

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 1: Secretary's Report 6/28/23 – Cressant Swarts

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

May 24, 2023

Present: David Cooper (Chair), Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), John Brass, Jim Harris, Veronika Kocen, Gary O'Neill, John Hodge (BLM), Jodie Nelson (BLM), Amber Long (Architectural historian), Cressant Swarts (Gift Shop Manager)

Absent: Scot Addis, Tammy Faust (BLM), Bre Brown (BLM)

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

David briefly introduced Amber Long, of Long Historic Preservation Services, who will present a proposal as a potential consultant for the Victorian Keepers' Houses project.

David asked to change the order of discussion for the agenda to begin with the first four reports, then move to New Business and item 9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report. After Amber's presentation and the board discussion, the agenda will resume with report 5. Tower Report. Agenda approved by consensus with these changes.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – See Appendix 1. Approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – Appendix 2. There was a small operations budget loss for the month and for the year to date. The \$50,000 anonymous donation received in March was moved to the Fidelity investment account. The Victorian/Keepers Reconstruction Fund amount shown in the report represents all donations earmarked for the Victorian project. \$15,000 was transferred from the investment fund to the operating fund to cover gift shop purchases.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – Appendix 3. Harry noted that the gift shop inventory is at the highest level ever at \$46,000; he may have to adjust the insurance coverage. John Brass asked if extra storage space could be added to the gift shop by extending the gift shop building a few feet to the north. A brief discussion followed. The gift shop committee will continue to discuss ideas for more efficient display, storage, and other sales venues.
4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – Appendix 4. Jodie reported that the parking lot chip-seal has been completed, leaving the parking lot expanded and with a better layout that will allow for more event parking. The strip in the middle will be re-vegetated. Ryan is working on the NEPA for parking lot restroom. There is tentative approval on the tower plans in the MOA, but archaeologist approval is still pending. The SHPO report will be sent by the middle of next week. John Hodge clarified that approval has been received for the first three tasks specified in the MOA, pending SHPO approval of the window reconstruction in task 3. John will respond by next Wednesday with confirmation that work can begin on the first two tasks: the mortar testing and the geotechnical testing. David asked to have a memo signing off on each component of

the MOA for record-keeping. David asked if the board's memo from the last meeting had been received and passed on; John confirmed that it had.

Jodie is inquiring about using a shuttle from Cambria to ease parking concerns for this year's hike-in events. Bre will do interpretive astronomy programs with State Parks at the San Simeon campground this summer and will have monthly programs at the light station starting this fall and continuing through May. Tour numbers have been down this winter and early spring due to weather closures, but Jodie expects the additional hike-in dates to increase the summer tour numbers over last year.

Jodie reported that the phones at the light station have been down and that AT&T is still working on the issue. The gate has not been working, but an electrician is scheduled to repair it on Thursday or Friday and get an estimate for a better, mouse-proof system.

Discussion moved to New Business: 1. Proposal presentation by Amber Long, architectural historian.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – Jim Harris made the following 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.” David seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

The motion was tabled until the June 2023 board meeting following discussion on concerns regarding the total expenditures the PBLSA will be incurring through fulfillment of the MOA. Harry will forward to the board a summary of the costs associated with each of the four components of the MOA. There was further discussion on how to apply for BLM co-op funds in order to offset some of the costs, as was the case for previous projects.

6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) No change.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) No change.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – David made the following motion: “David Cooper [or other board member] moves that the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association approves Amber Long’s May 17, 2023, proposal to fund Stage One of the Victorian Cottages Reconstruction Project. That proposal includes the preparation of a bid package, solicitation of bids, review of bids, and recommendations that will assist the board in selecting a suitable contractor to prepare architectural plan conversions based on historic building plans, drawings, elevations, and photographs stored at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. Doing business as Long Historic Preservation Services, Amber Long’s fee for these services shall not exceed \$5,170.00.” Jim seconded. Discussion followed. David called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion returned to Reports: 5. Tower Report.

10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – David has contacted Mike Hanchett of the San Simeon Tourism Alliance, who is willing to work on a solution to fund the repair of the lens enclosure. David and Scot are working to schedule a meeting.

