie Nelson (BLM), Bre Brown (BLM)

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

#### **Reports:**

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. The minutes of the February 22, 2023, minutes were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 2. Revenue was up in February from the previous month, showing a small profit, but there was still a negative balance for the year-to-date in the operations fund. The \$50,000 anonymous donation received in February had a problem with the check; a replacement check was received and deposited in March.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 3. There was discussion about asking the Friends of the Elephant Seal if we can set up a table in the parking lot to sell light station merchandise. Scot is contacting the State Parks liaison for FES and will pass on what he learns.
4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – See Appendix 4. Ryan reported that construction on the parking lot should begin April 25. The revised MOA between BLM and PBLSA is attached at the end of the reports. The engineers have a few questions for Bruce, and Ryan is hoping to have one of them come out to the light station in the next couple of weeks. Jim said Bruce has prepared a written response to the engineers that will be delivered this week. Gary mentioned his concerns about a leak he had noticed in the lighthouse after the recent heavy rain. David expressed his willingness to sign the revised MOA. Further discussion in the Tower Report below.

Ryan said he hopes the Victorian Keepers Cottage Workgroup can reconvene and create an MOA with BLM from the beginning of the planning process. Ryan has asked about a new co-op agreement and feels the Cultural Restoration category may be the best fit for the work PBLSA is currently doing.

Bre is offering an evening astronomy program to volunteers this Friday, weather permitting. There are plans to offer public programs this summer and fall. Gift shop volunteer Azul offered to represent the light station at the "Party for the Planet" Earth Day event at the Charles Paddock Zoo in Atascadero on Saturday, April 22; Bre will also be there to represent the light station with handouts, membership forms, and an example brick. Fourth-grade tours for Vineyard Elementary are in progress. This summer, there will be two hike-in days per month in

July and August. Tour numbers were lower than usual in March due to canceled tours and low attendance because of bad weather.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 5. Jim reviewed the schedule in the MOA with Bruce Elster, who says it is still workable despite the delays in signing. Provision 6 of the MOA allows for adjustments to the schedule if necessary. Jim noted that many of the cost estimates are now over a year old and will have to be reviewed and updated. David praised the MOA as a framework for clarifying and strengthening the relationship between PBLSA and BLM. David will sign the MOA, with the consensus of the board, by the end of the week if possible.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 6. Jim noted that the PBLSA has already paid \$8,000 to PG&E as a deposit on the project. Connected Energy may have to modify their estimated costs when the board is ready to hear their presentation.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe/Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 7. Cressant completed the final report to the SLO Community Foundation for the Fall 2018 BUILD grant; the adjustments made to the budget were approved and no part of the grant had to be returned. David reported that the \$5,000 grant from SLO County needs final approval from the Board of Supervisors, but that the check should be received this week. The grant will help offset the lens enclosure engineering costs incurred by PBLSA.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – David has contacted the Workgroup members and is waiting for the completion of the MOA with BLM before arranging a meeting. David has also been in contact with Amber Long, an architectural historian who was involved in the restoration of Sebastian's Store in San Simeon. She has expressed an interest in consulting on the reconstruction of the Keepers' Cottages.
10. Fresnel Lens Update (Scot Addis) – See Appendix 8. Scot reported that the Pinedorado Lions Foundation has received a revised agreement from the Coast Guard for the loan of the lens. The agreement is under final review by the Foundation. The engineering evaluation and cost estimates for the lens enclosure repair have been sent to the Coast Guard for their approval. Discussions have begun with SLO County, which owns the land where the lens is on display; the Foundation leases the land and will get County approval before signing the loan agreement with the Coast Guard. The Cambria Tourism Board rescheduled their April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. A letter of support from Supervisor Bruce Gibson was added to the funding application to the Tourism board. The requested funds total \$155,000. David thanked Scot for his work on this project.
11. Social Media Update (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 9. Cressant asked if the board would like to expand the scope of the report, which will be the Communications/Social Media report in the future. David encouraged the board to engage with social media posts. The board offered ideas on content for *The Beacon* and the social media accounts. There was a brief discussion on selling gift shop merchandise through social media.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Discussion Items:** None

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by David Cooper (Chair) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on April 23, 2023.

## Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 4/26/23 – Harry Thorpe

### TREASURER'S REPORT for March 2023

**1. OPERATIONS INCOME:** Last Month: \$4,831.60 YTD: \$13,929.40  
**PROFIT:** Last Month: <\$676.41> YTD: <\$2,180.35>\*\*

**MECHANICS BANK OPERATIONS:** \$55,500.68\*  
**TOWER RESTORATION FUND BALANCE:** \$13,660.03  
**CONSTRUCTION FUND:** \$98,330.65  
**VICTORIAN/KEEPERS RECONSTRUCTION FUND:** \$101,000

**BLM SUPPORT EXPENSE:** Last Month: none YTD: none  
**BALANCES:** P.P. Bank: \$500.00 ASAP: none

\* Includes \$50,000 donation not yet transferred

\*\*Excludes restoration: \$19,456.30

### 2. INVESTMENT BALANCE – FIDELITY INVESTMENTS

<i>Month</i>	<i>Beg Bal</i>	<i>Market Chg</i>	<i>Div/Int</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>W/D</i>	<i>Ending Bal</i>
<b>Mar 2023</b>	711,662.82	12,411.80	919.93	--	--	724,994.55
<b>Feb 2023</b>	737,846.39	<19,676.90>	993.33	--	<7,500>	711,662.82
<b>Jan 2023</b>	713,922.30	22,963.66	960.43	--	--	737,846.39

### 3. OTHER:

- Review of transactions – on hold.
- \$50,000 donation needs to be transferred to Fidelity.
- \$15,000 needs to be transferred to operating account.
- Tax letter needs to be sent to donor.

