

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

July 26, 2023

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

Absent: David Cooper (Chair), Scot Addis

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 June 28, 2023, meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – There have been small losses for the month and year. Another anonymous \$50,000 donation was received for the Victorian house reconstructions.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – Net sales in June were lower than the previous June, though comparable to June 2021. Sales of fleece jackets and vests, two of the gift shop's highest-costs items were especially high in June 2022, which may explain the difference.
4. BLM Update (Tammy Faust) – Tammy reported that the NEPA for MOA components #1-3 has begun and will go to the resource specialists to review soon. Tammy has also been doing maintenance on the Coast Guard buildings and addressing concerns around the light station from the safety inspection. The Hike In Open House events on July 5 and 19 had 79 and 129 attendees respectively. Donations and gift shop sales did well, especially on the 19th. The final two Hike In events for the summer will be August 2 and 16, both of which are anticipated to have good attendance.
5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – Jim said that Bruce is ready to begin work as soon as components #1-3 are approved by BLM and SHPO. John Hodge reported that approval has been granted by SHPO for components #1-4, and BLM is working on the NEPA. A timeline is not available, but the review by BLM resource specialists may take 30 days. At the August board meeting, Jim will have an additional task related to the seismic testing that was recommended by Bruce.

There was discussion on funding for the tower work in addition to PBLSA's resources. Harry asked John if a new co-op agreement would be possible. John said Ryan has been talking to the grants office. Applying for the Great America Outdoors Act funding with a request scaled down from the previous \$12 million estimate may be a good possibility.

6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – No changes.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – No report.

8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – The workgroup will meet via Zoom on August 2 to discuss the RFP Amber has prepared to send to potential architectural firms for the conversion of the historical plans to modern building standards. John will try to get BLM staff on the call as well.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – Significant progress has been made toward getting donations for the enclosure repair. Scot will ask Harry for the PBLSA's previously approved \$25,000 contribution when other donations are secured. Board members praised Scot's efforts in securing these donations.
11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – There was a brief discussion of some of the logistics of planning the Dinner & Libations for the Station event on October 7.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Discussion Items: None.

Harry Thorpe adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on August 22, 2023.

Appendix 1: Secretary's Report 7/26/23 – Cressant Swarts

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

June 28, 2023

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

Absent: David Cooper (Chair), John Brass, Bre Brown (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 May 24, 2023, meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – There was a small profit for the month, and a small loss for the year so far. Investments continue to perform poorly.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts/Sharon Flaherty) – Sharon reported on the gift shop committee meeting held on June 15. The committee discussed ideas to increase revenue, including ways to increase on-site sales and promote the website to improve online sales. Other online venues like Etsy were also discussed, but the committee concluded that it would be hard to sell PBLS merchandise to people who have not visited the light station. That would also be a challenge with any additional off-site sales venues, such as the Friends of the Elephant Seal parking lot. There is also the concern that we may be perceived as competing with FES, and we want to make sure not to damage that important partner relationship. There are also currently not enough volunteers to staff an additional sales location. Harry and Sharon will discuss the possibility of gift shop merchandise in Cambria stores.

If part of the restored Victorian duplex is made into a museum, it may be beneficial to have the gift shop be the entry and exit point, as many museums do. No additional storage space would be needed, as long as the Coast Guard unit C is still available for gift shop storage. The existing gift shop building will be behind the restored Victorian duplex, however, so if the gift shop remains in the current building, it will be important to consider traffic flow to keep the gift shop readily accessible to visitors.

Another source of gift shop and other revenue is additional events similar to the Dinner & Libations fundraiser in the fall. Hiring an event planner would make it possible to have more events than are currently possible. The gift shop is always open during special tours and events like the photo tours. The board briefly discussed possible events targeted toward specific fundraising goals. Sharon stated the importance of acknowledging and honoring donors to increase goodwill and encourage further donations.

4. BLM Update (John Hodge) – John reminded the board that any additional fundraising plans should remain consistent with the BLM business plan. The parking lot will have bumpers or a fence installed to protect the surrounding vegetation; the improved layout should allow for more cars. Ryan is working on the restroom for the parking lot; construction can't begin until after the BLM fiscal year begins in October. There is also the possibility of adding a permanent restroom in the historic district after the one in the parking lot is completed.

The proposal for the exploratory work on the tower as specified in the MOA components #1-3 was sent to the SHPO office for approval. John thanked Jim, Shoreline, and Wellsona for answering questions from the BLM engineers. The project was scoped with the BLM resources team on June 27. The resources team will meet in approximately two weeks. Tribal notifications have also been completed. Jim asked how the PBLSA will be notified when the tower project is ready to begin. John will send an email to David and Jim when the SHPO agreement has been received and the NEPA completed.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – The board discussed the motion that was tabled at the last meeting regarding approval of the proposal from Shoreline and Wellsona to develop plans to replicate the top three floors of the tower. David emailed the board prior to the meeting expressing his support. Harry agreed that the expenditure is justified as the tower is the most significant project at the light station. Jim reminded the board that approving this motion only commits PBLSA to funding for the first phase of the project, including components #1-4 of the MOA. This first phase will provide the information necessary to estimate costs for further phases.

