

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

February 28, 2024

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

Absent: Jodie Nelson (BLM)

David Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

David thanked Harry for standing in as chair for the last several meetings and keeping projects going.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – The minutes of the January 24, 2024, meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – There was a small loss for the month, with not a lot of revenue or expenses. Investments have shown some growth in the last few months.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – Gift shop revenue was likely higher than last February due to last winter's road and weather closures. Revenue was more in line with 2022.
4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – Ryan is working to find out how an assistance agreement can be created between PBLSA and BLM again. Agreements are now offered as grants in different categories, and the Cultural Restoration category was not offered last year. Ryan is trying to find out future deadlines and is making sure BLM leadership knows Piedras Blancas is interested in this type of grant. The relationship that BLM and PBLSA have is different from other grantees and can be hard to explain. David asked if a meeting with BLM, PBLSA, and Thelma from the Grants and Agreements Office would help to clarify; he will also forward documents he has been working on regarding the role of a mission-oriented friends group. Harry asked about other sources of federal funding. Ryan said the project was submitted for the Great America Outdoors Act but it is not clear if the project is still on the list for potential funding.

The replacement for the entry gate is being built and the operator mechanism is waiting to be picked up. Ryan hopes the gate will be operational by the next board meeting.

The geotesting work for the tower started last week. The test pits showed that the foundation goes down 12-18 inches before hitting rock. Yeh placed sensors and did ground-penetrating radar tests yesterday; they will prepare a report on the results. Ryan said that Yeh has been very good to work with. The next part, the replacement of the south window, depends on Dan's progress with the lens enclosure.

There have been a lot of school tours and good numbers on the public tours. California State Parks may use the lighthouse for a K-9 training in April.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – Bruce and Dan have been developing a schedule for Component #4 of the MOA, which is the concept plan and evaluation for replacing the missing top three levels of the lighthouse. Bruce is dividing some of the work with an additional structural engineer, Mason Walters; no additional cost is expected for PBLSA. Bruce thinks that all tasks can be completed in 2024, meaning that the project will be ready for the construction phase by the end of the year. Jim suggested that there should be a meeting to refine the schedule laid out in the MOA.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – No change in status. Jim asked if there was an expectation that there would be an access agreement with State Parks within the next year or two. Ryan said that he has been prioritizing the tower and Victorian projects and suggested there be a conversation about whether the board is still interested in pursuing the utilities project. Jim reminded the board that Connected Energy has created a plan that can be presented to the board.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – Jim said that if the engineering work proceeds as expected, a plan should be created this year to find the funds for construction. David said that a capital campaign by PBLSA would not be adequate to fund the tower construction and that federal resources should be the focus.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – Cressant did some research on the Head Keeper's Cottage, which Amber is reviewing. When she is finished, David will organize a meeting of the work group. David will send Cressant's report to anyone who is interested.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – Scot reported that work is still in progress on the lens enclosure and that Dan is doing a fabulous job. Most of the structural work is complete, including most of the vertical rusted areas, and Dan is working on the roof. The piece that blew off the roof can probably be reused, but Dan will need to fabricate copper vent covers for the seams, which is outside the original scope. Dan does not yet have an estimate for the additional work. There is \$20,000 from the original estimate to be covered, as well as \$6,000 to Bruce for engineering fees. A donor who already gave \$5,000 offered another \$10,000 as a match. PBLSA will match the \$10,000, as the board previously agreed to backstop the funding of the enclosure. David asked Scot to keep the board apprised of the outstanding costs for the lens enclosure. Scot will also approach the tourism boards again, as well as Supervisor Bruce Gibson and the Lions Foundation for funding. Local journalist Kathe Tanner spoke about the lens at a recent Lions dinner and suggested there should be an event to promote and fundraise for the enclosure. David said that the event is a good idea, and the lens should have a thorough cleaning beforehand. Some volunteers had training from Bob Woodward when the lens was cleaned in 2018. Scot suggested Bruce be asked to give a service life extension to the lens enclosure, because Dan thinks it could last 10 years instead of the anticipated 5 years.
11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – The social media accounts have shown slow, consistent increases in followers. Fluctuations in reach are based on the topics and frequency of posts, with events at the light station getting the most attention.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

