

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

September 27, 2023

Present: David Cooper (Chair), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), John Brass, Jim Harris, Gary O'Neill, John Hodge (BLM), Ryan Cooper (BLM), Jodie Nelson (BLM), Tammy Whitley (BLM), Cressant Swarts (Gift Shop Manager)

Absent: Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer), Scot Addis, Veronika Kocen

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

David thanked Harry for standing in as chair for the last three months and welcomed back Ryan from his detail. He also noted that he had emailed the updated proposal from Yeh and Associates to the board a few hours before the meeting.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – The minutes of the August 23, 2023, meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – Harry will give his report at the next meeting.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – Sales in the gift shop were up from the previous August. Dinner & Libations ticket sales are not included in the gift shop net sales. The profit percentage was 33% for August; profits range between 30-40%.
4. BLM Update (Ryan Cooper) – Ryan is working on the restroom project now that the parking lot is complete; there will be one restroom in the parking lot, with plans for another installed in the historic district, though that one will involve more coordination with the BLM archaeologist and engineers.

It is possible there will be a government shutdown next week if a budget is not passed by congress before midnight on September 30. In that case, the light station would be closed with no tours and no events, including the Dinner & Libations fundraiser scheduled for October 7. John Hodge said there was discussion at higher levels of BLM and DOI about what events may be allowed, as there have been differences in how previous shutdowns were handled. BLM staff will be given information at an all-staff meeting on Monday, October 2.

Tour numbers for the federal fiscal year are similar to last year's. There will be a National Public Lands Day free tour day on Saturday, as well as a volunteer brunch the day before. A volunteer outing to Point San Luis Lighthouse on November 10 is being arranged; Ryan encouraged the board to participate. David noted that there is a meeting in Sacramento for friends groups organized by the National Conservation Lands program; he will try to have the PBLSA represented.

5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – David noted that there had been no official notice from BLM that final approvals were granted for the work described in Components #1-3 of the MOA, potentially losing a month of work time. He asked what the procedure is for work to begin. John Hodge said that BLM usually has a kickoff meeting with all involved parties to schedule the contractors' work all at once and that the PBLSA should schedule a meeting. David noted that the MOA specifies that BLM will be responsible for scheduling, but that he can help begin the process by setting up a meeting with himself, Jim, and Ryan to discuss how to best ensure that the BLM archaeologist and any other necessary BLM staff are available when the contractors are working. Jim reported that Shoreline, Wellsona, and Yeh have been informed that work can begin soon.

The updated proposal for Component #2 of the MOA, to plan for replacing the top three levels of the lighthouse, was distributed to the board before the meeting. It combines the original Component #2 with the additional geotechnical work that had previously been referred to as Component #5 and should be incorporated into the MOA as a replacement for Appendix D. There was discussion on how this change should be handled. Because the additional work will be seismic tests with no ground-disturbing work involved, Ryan said it can be added to the MOA without beginning the approvals process again. Tammy Whitley, the BLM archaeologist, asked to review the updated proposal to confirm that the scope of the project has not changed. Jim will send the updated proposal to Tammy, along with a formal request that this proposal be substituted for the existing Appendix D in the MOA. John Hodge said that BLM staff will review it to make sure the scope doesn't exceed what has already been approved. David sent a memo to the board regarding the additional costs that will be incurred with this updated proposal; board approval for the budget was granted in the MOA with the understanding that there would be budget adjustments.

6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – No changes.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – No changes.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No report.
9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – David reported that Amber Long, the architectural historian consulting with the PBLSA, has said that the Head Keeper's Cottage needs more documentation for the whole structure of the restoration to be considered historic. Cressant is doing some research to see if the missing sheets of the plans can be found in the National Archives or other sources. The submission of the RFP to potential architectural firms is waiting on this additional documentation.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – David reported that Dan is nearly ready to start transporting materials to Cambria to begin work on enclosure. All the subcontractors have been hired and scheduled. Estimated completion is before the end of the year. David sent a note to the board asking for any additional funds needed for the enclosure repair, which was approved.
11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – Cressant reported that ticket sales are continuing for the Dinner & Libations for the Station fundraiser despite the possibility of a government shutdown. In the case of a shutdown, the decision to cancel the event will be made on Monday after the BLM all-staff meeting. Cressant is discussing the possibility of rescheduling with Harmony Cellars, who partners with PBLSA on planning the event.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Discussion Items: Gary was approached at the volunteer gathering by Susan Fiedler, who is involved in the native plant restoration of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve. She asked if the PBLSA board would lend public support to their efforts, given the native plant restoration completed at the light station. Gary will find out more details, but he believes they are not asking for funds or volunteers but instead a letter of support.

Gary recommended that all board members come out to PBLS once a month on tour days to see how tours are run and talk to visitors. Helping on school tour days would also be valuable to better understand the work that happens at the light station daily. David agreed that it would be helpful to build more relationships with volunteers and that he intends to start visiting the light station as Gary suggests.