11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – The board discussed suggestions for content for the next edition of *The Beacon*.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

1. Proposal presentation by Amber Long, architectural historian. – Amber gave a quick summary of her proposal, which would involve preparing a bid package for potential architectural firms to convert the historic plans to current building code standards; soliciting proposals from potential firms; reviewing the proposals and providing a recommendation to the board; and working with the selected firm to ensure that the converted plans meet standards for historical reconstructions. Amber explained the requirements of converting historic plans to modern building standards, including a review on whether the update to current code would change character-defining features of the historic structure. This first phase would generate conceptual plans without details of wiring, plumbing, etc. that could be used in marketing for fundraising and as a working document to guide discussions on the functions of the buildings' interiors. Amber emphasized that complete historical reconstructions are rare, and that this rarity and the Victorian style of the buildings should get attention useful in fundraising. There was discussion regarding potential complications in maintaining historic standards for the exterior, such as housing the lens in part of the duplex or if the planned use of a building requires the addition of an elevator.

Amber Long exited the meeting and the discussion moved to Reports: 9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report.

Discussion Items: None.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by David Cooper (Chair) and Sharon Flaherty (Secretary) on June 22, 2023.

Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 6/28/23 – Harry Thorpe

TREASURER'S REPORT for May 2023

1. OPERATIONS INCOME: Last Month: \$8,370.60 YTD: \$29,938.49
PROFIT: Last Month: \$517.78* YTD: <\$2,128.79>**

MECHANICS BANK OPERATIONS: \$14,812.43
TOWER RESTORATION FUND BALANCE: \$13,660.03
CONSTRUCTION FUND: \$98,369.03
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: \$2,027.47

**Excludes restoration/BLM: \$21,483.77

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>
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
Mar 2023	711,662.82	12,411.80	919.93	--	--	724,994.55

3. OTHER:

- Reviewed transactions for April/May.
- Increased product liability for expanded inventory.
- Renewed government website passwords.

Harry M. Thorpe, Jr.
Treasurer

Attachment 3: Gift Shop Report 6/28/23 – Cressant Swarts

The profit percentage dropped to 33% from 38% last month; our costs have increased on some items and Cressant is considering which prices to raise.

Harry asked to see how much money was saved by ordering gift shop stock in larger quantities. The total cost for spring orders of hoodies, fleece jackets and vests, custom keychains, and custom socks was \$12,550 with a total savings of \$731. Part of this savings will be realized in the current year, and part will be spread over approximately 5 years.

The gift shop committee met on June 15 and discussed additional sales venues and whether the gift shop should have a place in the Victorian reconstruction.

May Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$6,848.41
Website sales	\$114.69
Total	\$6,963.10

May Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$4,656.73
Profit	\$2,306.37
Percentage	33%

**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	4,605	6,493							

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 6/28/23 – Tammy Faust

Lens

Meeting with PB Lens stakeholder group on June 28 with stakeholder group to go over status of the lens and glass display renovation. San Simeon Tourism Alliance has agreed to a matching funds proposal for the enclosure improvements. SSTA has committed \$75,000 and stated they may be able to commit more funds in the future. More information to come.

Parking Lot Redesign / Restrooms

Next, we need to work on some sort of boundary / parking bumpers to protect the vegetation. We should now be able to park many more vehicles during events. The parking lot did not expand but it now has a much better layout. Ryan will be working on the restroom while on his detail.

Tower

Initial scoping with resource team was held on June 27. BLM IDT (Interdisciplinary Team aka Resources Team) has formed and will meet in approximately 2 weeks. SHPO has been notified and tribes have been contacted.

Victorian Duplex

CAD drawings have been scanned.