1. GoFundMe as a fundraising option (Veronika Kocen) – Veronika gave the board a brief overview of GoFundMe as a fundraising option. Funds are directed through the PayPal Giving Fund, with 2.2% + \$.30 in fees subtracted from each donation; there is no cost to start a fundraiser or fees to pay directly. Veronika showed the fundraising page for the Chicago Harbor Lighthouse as an example. The GoFundMe page will have PBLSA listed as the organizer, with a description of the project, the goal and how much has been raised, and who has donated with comments from supporters. There was discussion and agreement by the board to try a GoFundMe fundraiser for the lens enclosure. Veronika, Scot, and Cressant will work on creating the GoFundMe page.

Discussion Items: None.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by David Cooper (Chair) on March 23, 2024.

Appendix 1: Secretary's Report 2/28/24 – Cressant Swarts

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

January 24, 2024

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

Absent: David Cooper (Chair), John Hodge (BLM)

Harry Thorpe called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – The minutes of the December 6, 2023, meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – Reports were included for November and December, as well as an overview of the association's insurance costs. The commercial property insurance for the gift shop increased significantly. Harry is looking for a less expensive policy, but property insurance rates have gone up across the state. The investments performed well over the last two months. Scot asked about the negative year-to-date profit for the operations line item and if there is a set budget. Harry explained that there is no set budget but that expenses are consistent, and variations are noted in his reports; the expectation is to come close to breaking even. Restoration funds are tracked separately from operations.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – Total sales for 2023 were \$3,753 less than 2022; most of the difference was in the first part of 2023 and can be partially attributed to cancelled tours last January – March due to weather and road closures. Veronika asked if there are many gift shop sales through the website, and Cressant explained that we receive donations, membership renewals, and brick orders through the website but not many sales from the gift shop.
4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – ACE and AmeriCorps crews did a lot of work around the light station, including painting in the lighthouse, painting the outsides of the gift shop and tank house, laying flooring in Unit B, and some trail work. Jodie has arranged for another group to come out in the spring to help with vegetation control, as the rain will mean more growth than usual. Ryan is planning a meeting with the BLM state grants office to work on a new cooperative agreement. A custom gate is being fabricated and a new operator is on order, so the entrance gate is expected to be repaired in the next month or so. The light station has participated in a lot of events recently, including the Morro Bay Bird Festival, with a booth at the main event and a presentation and bird walk at the light station. January visitation has been higher than usual, probably because of special events. Harry asked about the status of the restrooms; there is nothing new to report.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – There is a scheduling meeting on Monday to plan the work for Components #1-3 of the MOA. Dan and Bruce are fleshing out Component #4, replacing the top three floors of the lighthouse, so there will be more progress to report soon.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – No changes in status. Jim reminded the board that \$8k has already been given to PG&E toward this project.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – Harry said that once the work for Components #1-3 is begun on the lighthouse, the board will need to start planning how to fund the construction work that will follow. Cressant reported that PBLSA did not receive the grant to assist with school transportation costs.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – Progress is waiting on research to find the missing pages of the blueprints for the Head Keeper's Cottage.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – The rusted sections of the lens enclosure are being removed and replaced with hard plastic that will offer more protection than the planned concrete. Some caulking against glass will be removed and the rusted metal underneath replaced as well, which may lead to additional costs not yet determined. Contractor work is estimated to be \$20k more than the funds raised; another \$6k will be needed to pay for Bruce's yearly inspection of the structure over the next 5 years. Social media fundraising appeals in December and early January raised about \$1,000. The board may need to consider approving another \$26k; the board previously agreed to backstop additional funds. Other funding methods were discussed. Cressant will search on Instrumentl for relevant grants and Veronika will give the board a report on what would be required to start a GoFundMe campaign. Work is estimated to be completed in 6-8 weeks depending on weather conditions.
11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – The social media accounts continue to slowly add new followers. The most popular posts are usually related to events at the light station.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

1. Annual Directors Financial Report – Appendix 11 reports significant financial changes over the course of the year. The full report was sent to board members via email. Harry asked that board members review the documents and ask any questions at the next meeting.
2. Capital campaign planning – See Capital Campaign/Grants Report above.