Ryan said that the light station will have a scarecrow in a keeper's uniform as part of the annual Cambria Scarecrow Festival that was built by Gail, a volunteer. It will be put in front of the lens enclosure on Monday and can be moved if it conflicts with enclosure repair. Ryan will contact Scot to see if he has any suggestions.

David Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Appendix 1: Secretary's Report 9/27/23 – Cressant Swarts

Piedras Blancas Light Station Association Minutes

Zoom Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

August 23, 2023

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

Absent: David Cooper (Chair), Sharon Flaherty (Secretary), Scot Addis, John Brass

Harry Thorpe called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

Reports:

1. Secretary's Report (Cressant Swarts) – The minutes of the July 26, 2023, meeting were approved by consensus.
2. Financial Status and Treasurer's Report (Harry Thorpe) – Income improved this month, showing a small increase in profit and leaving only a small loss for the year to date. The investment portfolio has grown due to invested donations and positive market changes this month.
3. Gift Shop Report (Cressant Swarts) – Gift shop income was lower this July than the same month last year. A review of sales for both years shows that clothing and stuffed animal sales are lower this year, but clothing remains the highest-selling category overall.
4. BLM Update (Tammy Faust) – BLM's approval of tasks #1-4 from the MOA has proceeded through a final revision and NEPA approval and should be ready for signatures tomorrow. Once signed, the PBLSA will be notified and can communicate with Shoreline, Wellsona, and Yeh to coordinate the start of the tasks. Jim was asked to describe task #5, which is seismic testing around the foundation that will give assurance the models for stabilizing the tower are accurate. There is no impact on the approvals granted by BLM for tasks #1-4. Temporary manager Tammy Faust's last day at the light station will be on Thursday; Ryan Cooper returns next week. Tammy has been working on maintaining and updating the safety systems at the light station, including fire suppression. The Motus project installed an antenna on the roof of Unit B to track tagged wildlife remotely.
5. Tower Report (Jim Harris) – See BLM report above. Jim will communicate with Shoreline, Wellsona, and Yeh so they are aware that work can start soon. The deadlines in the MOA may need adjustment if the work can't be completed by the end of the year. Judd King of Yeh will have a proposal on task #5 for seismic testing before the September board meeting.
6. Underground Utilities Report (Jim Harris) – No update.
7. Capital Campaign/Grants Report (Jim Harris/Harry Thorpe) – No update.
8. Membership Committee Report (Harry Thorpe/Sharon Flaherty) – No update.

9. Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report (David Cooper) – Amber Long has received the plans she needs to send to potential RFP architectural firms.
10. Fresnel Lens Report (Scot Addis) – Nearly all the funds necessary to repair the lens enclosure have been secured. In an email before the board meeting, David suggested that the board consider supplying any additional funds needed if the estimated costs have increased. The check for \$25,000 from the PBLSA has been sent to the Pinedorado Lions Foundation. Scot will talk to Shoreline and Wellsona regarding the work schedule and find out if there are changes to the cost estimate. Work may be able to start in the next few weeks.
11. Communications/Social Media Report (Cressant Swarts) – Engagement with the Facebook and Instagram pages is mostly increasing. The deadline for ticket sales for the Dinner & Libations for the Station fundraiser on October 7 has not been determined but will probably be a week before the event, depending on the food vendor.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Discussion Items: None.

Harry Thorpe adjourned the meeting at 6:29 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Cressant Swarts.

Minutes checked by Harry Thorpe (Vice-chair/Treasurer) on September 21, 2023.

Appendix 2: Gift Shop Report 9/27/23 – Cressant Swarts

Sales were back up this month compared to August of last year.

Dinner & Libations for the Station tickets grossed \$3,110, which is not included in the revenue, profit, and net sales calculations below.

August Gift Shop Revenue

On-site sales	\$8,707.15
Website sales	\$103
Total	\$8,810.15

August Gift Shop Profit

Cost of Goods Sold*	\$5,869.82
Profit	\$2,940.33
Percentage	33%

**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
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	7,875	8,017				

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 3: BLM Update 9/27/23 – Ryan Cooper

Lens

Discuss during the Lens Report

Restrooms

The restroom project has been revitalized. I am in the process of gathering old documents that have been done in the past few years and putting a package together to start the NEPA process. We will start with a restroom in the parking lot area where the old com tower used to be. If you are not aware of where that is it is the concrete slab near where the porta potty sits today.

Tower

NEPA is complete and we have the sign off from SHPO and the state engineers. We are ready to move forward. We need to work closely on scheduling so we can make sure the archeologist is on site when we are doing ground-disturbing activities.

Victorian Duplex

In my absence, I am not sure what has been going on, but I know some progress has been made.