*Harry M. Thorpe, Jr.*  
*Treasurer*

### Attachment 3: Gift Shop Report 4/26/23 – Cressant Swarts

There were several weather closures again in March, and sales were significantly lower than the previous March.

Gift shop stock is in good condition for increased summer sales.

#### March Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$3,456.80
Website sales	\$54.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,511.60</b>

#### March Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$2,209.99
Profit	\$1,301.61
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>37%</b>

*\*Includes cost, scrap, inventory shortages, taxes, fees, and shipping*

### NET SALES COMPARISONS

*Shaded month indicates lower sales than that same month last year. Figures include website as well as on-site gift shop sales starting in 2021. Excludes donations, memberships, and engraved bricks.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2018	3,077	3,094	3,104	3,316	3,133	3,707	6,225	4,157	3,383	2,552	1,597	1,730
2019	1,015	1,605	2,565	3,350	3,641	4,665	6,804	4,722	2,070	3,656	2,717	3,719
2020	2,202	2,764	1,653	215	164	189	524	244	136	56	220	376
2021	108	1,291	2,198	3,723	4,276	5,363	8,469	7,588	4,238	5,383	3,474	2,265
2022	2,636	3,290	4,410	4,404	6,384	7,593	9,236	7,493	5,204	5,329	3,693	3,824
2023	1,705	3,836	3,274									

*Government shutdown Dec 2018. COVID-19 closure Mar 2020 - Feb 2021. Several weather/road closures Jan – March 2023.*

### Yearly Net Sales Comparisons

	Jan - Jun	TOTAL
2018	\$19,431	\$39,075
2019	\$16,841	\$40,529
2020	\$7,187	\$8,743
2021	\$16,959	\$48,376
2022	\$28,717	\$63,496
2023		



## Appendix 4: BLM Update 4/26/23 – Ryan Cooper

### Earth Day Event

Bre and Azul attended the Earth Day event at the Atascadero Zoo. They made lots of good contacts. Sold one membership and gave out several brick order forms.

### Lens

Discuss during the Lens Report

### Parking Lot Redesign / Restrooms

Parking Lot is in progress. I had a conversation with the restroom manufacturer last week and I should be starting the process of securing the restroom soon.

### Tower

I am working on setting up a meeting with the engineers (BLM and Bruce). A BLM engineer could be at the Victorian meeting on Thursday.

### Victorian Duplex

Thank you, David, for setting up the meeting on Thursday with the Victorian Committee.

### Special Events:

Summer Campfire Programs	????
Del Mar Field Trip	4/28
Hike-in Tours	7/1, 7/19, 8/2, 8/16

### Tour Numbers

Month	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		
October	506	441	535	22	552	421		
November	523	433	334	56	350	439		
December	829	251	518	0	208	411		
January	608	0	715	0	300	196		
February	780	318	578	108	407	341		
March	662	784	185	160	471	329		
April	684	790	0	399	524	443*		
May	362	555	0	446	452			
June	732	698	0	643	661			
July	1169	1085	0	972	881			
August	1001	819	0	834	1043			
September	591	374	0	547	487			
Total	8447	6548	2865	4166	6336	2580		

\*partial

## **Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 4/26/23 – Jim Harris**

As pointed out by David Cooper, the BLM has yet to give engineering approval for Component #3 of the MOA between the PBLSA and the BLM; the schedule for the engineering approval in the MOA is March 31, 2023. Presented below is a response from the PBLSA board to the BLM that is intended to be transferred to Ryan Cooper for action. The following motion is presented to initiate this response:

**Motion:** The PBLSA Board endorses the following position and recommendation and requests that Ryan Cooper transmit the statement to the BLM for action.

Work on the proposal for the tower top restoration by Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering and Dan Murphy of Wellsona has not been reinitiated. Plans for a meeting with Bruce, Dan, and Jim at Shoreline to discuss the details of the draft proposal are yet to be finalized. The current expectation is that they will be able to devote time to their proposal for the engineering design work for replacing the top three levels and submit the proposal before the next PBLSA board meeting in May. As stated before, after the completion and submittal of their tower top restoration proposal, along with the three tasks proposals and the Shoreline final report of October 14, 2021, under review by the BLM, there should be sufficient documented engineering work to begin the construction rehabilitation phase for restoring the tower. The schedule presented in the MOA supports the end of the year 2023 for the completion of this phase of the tower stabilization and rehabilitation engineering work.