Discussion Items:

1. Reporting board hours – Jodie stressed the importance of reporting board hours, as volunteer hours can often be considered as matching funds for grant applications. Jodie will mail volunteer agreements and timesheets to each board member to assist with record-keeping. Board volunteer hours include travel time, phone calls, meetings including the monthly board

meeting, and any other business on behalf of the board. Harry noted that the board's volunteer hours shows the commitment of the board. Harry asked if a timesheet specific to the board's needs could be developed; Cressant will create one. Please keep reporting board volunteer hours to Cressant in response to the monthly agenda email. If hours haven't been previously reported, please send an estimate of hours starting in October 2023.

Harry Thorpe adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on February 22, 2024.

Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 2/28/24 – Harry Thorpe

TREASURER'S REPORT for January 2024

1. OPERATIONS INCOME: Last Month: \$3,422.20 YTD: \$3,422.20
PROFIT: Last Month: <\$626.84>* YTD: <\$626.84>*

MECHANICS BANK OPERATIONS: \$20,956.04
TOWER RESTORATION FUND BALANCE: \$13,660.03
CONSTRUCTION FUND: \$104,588.27
VICTORIAN/KEEPERS RECONSTRUCTION FUND: \$215,765.11

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

* Excludes restoration/BLM: \$507.50

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>
Jan 2024	840,766.61	6,715.30	1,441.18	--	--	848,923.09
Dec 2023	820,440.85	12,815.69	7,510.07	--	--	840,766.61
Nov 2023	788,180.37	30,517.07	1,743.41	--	--	820,440.85

3. OTHER:

- Reviewed transactions for 2023/January.
- Reviewed Board annual financial report.
- Paid 4th quarter sales tax.

Harry M. Thorpe, Jr.
Treasurer

Appendix 3: Gift Shop Report 2/28/24 – Cressant Swarts

The Starry Night Astronomy program grossed \$40 in January, which is not included in the revenue, profit, and net sales calculations below. \$120 worth of t-shirts and patches at cost were given to the AmeriCorps crew who spent a month working on various projects at the light station. January sales were significantly higher than last January, probably due to the weather-related closures last year. Two new stuffed animals were added to the gift shop in February: a dolphin and a gray whale. Several other items have been re-stocked to levels that will likely last through summer.

January Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$3,002.20
Website sales	\$0
Total	\$3,002.20

January Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$1,975.85
Profit	\$1,026.35
Percentage	34%

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

NET SALES COMPARISONS

Shaded month indicates lower sales than last year. Includes website sales starting 2021. Excludes donations, memberships, engraved bricks, and event sales.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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	4,605	6,493	5,760	7,875	8,017	3,880	6,380	3,549	4,369
2024	2,799											

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

Yearly Net Sales Comparisons

	Jan - Jun	TOTAL
2020	\$7,187	\$8,743
2021	\$16,959	\$48,376
2022	\$28,717	\$63,496
2023	\$25,673	\$59,743
2024		

Appendix 4: BLM Update 2/28/24 – Ryan Cooper

Assistance Agreement

I am in the approval process to become a Procurement Official which will allow me to administer grants and agreements.

Entrance Gate

The Gate and operator have been ordered and I would hope in the next month or so it will be completely operational.

Tower

Test Pits were dug last week and there is geophysical work going on this week. Volunteers are very excited to see things happening.

Lens

Discuss during the Lens Report

Victorian Duplex

No changes this month

Events This Past Month

Jan 26 th	Volunteer New Year Festival
Jan 26 th	Cal Naturalist (CCC)
Feb 20 th	Winfred Pifer Presentation
Feb 21 st	Winfred Pifer Field Trip 1
Feb 23 rd	Full Moon Hike
Feb 28 th	Winfred Pifer Field Trip 2

Future Events:

March 1 st	Morro Bay Montessori
March 13 th , 20 th , 26 th	Vineyard Elementary Presentations
March 15 th , 22 nd , 27 th	Vineyard Elementary Field Trips
March 6 th – 13 th	Ace Work Crew at LH
March 27 th	Plein Air Painting Group
April 10 th	Possible State Parks K9 training at LH

