

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

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

February 22, 2023

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

**Absent:** John Hodge (BLM), Jodie Nelson (BLM), Bre Brown (BLM)

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

### **Reports:**

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. The minutes of the January 25, 2023, minutes were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 2. Gift shop sales for the month were down due to the road closure, resulting in a loss for the year to date. The treasurer's report now separates donations intended for the reconstruction of the Victorians and for general construction from the operating fund and the tower restoration fund.

Harry was asked by the BLM grants office to audit past co-operative agreement funds as reported on the SF425 form because it didn't match BLM's accounting.

Invoices were paid to Shoreline Engineering and Wellsona for their work on the plans to repair the lens enclosure.

A check for \$50,000 targeted to reconstruction of the Victorians was received from an anonymous donor.

3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 3. Gift shop sales were down from the previous January due to the road closure and reduced tour numbers for the month. The suggestion was made to calculate gift shop sales per visitor using the net sales report and BLM tour numbers; Sharon said this information would be useful to compare as we attempt to increase gift shop sales. Sharon reported that she and Cressant met to discuss increasing gift shop sales, discussing on-site vs online sales, trading space with other organizations/stores, connecting with visitors to drive further sales after their visit, storage limitations, and expanding the gift shop to the museum room at some point. David asked the committee to create a budget for board approval for additional storage, display items, etc. Scot suggested asking the Friends of the Elephant Seals if we can set up a table in the vista point parking lot, as he has observed that their sales table is very popular. The committee will follow up with Scot.

This year's Dinner & Libations for the Station fundraising event with Harmony Cellars has been set for Saturday, October 7.

4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – See Appendix 4. Ryan reported that tours are back to normal for this time of year after the road closures in January and early February limited visitation. The AmeriCorps team that visited in January resurfaced the entire trail and built up the overlook above the elephant seal cove; staff and volunteers have received a lot of positive comments.

The parking lot resurfacing project is progressing; Ryan will meet with the contractor soon to determine the start date. Progress on the restroom planning will resume once the parking lot is finished.

Ryan has been working to move the MOA with PBLSA forward; a timeline should be forthcoming as soon as the local engineer finds out who needs to approve the plans. The archaeologist will then begin work with SHPO once the plans are approved. Jim asked if Ryan expected to see the MOA signed the following week, and Ryan concurred.

Ryan would like to see the Victorians committee meet to resume planning in light of the newest donation toward that project; the goal will be to set a timeline and agreement between PBLSA and BLM from the beginning of the project. David will reconvene the Victorians work group to review the work that has already been done and what comes next; he will have a progress report for the next board meeting.

School tours will be held at the light station each Friday through the end of March.

The astronomy program for volunteers presented by Bre will be postponed from February 24 to March 24 due to the forecast.

The volunteer appreciation get-together will be on Saturday, March 11, 4 – 6:30 p.m. It will be held behind the Coast Guard units again, though the Fog Signal Building will also be open for viewing.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 5. Jim expects work to continue on the tower top proposal soon now that Bruce and Dan are done with the engineering work for the lens enclosure. David referenced a memo he sent to Ryan and the board regarding the delay on the MOA, emphasizing that the board needs reinforcement that the slow progress is not a lack of interest. Ryan thanked David for expressing his support and for the motivation to move the process along. David will inform the board when the MOA is signed.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 6. The status has not changed. Jim reminded the board that the project has been in process for five years and that the board has already paid \$8,000.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 7. Cressant has not heard from the SLO Community Foundation regarding the final report for the Fall 2018 BUILD grant; she will follow up with them to see if they have made a decision. David reported that SLO County awarded the PBLSA a \$5,000 grant toward the engineering costs for the lens enclosure. Jim suggested that once the MOA with BLM regarding the tower is finalized, the board should begin thinking about a capital campaign for the Victorians reconstructions. Sharon said that the donations already received for the Victorians will help in starting a capital campaign.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.

9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – No report. David will reconvene the work group and will have a report at the next meeting.
10. Fresnel Lens Update (Scot Addis) – See Appendix 8. The insurance policy for the Fresnel lens has been accepted by the Pinedorado Lions Foundation; the Foundation is waiting on final approval from the Coast Guard to become the borrower of record for the lens. David and Scot met with Bruce and Dan to discuss the engineering plans and cost estimates for the lens enclosure repairs, including paint, concrete footings to minimize future rust, and sun protection; the estimated cost is \$113,000, and the work would take approximately 17 weeks to complete. The work would be completed by individual contractors to save the cost of a general contractor. Once the Coast Guard approves the agreement with the Pinedorado Lions Foundation, the stakeholder group will be reconvened to discuss the next steps. Scot has been preparing a funding application for the Cambria Tourism Board meeting on March 10, asking for \$155,000 to cover the total cost of the enclosure repair project, annual inspections over the next five years, and unforeseen costs. Ryan suggested also asking the San Simeon Tourism Board for funding; there was discussion on fundraising strategy, as there will need to be a capital campaign for the future home for the lens.