Jim read the motion again: Motion: The PBLSA Board endorses the following proposal from Shoreline and Wellsona for the replacement of the top three levels of the tower and submits it to the BLM for their action as component #4 of the MOA.

Harry called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously. Jim will communicate the results of the vote to Bruce and Dan.

Jim reported that Bruce has suggested an additional task to be completed before construction on the tower. He is preparing a proposal for testing the foundation of the tower for earthquake stability. Yeh has the equipment to perform this testing. If approved by the PBLSA board and BLM, this proposal would be component #5 as an amendment to the MOA. The proposal is expected to be ready in August. Jim stated that the tasks in the MOA can still be completed by the end of the year.

6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – No changes.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – Harry reminded the board that there had been previous discussions about retaining professional assistance for organizing and running a full capital campaign; he said the board will want to address that again when we are ready to raise funds. BLM will also have ideas on government programs that can contribute toward the total funds needed. The cost of the necessary construction on the tower won't be known until the exploratory phase is complete.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report – No report.

10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – Scot reported that the stakeholder group, including Bruce Gibson’s assistant, a representative of the real property department of SLO County, and members of the Lions Club, met with the Coast Guard today. Kathe Tanner of the *Tribune* also attended the meeting. The group discussed the loan agreement for the lens, which will be signed in approximately one week then sent to the real property department for their review; the Pinedorado Lions Foundation will be the borrower of record. Payment has been sent to the insurer of the lens. There was discussion on permits required by the planning department for the repair of the lens enclosure, which is being investigated. A total of \$75,000 has been raised toward the \$118,000 quoted for the repair of the lens enclosure: PBLSA (\$25,000), as well as Cambria Tourism Board (\$25,000) and San Simeon Tourism Alliance (\$25,000), both contingent on raising the rest of the funds. Options for raising the remaining \$43,000 are being discussed. The Coast Guard has asked for a date for the start of construction.
11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – An ad has been purchased in the upcoming SLO Chamber of Commerce visitor map. The second quarter issue of *The Beacon* has been mailed. Planning has started for the annual Dinner & Libations for the Station fundraiser, which will be held on Saturday, October 7, in partnership with Harmony Cellars. Harmony will donate wine and staff to pour for the event and is also coordinating vendors. The Central Coast Pizza Trolley will be the food vendor; a musician has not been scheduled yet. There will be a silent auction again this year. Cressant encouraged the board members to attend the Dinner & Libations event as an opportunity to make connections that may lead to further donations.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Discussion Items: None

Harry Thorpe adjourned the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on July 24, 2023.

Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 7/26/23 – Harry Thorpe

TREASURER'S REPORT for June 2023

1. OPERATIONS INCOME: Last Month: \$7,500.70 YTD: \$35,310.40
PROFIT: Last Month: <\$1,193.83>* YTD: <\$3,378.46>**

MECHANICS BANK OPERATIONS: \$60,763.86***
TOWER RESTORATION FUND BALANCE: \$13,660.03
CONSTRUCTION FUND: \$102,817.15
VICTORIAN/KEEPERS RECONSTRUCTION FUND: \$151,000

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

* Excludes restoration/BLM: \$478.30

**Excludes restoration/BLM: \$21,962.07

***Includes \$50,000 donation

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>
June 2023	758,766.54	15,816.59	1,496.52	--	--	776,079.65
May 2023	720,019.34	<12,693.46>	1,440.66	50,000	--	758,766.54
Apr 2023	724,934.55	8,613.85	1,410.94	--	<15,000>	720,019.34

3. OTHER:

- Reviewed transactions for May/June.
- Additional \$50,000 anonymous donation received.

Harry M. Thorpe, Jr.
Treasurer

Attachment 3: Gift Shop Report 7/26/23 – Cressant Swarts

Net sales in June 2023 were \$1,515 lower than in June 2022 (correcting for a different formula used to calculate June 2022 net sales). Net sales in June 2023 are more comparable to June 2021. Profit, however, was similar. For June 2023: \$2,072 total profit and 34% profit vs June 2022: \$2,346 total profit and 30% profit.

A comparison of top items by price sold in June 2023 vs June 2022 suggests that visitors may be less likely to buy our higher-priced items than they were last year. The price increases between June 2022 and 2023 on the fleece jackets and vests and beanies may need to be brought back down; however, sales of fleece jackets in July are already higher than last July. Fleece sales are highest when the weather is cooler than visitors expect; perhaps it was colder on tour days last June.

June Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$6,177.70
Website sales	\$0
Total	\$6,177.70

June Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$4,105.28
Profit	\$2,072.42
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, and engraved bricks.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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	4,605	6,493	5,760						

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

Yearly Net Sales Comparisons

	Jan - Jun	TOTAL
2019	\$16,841	\$40,529
2020	\$7,187	\$8,743
2021	\$16,959	\$48,376
2022	\$28,717	\$63,496
2023	\$25,673	

Appendix 4: BLM Update 7/26/23 – Tammy Faust

The NEPA for MOA components #1-3 has been initiated and the draft CX will be going to the resource team by the end of this week.

- Estimate requested to replace back doors for units A, B and D
- New keypad locks will be installed for the front doors as we are starting to have issues with the current ones.
- Unit C received a new hot water heater, will need estimates to replace several gas lines.
- Cal Fire came out to look at fire hoses and fire safety set up. The fire suppression water system within the Pump house needs a complete overhaul as it's very rusted out and is not safe to test the fire hydrants until the system has been looked at. Will get an estimate on that.
- Working on having smoke/carbon detectors installed in all the Unit living and sleeping quarters
- Have placed fire extinguishers in all buildings, will need to have specific grease fire extinguishers for the kitchens and utility room. Working to get those.
- Will have a safety railing put on telecommunications building.
- The access gate is working again.
- Hike-In's – 1st one had 79 in attendance and the 2nd one 129.
- Average number of tours have been 45 people per day

Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 7/26/23 – Jim Harris

Jim will deliver his report at the meeting.

Appendix 6: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 7/26/23 – 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 7/26/23 – 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 7/26/23 – David Cooper

Amber Long, Long Historical Preservation Services, completed a draft of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for design plans of the Victorian Keepers Cottages. The work group will meet on Wednesday, August 2, to flesh out some details related to the Scope of Work section of the RFP. Once the RFP is finalized, Ms. Long will circulate it to three architects/contractors for proposal submissions, due two weeks after receiving the RFP. Proposals will include the contractor's plans for converting the historical drawings into a digital set of building plans, outline their approach to the work, and include a budget table with line items for labor, expenses, and other direct costs, as well as identifying milestones and final submission dates.

Appendix 9: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 7/26/23 – Scot Addis

The San Luis Obispo County (County) Real Property Services office is reviewing the final version of the lens loan agreement and addendum sent by the Coast Guard (CG). Once approved by the County, the Pinedorado Lions Foundation (Foundation) is prepared to sign it as borrower of record for the lens. The insurance required by the CG for the lens has been secured by the Foundation and is in effect.

A stakeholder call took place on June 28th to discuss developments and review next steps on the project. Participants included the CG, County, BLM, Foundation and PBLSA. Kathe Tanner, reporter for the Tribune/Cambrian was also on the call.

The Foundation submitted documents required by the County to place the funds approved by the Cambria and San Simeon tourism boards for the lens enclosure repair project before the Board of Supervisors for approval to issue a check to the Foundation for \$50K. Upon receipt, the Foundation

will request a check from the PBLSA for the \$25K previously approved for this endeavor. Further, a local benefactor has pledged a \$5K donation. We now have commitments totaling \$80K toward the enclosure restoration project.

A funding application for \$25K will be submitted by the Foundation for consideration by the Cambria Community Council (CCC). The project will be presented to the CCC grant committee on August 23rd with a decision on the funding request expected by early September. Additional individual donors and alternative funding options will be pursued to secure the funds needed to cover the remaining repair costs.

Appendix 10: Communications/Social Media Report 7/26/23 – Cressant Swarts

Overall reach (the number of views that posts received) increased for both Facebook and Instagram, but visits to the pages both decreased, as did the number of new likes and follows compared to the rate of increase for the previous month.

Marketing has begun for Dinner & Libations for the Station, the fundraising event scheduled for Saturday, October 7. Ticket sales are going directly to PBLSA via the Square retail system we use in the gift shop and on the website. Tickets are available at <https://piedrasblancas.org/dinner-and-libations-for-the-station.html>. Harmony Cellars is donating their wine and staff time. The food vendor is the Central Coast Pizza Trolley. Details aren't finalized with the Trolley, but the food costs should be significantly less than last year. Kenny Taylor will be the musician again this year; we received positive feedback on his performance at last year's event.

Harmony Cellars is also assisting with promoting Dinner & Libations. Cressant is submitting an article about the upcoming Hike In events as well as Dinner & Libations to *The Cambriaca* local online news site (<https://cambriaca.org>.) Event information will also be distributed to local events websites and Chambers of Commerce, among other news sources.

The August Hike In events and Dinner & Libations are on Facebook as events, which can be easily shared. (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>