Tour Numbers

Month	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
October	506	441	535	22	552	421	599	
November	523	433	334	56	350	439	378	
December	829	251	518	0	208	411	405	
January	608	0	715	0	300	196	561	
February	780	318	578	108	407	341	423*	
March	662	784	185	160	471	329		
April	684	790	0	399	524	570		
May	362	555	0	446	452	444		
June	732	698	0	643	661	752		
July	1169	1085	0	972	881	1087		
August	1001	819	0	834	1043	1192		
September	591	374	0	547	487	493		
Total	8447	6548	2865	4166	6336	6675		

*partial

Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 2/28/24 – Jim Harris

The Zoom meeting for initiating the four MOA tasks for the tower was held on Monday, January 29, at 1:00pm. The meeting was chaired by Ryan Cooper, and included David Cooper, Jim Harris, Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering, Dan Murphy of Wellsona Iron and Engineering, Judd King of Yeh and Associates, and BLM members. Bruce Elster and Dan Murphy are preparing a document defining the Component #4 schedule. This document also will discuss the addition of structural engineer Mason Walters, a Senior Principal at Forell | Elsesser in the Bay Area; he will work with them on the completion of the project (email me to request a copy of his eleven page resume). Bruce and Dan are currently obligated to the Lens Project as a priority. However, the geotechnical project for component #2 performed by Yeh and Associates started last week, and Dan Murphy as a subcontractor to Yeh and Associates was on-site excavating locations near the tower foundation. As stated before, with the Shoreline final report of October 14, 2021, and the four task proposals for Components #1, #2, #3, and #4 (work expected to be completed in 2024), there will be sufficient documented engineering work to begin the construction rehabilitation phase for restoring the tower. The schedule presented in the MOA for the completion of the engineering work for tower stabilization and rehabilitation is being revised accordingly.

Appendix 6: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 2/28/24 – Jim Harris

The status of this project remains the same as last month: the undergrounding 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 2/28/24 – Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe/Cressant Swarts

The status remains the same as last month: the PBLSA Board is awaiting the progress of the work outlined in the MOA before initiating any plans for a capital campaign. The four components outlined in the MOA are expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Appendix 8: Victorian Keepers Cottage Workgroup Report 2/28/24 – David Cooper

Cressant finished additional research on the head keeper's cottage at the USLHS archive. Amber Long is going over it. The workgroup will meet again soon to consider next steps.

Appendix 9: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 2/28/24 – Scot Addis

Dan Murphy of Wellsona Iron and Gregg Whitfield Painting continue to work on the lens enclosure. Weather permitting, they expect to complete their work in four weeks.

To date we have secured funds for the project totaling \$91,000. The contractor work (UV film, structural work, and painting) will cost \$111,109 before any additional cost Dan Murphy may identify to address the rust removal on the vertical posts and enclosure roof repairs. In addition, there will be engineering oversight and management fees from Shoreline Engineering estimated to cost \$6,000. Before any potential scope change order, we are short of funds needed by \$26,000.

A private donor, who has already generously provided funds for this project, has offered another \$10,000 as a matching grant to help address the funding shortfall. Contact was made with SLO County Supervisor Bruce Gibson's office to request funds. In addition, a local community group was approached but declined to participate. The tourism boards can be approached for additional money, but any funds received will likely arrive after the completion of work.

Kathe Tanner, local reporter for *The Tribune*, spoke at a Cambria Lions dinner on February 13, 2024. A sizable portion of her presentation was devoted to the lens and her past association with the light station. She suggested an event centered on the lens would focus attention on the enclosure renovation project and serve as a "hook" to publicize the work completed and facilitate fundraising. One idea floated was to have a "re-dedication ceremony" of the enclosure and solicit funds in advance of and during the event. Other fundraising ideas are welcome.

Appendix 10: Communications/Social Media Report 2/28/24 – Cressant Swarts

Overall reach (the number of views that posts received) has increased for January – February compared to November – December for Facebook but decreased over the same period for Instagram. The top post for both Facebook and Instagram was for the 149th anniversary event.

Total Facebook followers: 1,680 (previous 1,655), Instagram followers: 1,999 (previous 1,989).

We are making a greater effort to put all events at the light station that are sponsored by BLM or PBLSA on the website at <https://www.piedrasblancas.org/events> and our Facebook event page. (Direct link to the events page: <https://www.facebook.com/PiedrasBlancasLightStation/events/?id=100064822293325&sk=events>)

<https://www.piedrasblancas.org>

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

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