

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 1: Secretary's Report 5/24/23 – Cressant Swarts

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

April 26, 2023

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

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

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

The agenda was approved by consensus.

Reports:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Discussion Items: None

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

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

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

Appendix 2: Treasurer's Report 5/24/23 – Harry Thorpe

TREASURER'S REPORT for April 2023

1. OPERATIONS INCOME: Last Month: \$5,671.70 YTD: \$19,439.10*
 PROFIT: Last Month: <\$306.22> YTD: <\$2,646.57>**

MECHANICS BANK OPERATIONS: \$13,118.28
 TOWER RESTORATION FUND BALANCE: \$13,660.03
 CONSTRUCTION FUND: \$100,569.02
 VICTORIAN/KEEPERS RECONSTRUCTION FUND: \$151,000

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

* Does not include \$50,000 donation

**Excludes restoration expenses: \$19,456.30

2. INVESTMENT BALANCE – FIDELITY INVESTMENTS

Month	Beg Bal	Market Chg	Div/Int	Deposit	W/D	Ending Bal
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
Feb 2023	737,846.39	<19,676.90>	993.33	--	<7,500>	711,662.82

3. OTHER:

- Reviewed transactions For March/April.
- Transferred \$50,000 donation to Fidelity.
- Transferred \$15,000 from Fidelity to operating fund.
- Filed/paid 1st quarter sales tax.

Harry M. Thorpe, Jr.
 Treasurer

Attachment 3: Gift Shop Report 5/24/23 – Cressant Swarts

Nearly everything is now at a good stock level for summer. There is a new kids' t-shirt design, matching the one on the women's v-neck t-shirts.

April Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$4,862.32
Website sales	\$70.28
Total	\$4,932.60

April Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$3,040.02
Profit	\$1,892.58
Percentage	38%

*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								

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 5/24/23 – Ryan Cooper

Lens

Discuss during the Lens Report

Parking Lot Redesign / Restrooms

The parking lot chip seal is complete. 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. I will be working on the restroom while on detail.

Tower

I have received the verbal approval from the engineers, and we are waiting for the Archaeologist to get back from leave next week to get the SHPO process moving. My plan is to work on the NEPA while I am on detail. I know we have missed a few deadlines, but we are still making progress.

Victorian Duplex

We had a great meeting with a few board members and Amber Long the architectural historian. She laid out the steps that would need to be taken to get the project going.

Special Event:

Hike-in Tours

7/5, 7/19, 8/2, 8/16

Tour Numbers

Month	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		
October	506	441	535	22	552	421		
November	523	433	334	56	350	439		
December	829	251	518	0	208	411		
January	608	0	715	0	300	196		
February	780	318	578	108	407	341		
March	662	784	185	160	471	329		
April	684	790	0	399	524	594		
May	362	555	0	446	452			
June	732	698	0	643	661			
July	1169	1085	0	972	881			
August	1001	819	0	834	1043			
September	591	374	0	547	487			
Total	8447	6548	2865	4166	6336	2580		

*partial

Appendix 5: Summary of Tower Top Project 5/24/23 – Jim Harris

The PBLSA still has not received a notification from BLM for engineering approval for Component #3 (window rehabilitation) of the MOA between the PBLSA and the BLM. Further, the MOA specifies that the BLM complete all review and approval for Components 1, 2, and 3 by May 31, 2023. The proposal from Shoreline and Wellsona for replacing the top three levels of the tower is being prepared, and an electronic copy of this Component #4 task will be emailed to the PBLSA Board and BLM members prior to the May Board meeting for consideration. Please note that the MOA timeline specifies that the PBLSA submit this proposal to BLM by 6/1/23; therefore, the following motion is presented to satisfy this milestone:

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.

As stated before, with the Shoreline final report of October 14, 2021, the three tasks 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 5/24/23 – 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 5/24/23 – 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 5/24/23 – David Cooper

A 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.

Appendix 9: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 5/24/23 – Scot Addis

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

The Cambria Tourism Board (CTB) met April 25th to consider an infrastructure funding application submitted by the Foundation to cover the lens enclosure repairs. The Board entertained an amended motion to provide \$50,000 for the project. A Lion on the CTB abstained and the remaining Board members split in their vote with the result being the application and amended motion failed to pass. The Cambria Chamber of Commerce has offered to engage lodging operators to help identify the importance of the lens to visitors. Alternate funding avenues are being explored with the immediate aim of securing sufficient funds to re-apply to the CTB with a revised funding application seeking matching funds to cover the repair costs. The CTB does not generally meet in the summer, the next opportunity to present an amended funding application will likely be in September.

Plans are underway to conduct a stakeholder call in June to provide all with a status report on the project.

Appendix 10: Communications/Social Media Report 5/24/23 – Cressant Swarts

Social media posts for April have featured a lot of wildflowers and animals. Overall, Facebook reach declined slightly, and Instagram reach increased significantly from the previous month.

Promotion for the hike-in events in July and August has just begun, with events listed on Facebook and a page created on the website.

The second quarter edition of *The Beacon* has been delayed, but Cressant will finish it soon.

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.piedrasblancas.org>

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

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