Special Event:

Hike-in Tours Wednesdays 7/5, 7/19, 8/2, 8/16

*Local press has indicated interest in attending

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	594		
May	362	555	0	446	452	438		
June	732	698	0	643	661	619*		
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		

Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 6/28/23 – Jim Harris

Judd King of Yeh and Associates, Inc. provided a memo for Project No. 222-284 on June 2, 2023, which was forwarded to Ryan Cooper of the BLM. This memo was in response to questions raised by the BLM for field exploration for the project site and provides requested details as part of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approval for the work. Ground disturbing activities are specifically described, and the plan identifies the proposed exploration locations that include test pits, geophysical surveys, and ground penetrating radar survey as described in the proposal to PBLSA, dated August 10, 2022. In a June 9, 2023, email, Ryan said the package for what we assume is the MOA components #1-3 was sent to SHPO with the expectation that they would respond in about 30 days. Discussions with Bruce Elster indicate that both he and Dan Murphy of Wellsona are ready to initiate work when BLM gives the go-ahead; Judd King is also prepared to initiate work. Hence, components #1, 2, and 3 are all ready to initiate project work upon notification from BLM.

The proposal from Shoreline and Wellsona for replacing the top three levels of the tower was submitted to the PBLSA Board at the May 24 meeting, and the following motion was tabled until this meeting: **“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.” Please note that the MOA timeline specifies that the PBLSA submit this proposal to BLM by 6/1/23.

Bruce has indicated that he has been in discussion with Judd King of Yeh and Associates, Inc. about an additional task in preparation for the rehabilitation of Tower. The task is for seismic testing of the tower site with an external force mechanism; this would provide site data on the foundation seismic physics directly as opposed to the currently used external data. This project will be submitted by Yeh and Associates, Inc as component #5 to be appended to the existing MOA between the BLM and the PBLSA; the tentative schedule for the submittal is the August PBLSA Board meeting.

As stated before, with the Shoreline final report of October 14, 2021, the three task proposals for Components #1, #2, and #3, and with the submittal of the tower top restoration proposal Component #4, there will 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.

Appendix 6: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 6/28/23 – 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 6/28/23 – 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: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 6/28/23 – Scot Addis

The Pinedorado Lions Foundation (Foundation) is in receipt of the final version of the lens loan agreement and addendum sent by the Coast Guard (CG) for signature.

The Cambria Tourism Board (CTB) met June 13th to consider a revised infrastructure funding application submitted by the Foundation to cover the lens enclosure repairs. The Board approved \$25K for the project contingent upon the Foundation securing the remaining funds necessary to complete the \$118K repair project. A funding application package was submitted to the San Simeon Tourism Board (SSTB) on June 17th. At the SSTB meeting on June 20th, the Board approved \$25K contingent upon the Foundation securing the remaining funds necessary to complete the project. With the PBLSA Board approved funds of \$25K we now have commitments totaling \$75K toward the enclosure restoration effort. Individual donors and alternative funding avenues will be explored to secure the funds needed to cover the remaining repair costs.

A stakeholder call is scheduled for June 28th to provide all with a status report on the project.

Appendix 9: Communications/Social Media Report 6/28/23 – Cressant Swarts

The ad in the visitor map produced by the SLO Chamber of Commerce that the board approved earlier this month has been purchased and new artwork submitted. The ad includes space on the digital display in the SLO Visitor Center that can be changed throughout the year.

Facebook page likes increased in the last 30 days, and Instagram followers also increased. However, overall reach (the number of views that posts received) declined; Cressant will try to post more frequently, which should bring the reach numbers back up.

The second-quarter issue of *The Beacon* was mailed to members and posted on the website on June 28. Cressant intends to send the next issue by the end of August; please contact her with any suggestions for articles.

Cressant met with Erin and Mike from Harmony Cellars on June 22 to discuss the Dinner & Libations for the Station fundraising event scheduled for Saturday, October 7. As they did last year, Harmony is coordinating the scheduling of the food vendor and musician, as well as donating their wine and staff time for the event itself. The food vendor will be the Pizza Trolley, serving pizza, salad, and cannolis for dessert. The musician has not been scheduled yet. We will be organizing the silent auction, the ABC license, marketing design, and providing setup and volunteers for the event as we did last year. There will also be a PBLS wine glass included in the ticket price. Tickets will be \$90 until August 1 and \$100 after that. Promotion is intended to begin the first week of July, which is a month earlier than last year, so we have hopes of selling more tickets. Harmony is also looking for a new ticket vendor, but if they can't find one that doesn't detract from the profits, we will run ticket sales through the same Square system we use for the gift shop.