David asked the board to consider the following motion: The PBLSA board approves partnering with the Pinedorado Lions Foundation with respect to funding and will contribute \$25,000 toward the cost of repairing the lens enclosure. Jim seconded. There was discussion on the importance of the PBLSA retaining a formal presence in the ongoing lens project through the five-year phase of maintaining the lens in its current enclosure and determining where it will be permanently housed. There was also discussion on whether offering these funds now would hinder the process of getting funding from the Cambria Tourism Board.

David agreed to amend the original motion as follows: Motion: The PBLSA board approves partnering with the Pinedorado Lions Foundation with respect to funding and will contribute up to \$25,000 toward the cost of repairing the lens enclosure; the funds will be offered at the discretion of Scot Addis if he feels it would support the application to the Cambria Tourism Board. Harry seconded. A vote was called on the amended motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Harry will also inform Scot of the total amount the PBLSA has spent on the lens so far, as that may also help the funding application.

11. Social Media Update (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 9. Due to time constraints, Cressant will give the board a presentation on social media at the following meeting. She described briefly how the board can support the Facebook and Instagram accounts by joining, following or subscribing, and sharing posts with friends and family.

#### **Old Business:**

1. Review 2022 Annual Board Financial Report (Harry Thorpe) – There were no questions on the annual report Harry sent prior to the last board meeting. Jim asked if there had been any word on a new co-operative agreement with BLM. Ryan had to leave the meeting early; David will contact him to ask for an update.
2. Discussion of David's 2/20/23 memo to Ryan Cooper re: MOU – Discussed in the Tower Report above. If the MOA is not signed, David will send another memo and address it at the next board meeting.

**New Business:**

None.

**Discussion Items:**

None.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on March 17, 2023.

## **Appendix 1: Secretary's Report 2/22/23 – Cressant Swarts**

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

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

January 25, 2023

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

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

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

David informed board members of the passing of Jack Morehead, a previous PBLSA board chair, in December. David wrote a memorial that was distributed to board members and will also appear in the next issue of *The Beacon*. Jim noted that Jack's guidance was critical during an important transition phase for the board. David asked board members for suggestions on ways to commemorate Jack.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

#### **Reports:**

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. The minutes of the December 7, 2022, board meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 2. Harry reviewed the treasurer's reports for November and December, as well as the summary of the annual report (Appendix 10). Harry noted that the profit for the end of the year was a significant increase over the previous year. There were some losses with investments, but he hopes to see a recovery. He purchased a CD at 4.75% to invest the funds from the anonymous donations totaling \$101,000. Board members were asked to review the full annual report sent to their emails and ask any questions of Harry individually or at the next board meeting if appropriate. The full report consisted of the summary; itemized income, expenses, assets, and liabilities for the year; the tax summary prepared by the CPA; and the year-end investment report from Fidelity Investments.

The electrician has completed work on the Fog Signal Building lighting project and submitted invoices. The board approved a budget of \$26,000 for the project; the total cost was \$29,000 due to additional unavoidable labor costs. Jim proposed a motion to approve the increased budget. Scot seconded. There was no further discussion. David called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 3. Cressant made some revisions to the Net Sales numbers previously reported, which resulted in a small decrease in August and October sales compared to the same month in the previous year. The yearly total, however, increased by \$15,000 over the previous year; the light station was closed for the first two months of 2021. There was discussion on how to best use the resources generated by the gift shop, especially if revenue continues to increase. Harry noted that a large part of the increase

was due to the change in tour format last year that allows visitors to spend more time in the gift shop; revenue will likely hold relatively steady barring closures or other events. There was brief discussion on website sales and methods to increase website revenue. David requested that the gift shop committee meet and discuss a strategic plan for the gift shop including areas to improve and change.

4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – See Appendix 4. Ryan informed the board that the landslides to the north from the recent storms have resulted in a road closure at the Elephant Seal Vista Point parking lot 1.5 miles south of the light station. Tours were canceled for just over a week while BLM discussed options with Caltrans and decided how to proceed. BLM staff is now meeting visitors near the entrance to the Vista Point parking lot and leading them back to the light station for tours. Tour numbers were at first limited while testing this method, but they are now back to normal. It's unknown when the road closure will be removed. The light station suffered no significant damage in the storms. Ryan is in contact with the contractor who installed the roof on the Coast Guard units a year ago, as there were some shingles missing. There were also some big waves to the west that washed away some vegetation on the bluff and left bull kelp on the trail.