Special Events:

September 29 th	Motus Presentation
October 7 th	Dinner & Libations for the Station
October 21 st	Bat Presentation
October 28 th	Evening tour at LH
November 4 th	Sunset Photo Tour
Nov 10 th	Vol tour at Point SLO
Nov 11 th	Condor Presentation
Nov 17 th	Starry Night @ the Light Station
Nov 27 th	Wildlife Society Workshop
Dec 1 st	Full Moon Tour
Dec 9 th	Sunrise Photo Tour
Jan 6 th	Volunteer New Year Festival
Jan 11 th – 15 th	Morro Bay Bird Festival

Tour Numbers

Month	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
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	520		
May	362	555	0	446	452	444		
June	732	698	0	643	661	702		
July	1169	1085	0	972	881	1087		
August	1001	819	0	834	1043	1036		
September	591	374	0	547	487	375*		
Total	8447	6548	2865	4166	6336	6103		

*partial

Appendix 4: Summary of Tower Top Project 9/27/23 – Jim Harris

Ryan Cooper email on 9/21/23: “A little update on the BLM end as it pertains to the tower project. We have approval from SHPO, the engineers and Gabe signed the environmental work just a few days ago. We are ready to move forward. Maybe we can talk next week during the board meeting. One thing to think about is that for some portions we will need the archeologist on site so it will take some coordination on everyone's behalf.”

Bruce Elster of Shoreline Engineering 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. The proposal for this project has been received and it is being reviewed with respect to the project associated with Component #4 submitted in 2022. Bruce and Jim are reviewing the two proposals, and there is some possibility that it will be better to combine the two proposals into one project at this point in time. If so, this project will be submitted by Yeh and Associates, Inc as an augmented Component #4 to be appended to the existing MOA between the BLM and the PBLSA. The status of this review will be addressed at the PBLSA Board meeting on Wednesday.

As stated before, with the Shoreline final report of October 14, 2021, and the four task proposals for Components #1, #2, #3, and #4, there will be sufficient documented engineering work to begin the construction rehabilitation phase for restoring the tower. The submittal of the on-site seismic testing to be proposed for Component #5, or augmented Component #4, will address any risks involved in the modeling studies for the stabilization of the tower by the use of inferred seismic data for simulation. The schedule presented in the MOA which supports the end of the year 2023 for the completion of this phase of the tower stabilization and rehabilitation engineering work should be considered at risk because of the delay in approval by the BLM for the four submitted task proposals.

Appendix 5: Summary of Underground Utilities Project 9/27/23 – 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 6: Capital Campaign/Grants Report 9/27/23 – 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.

Appendix 7: Victorian Keepers Cottages Workgroup Report 9/27/23 – David Cooper

The BLM and PBLA archives are sketchy on documents relating to the single-story Head Keeper's Cottage. Our consultant, Amber Long, thinks we need more information before we circulate the RFP to local architects. So Cressant is conducting further research into collections at the National Archives and the U.S. Lighthouse Society. Stay tuned.

Appendix 8: Fresnel Lens Enclosure Report 9/27/23 – Scot Addis

The Pinedorado Lions Foundation (Foundation) established a checking account at Pacific Premier bank to manage funds in support of the lens enclosure restoration project. To date, funds totaling \$85K have been deposited. Another \$15K pledged by a private donor pends. With the funding backstop this Board has generously provided, we have the means to proceed with the project. Contracts have been signed by the Foundation with each of the three contractors performing restoration work, and a general liability insurance policy is in place. To kick off the project, a pre-construction meeting was held on-site at the enclosure on 9/20 to review each element of the project and coordinate activities. Protective measures to safeguard the lens were also discussed and confirmed with all the contractors. The first element of the project will be performed by San Luis Customs who will install the UV sheeting over the enclosure glass. This work will take place throughout October. Meanwhile Wellsona will begin shop fabrication of parts. Dan will start work on-site once the UV film installation is complete. The last element is painting of the metal framework that will be performed by Gregg Whitfield who has done this work before. Weather permitting, the intent is to complete the entire project by the end of the year.

Further issue for Board consideration: sources of additional funding to cover the amount pledged by the Board (\$18K) to backstop the remainder of this project.

Appendix 9: Communications/Social Media Report 9/27/23 – Cressant Swarts

Overall reach (the number of views that posts received) declined for both Facebook and Instagram. However, followers for both Facebook and Instagram increased significantly.

A sandwich board sign was made to sit in front of the lens with information about the history of the lens, the address of the Pinedorado Lions Foundation for donations to the enclosure repair fund, and thanks to sponsors of the repair.

The third quarter *Beacon* newsletter was mailed in early September.

Marketing continues for the Dinner & Libations for the Station fundraiser on October 7. Tickets will be available until September 30 at <https://piedrasblancas.org/dinner-and-libations-for-the-station.html>. However, there is a possibility that a government shutdown may force the Dinner & Libations for the Station event to be rescheduled. Cressant is working with Harmony Cellars to find another date.

We are making a greater effort to put all events at the light station that are sponsored by BLM or PBLA 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.instagram.com/piedrasblancaslightstation>