### **PBLSA position and recommendation for BLM action for requested meeting with BLM regarding their lack of approval of Component 3 of MOA by March 31, 2023**

The rehabilitation of the south lower window is in preparation for the reconstruction of all the openings, and therefore is a prototype effort. As is the case in most rehabilitation efforts with existing structures, the principal engineer initially will not have all the answers to questions on the construction. This observation follows as the purpose of this project component as expressed in the proposal of 1/19/22 is to: "Rehabilitate an appropriate Tower opening following the design proposed by the Reference to ascertain the condition of the openings as well as to evaluate the proposed design approach." The proposal further states that all the iron associated with the window will be removed. In addition, the tower site visit of 2/23/22 as documented by Cressant Swarts presented an opportunity for further discussion of the construction from Dan Murphy and Bruce Elster.

We believe the BLM should sign off on the south window rehabilitation so that we can begin to understand the extent of the effort that will be necessary to rehabilitate the openings - it has been over a year since the proposal was submitted. Construction working drawings are incorporated into the proposal work; only details of the approach are presented in the proposal. Once work has commenced, any modifications will be coordinated with the PBLSA representative prior to acting on any modifications, if any.

Further, the PBLSA has previous work that demonstrates the professional competence of both the engineer and the contractor to perform the work at the highest professional level. They will address the concerns of the BLM for the safety of the structure during construction as they have on previous projects they have performed at the light station.

We encourage the BLM to "approve" the proposal for the rehabilitation of the lower south window with the understanding that the BLM can monitor the project as it progresses. We state this encouragement with the understanding that the PBLSA was formed as a 501(c)(3) in 2004 to support the BLM in its stewardship and management of the light station.

## **Appendix 6: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 4/26/23 – Jim Harris**

The status of this project remains the same as last time: the under-grounding of the PG&E electrical supply lines project remains on hold until the BLM and California State Parks come to a formal understanding of the access road to the light station along with other considerations. As stated previously, the PBLSA provided an \$8K deposit with PG&E a number of years ago as a condition for their cost proposal for the estimated work. Connected Energy has prepared a revised version of their white paper and is willing to give a presentation to the Board as soon as the Board is meeting in person again, hopefully in the next few months. Their white paper is a proposed design of a sustainable option to allow electric power for the light station to be provided with or without grid input using a microgrid system with solar and motor generator input and battery storage.

## **Appendix 7: Capital Campaign/Grants Report 4/26/23 – Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe/Cressant Swarts**

The PBLSA Board is awaiting the progress of the work outlined in the MOA before initiating any plans for a capital campaign.

## **Appendix 8: Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report – David Cooper**

The Keepers Cottages' Workgroup met on 4/19/23. We decided we needed some direction and consultation, so we agreed to ask Amber Long, an architectural historian, to visit us at the light station and go over the typical stages in the process of planning for the replication and construction of a historic building. Ms. Long formerly worked for Applied Earthworks, Inc. and project-managed the restoration of Sebastian's Store in San Simeon. She now operates her own business as a consultant for historic preservation services. Her recent work includes planning and permitting the restoration of the Point Conception Light Station.

Amber Long agreed to meet with us, pro bono, on 4/27/23 at 1 p.m. Cressant sent Ms. Long file copies of original elevations and drawings of the 1876 Light Keepers' Duplex and the single-story Head Keeper's Cottage (ca. 1907). We also asked her to review how she could help us, what her services entail, and at what cost.

## **Appendix 9: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 4/26/23 – Scot Addis**

The Coast Guard (CG) has agreed to send to the Pinedorado Lions Foundation (Foundation) the final version of the lens loan agreement and addendum for signature. The CG has also approved the final engineering evaluation and lens protection plan for the enclosure repair project.

The Cambria Tourism Board (CTB) has deferred previously scheduled meetings and will now meet on April 25th to consider an infrastructure funding application submitted by the Foundation to cover the lens enclosure repairs. A letter of support for the repair project from Supervisor Bruce Gibson is part of the application package provided to CTB members. The objective remains to obtain the funds needed for this project from the CTB. Should the CTB approve the amount requested (\$155,000) funding will then need approval from the SLO County Board of Supervisors.

Once the CTB has acted on the funding application we will be able to better understand our funding prospects and conduct the next stakeholder call to provide all with a status report on the project.

## **Appendix 10: Communications/Social Media Report 4/26/23 – Cressant Swarts**

Social media posts for March have included a couple for Women's History Month and several on native plants and animals; thank you to Bre for providing content. There was also a post about a short video filmed at the light station a few months ago by Bartell's Backroads. Overall, Facebook reach increased in March, while Instagram reach declined slightly.

Cressant is continuing to research how to use social media for fundraising and gift shop sales.

Cressant is also working on the second quarter edition of *The Beacon*, with the intention of sending it to the printer early next month.

Feedback is welcome on what information the board would like to see in this monthly report. Ideas for social media content are encouraged; please contact Cressant with suggestions.

<https://www.facebook.com/PiedrasBlancasLightStation>

<https://www.instagram.com/piedrasblancaslightstation>