Seven AmeriCorps members have been staying at the light station in January and making trail improvements as well as helping with other maintenance tasks. BLM staff have also been offering career development activities.

Approval to chip seal the parking lot and all the roads in the light station has been granted; the work may happen in February and may require canceling tours for a day. Ryan described the flexibility of the lighting options in the completed Fog Signal Building. A grand opening will be planned once the road closure is removed.

BLM has reviewed the MOA prepared by David and Jim and suggested some edits. Ryan is meeting tomorrow with the local and state archaeologists to get approval and a timeline for the work to begin; his priority is to keep the process moving forward.

School visits will resume in February; there will be one visit per week through March. David suggested featuring photos from school tours on social media. There was brief discussion on the logistics; Ryan and Cressant will coordinate.

Harry asked if there had been any progress on the restrooms. Ryan will resume the restroom project once the parking lot has been completed.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 5. The draft of the MOA submitted to BLM in December is included in the appendix for reference. The deadlines proposed in the draft will have to be pushed back, as the first deadline has already passed, but Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering said the components can still be completed by the end of 2023 if it isn't delayed too much longer. Ryan estimates that approval by the archaeologist (including SHPO approval) may take 60-90 days for Components #1-3; engineering approval should happen sooner. On receipt of the concept plan for Component #4 from PBLSA, BLM will begin the approval process for that component. David encouraged the board to understand that using an MOA to specify responsibilities and deadlines will be the new method of working with BLM in the future.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – See Appendix 6. No change in status. Connected Energy is waiting to present the white paper they have prepared to the board.

7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – See Appendix 7. Cressant is waiting for a response from the SLO Community Foundation regarding their decision on a BUILD grant from 2018 that wasn't fully spent.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – No report.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – See Appendix 8. The Pinedorado Lions Foundation has received a quote of \$1,350 per year for insurance for the Fresnel lens that meets the Coast Guard's requirements. It is a group policy for lenses around the country, and the PBLS lens would be added as an additional location. On review, the Foundation is asking the broker to add the Pinedorado Lions Foundation as an "additional named insured" to allow for direct claims to be made against the policy by the Foundation and to confirm any claims are "per occurrence" to ensure claims made against this group policy by other lens borrowers do not reduce the coverage available to the Foundation. Once the insurance is purchased and loan agreement secured, the Coast Guard would like to see another stakeholder meeting held to set milestones.  
  
Scot has been maintaining contact with the Cambria Tourism Board for possible funding for the repairs to the lens enclosure; there are other requests for available funding, so moving forward soon would be best. The Foundation has not yet received the final engineering plans for the lens enclosure repairs from Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering. David reported that Dan Murphy of Wellsona Iron has been negotiating with subcontractors in an effort to save costs; David will contact Bruce and Dan again.
11. Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 9. David asked for a demonstration of the social media accounts for the next board meeting. Cressant will discuss with Veronika what would be best to include. Cressant asked the board to pass on any ideas for social media content.

#### **Old Business:**

None.

#### **New Business:**

1. Review 2022 Annual Board Financial Report (Harry Thorpe) – See discussion above in Financial Status and Treasurer's Report.

#### **Discussion Items:**

None.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by David Cooper (Chair) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on February 20, 2023.

## Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 2/22/23 – Harry Thorpe

### TREASURER'S REPORT for January 2023

**1. OPERATIONS INCOME:** Last Month: \$2,734.40 YTD: \$2,734.40  
**PROFIT:** Last Month: <\$1,830.39>\* YTD: <\$1,830.39>\*

**MECHANICS BANK OPERATIONS:** \$3,984.59  
**TOWER RESTORATION FUND BALANCE:** \$13,660.03  
**CONSTRUCTION FUND:** \$99,334.78  
**VICTORIAN/KEEPERS RECONSTRUCTION FUND:** \$101,000

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

\* Excludes restoration: \$13,423.00

### 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>Jan 2023</b>	713,922.30	23,581.42	960.43	--	--	738,464.15
<b>Dec 2022</b>	628,070.78	<17,585.40>	2,486.92	101,000	--	713,922.30
<b>Nov 2022</b>	600,400.32	26,440.78	1,180.06	--	--	628,020.78

### 3. OTHER:

- Reviewed transactions for December/January.
- Filed/paid quarterly sales tax.
- Completed FSB lighting project.
- Final budget for FSB approved: \$29,000.
- Submitted annual Board financial report.

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



### Attachment 3: Gift Shop Report 2/22/23 – Cressant Swarts

January sales are lower than in 2022 due to the road closure which affected tours in January through the first week of February.

Sharon and Cressant met on February 2 to discuss ideas for expanding gift shop sales.

This year's Dinner & Libations fundraising event with Harmony Cellars has been set for Saturday, October 7.

#### January Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$1,780.33
Website sales	\$48.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,828.40</b>

#### January Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$944.55
Profit	\$655.63
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>36%</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											

*Government shutdown Dec 2018. COVID-19 closures Mar 2020 - Feb 2021. Road closure Jan – early Feb 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 2/22/23 – Ryan Cooper

### AmeriCorps Team

AmeriCorps did a great job. They resurfaced the entire trail and built up an overlook near the cove that has been very popular with the visitors.

### Lens

Discuss during the Lens Report.

### Parking Lot Redesign / Restrooms

Still waiting for contracting and the contractor to get all the proper documentation.

### Tower

We are working on an MOU between BLM and the PBLSA to set a strategy to move this project forward.

### Victorian Duplex

Would love to revitalize the Victorian Committee and maybe start looking at an MOU similar to the Tower. This time we will get everyone on the same page from the get-go.

### Special Event:

Astronomy Program  
Volunteer Appreciation  
Winifred Pifer  
Vineyard Elementary

Feb 24  
March 11<sup>th</sup> 4-6:30  
2/24, 3/3, 3/10  
3/15, 3/17, 3/22, 3/24, 3/31

### 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	170*		
March	662	784	185	160	471			
April	684	790	0	399	524			
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			

\*partial

## **Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 2/22/23 – Jim Harris**

David Cooper and Ryan Cooper will have the latest status on the MOA for the review of the remaining engineering work and the start of the construction phase of the rehabilitation of the Tower (the initial draft of the MOA was presented at the January meeting of the Board). Work on the proposal for the tower top restoration by Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering and Dan Murphy of Wellsona is expected to continue after their work for the Lens enclosure in Cambria is completed; 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 next month (March). 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.

## **Appendix 6: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 2/22/23 – 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. 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 2/22/23 – Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe**

Cressant Swarts is responding to a request from the SLO Community Foundation for a final report of a Fall 2018 BUILD grant related to preparing for a capital campaign and will have the latest status of that effort. As discussed at the last Board meeting, any planning by the PBLSA for a capital campaign will await the resolution of the MOA between the BLM and the PBLSA for the remaining engineering work and subsequent construction of the Tower.

## **Appendix 8: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 2/22/23 – Scot Addis**

The Pinedorado Lions Foundation (Foundation) has approved the lens insurance policy as quoted and is prepared to pay the premium once the Coast Guard (CG) accepts changes to the lens loan agreement addendum proposed by the Foundation.

On February 13, 2023, David and I met with Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering and Dan Murphy of Wellsona Iron. We obtained a copy and reviewed together their final engineering evaluation and cost estimates for the enclosure repair project. The cost estimate to repair the enclosure, paint it (outside and partially on the inside), and apply UV film on exterior windows is \$112,870.43. This amount also covers Bruce's fee for engineering administrative services during the project, site observations/inspections, and to prepare close-out documentation. Upon acceptance of the bids, work on the project is expected to last 17 weeks. To help defray the cost of the engineering work David requested the previously authorized \$5,000 community project grant from San Luis Obispo County be reinstated. Supervisor Bruce Gibson has authorized this request.

Once the CG approves the revised loan agreement addendum, a copy of the enclosure repair plan and cost estimate can be provided for their review and a stakeholder call can be scheduled to provide all with a status report on project.

Meanwhile, I am preparing an infrastructure funding application for consideration by the Cambria Tourism Board at their meeting on March 10th. The objective will be to secure most of the funds needed for this project.

### **Attachment 9: Social Media Report 2/22/23 – Cressant Swarts**

Social media posts for February included one about the light station's birthday last week and the re-opening of the road and return of tours to normal, as well as the ongoing elephant seal series. Cressant intends to continue #WildlifeWednesday posts after the elephant seal series ends this month. Bre Brown has also been submitting weekly content for social media posts; thank you, Bre!

Cressant submitted an article to the local online nonprofit newspaper, *the cambriaca* (<https://cambriaca.org>), for the February 8 issue regarding the road closure and general tour information. Articles can be submitted every other week; no advertising is allowed but information on upcoming events is welcome. If you have ideas for articles or would like to write one on behalf of the PBLSA, please let Cressant know.

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>