

Olympics marketing campaign gathering funds, support

November 15, 2019



After receiving a pledge from Crescent City officials last week, the Crescent City/Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce met this week with other organizations to secure commitments for the city's plan to market the region's tie to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan.

Last week, the Crescent City Council authorized \$15,000 toward hiring a marketing consultant who would work with chamber executive director Cindy Vosberg.

This week, Vosberg was able to secure another \$10,000 from the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors and \$9,500 from the Crescent City Harbor District.

City staff had tapped Rob Holmlund of Malex Consulting to outline the duties and responsibilities of the new position. Vosberg said her preference is to keep Holmlund aboard as the consultant, rather than search for someone new once the position is authorized.

“He’s the right guy for it. I don’t have the expertise to do it all right, but he is the right project manager we need,” Vosberg told The TriPLICATE.

The goal has been to raise a total of \$59,000 to pay for the consultant’s services, which would entail developing a relationship with outside news media and generating promotional materials for social media, including special publications, video productions and web content.

Vosberg’s first stop this week, joined by Holmlund, was the harbor district. While the commission was on board with the concept of promoting the region in the wake of national and international exposure, members were worried about favoritism, spending as much as other organizations but getting less than them in return.

“We’re small, we don’t have a big staff. If you involve all these people, which is a wonderful idea to get the city involved, how does the harbor not get lost in the discussions?” asked Harbormaster Charles Helms.

Crescent City Harbor Commissioner Wes White added, “I like this project, but my concern is favoritism. This town, community, has been somewhat restrictive because of favoritism, so if we’re going to put some money into this, how can we be assured that does not happen?”

Holmlund was blunt in response. “I don’t have an answer. I don’t know how this will benefit the harbor directly, unless the ultimate goal is bringing more tourists, more businesses here.

“It’s a long-term picture. I don’t think you’re going to spend \$5,000 now and make \$10,000 next month. It’s a bit of a gamble.

“My response (to favoritism) is, capitalism isn’t fair,” he added. “Some benefit more than others. Collectively, capitalism produces more wealth for everyone than any other system in the past.”

In the end, the commissioners appreciated Holmlund’s candor but couldn’t approve the full \$10,000 asked. Instead, they “split the difference” and offered \$7,500 from the harbor district, with Rick Shepard, president of the Crescent City Fisherman’s Association, chipping in another \$2,000.

Vosberg and Holmlund met little resistance at their next stop, with the Del Norte County supervisors. However, District 1 Supervisor Roger Gitlin did want assurances this would be different from past solicitations.

“Our experience with consultants in the past is, we’ve come up short when we’ve hired consultants. We expect super results, then they don’t come. So, what makes this one different?

“A once-in-a-lifetime experience, I understand and appreciate that. How do you think this will translate to the average person on the street who’s not exactly engaged in this project, who’s being asked to spend \$15,000 on a photo op to be developed down the road?” Gitlin asked.

Vosberg said that every dollar coming into the county helps everyone who lives here. “I don’t know the exact return we’re going to have on this investment, but I do know this: If we don’t do anything, it is going to be greatly diminished from what it could be.

“Being proactive and going after the dollars is going to be how we help our community grow,” she said.

Kevin Harwick of Cholwell, Benz and Hartwick Accountants and Consultants in Crescent City expressed his agreement during public input that this was an opportunity to leverage a multimillion-dollar advertising campaign.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that we aren’t going to get again. NBC’s filming has been virtually completed, and completed with a recognition of our sister-city relationship as well as a focus on commerce. That’s going to air whether we do anything or not,” Harwick said. “But it would be a great opportunity for all.

“The most classic example is the recognition of the Dungeness crab fleet. NBC has gone to great lengths to show one of our greatest possessions. The amount of money today is a very small amount of money. The \$10,000 doesn’t go very far at all. The reality is, it’s symbolic.”

District 3 Supervisor Chris Howard looked back at the story behind the sister-city relationship, when a boat from Rikuzentakata washed ashore in Crescent City in 2013. “We didn’t know how this relationship was going to turn out when those students recovered that boat. But we do know now that it has captured the attention of the hearts and minds of the world.

“And it will be on public display for us fairly soon - July 24, 2020. We’ve got a very limited time to do that. It’s not a lot, it is symbolic in nature and doesn’t go as far in nature as we need it to,” Howard said.

The four county supervisors voted unanimously to transfer \$10,000 from their economic development budget (chairwoman Lori Cowan had recused herself from the discussions).

District 4 vice-chair Gerry Hemmingsen said the other \$5,000 the chamber sought would have to be found in some other part of the budget and would be considered at a future meeting.

In addition to the county and harbor district, city staff also reached out to the Del Norte Unified School District. Superintendent Jeff Harris said he was asked “to what extent is it possible or practical to engage students in the process.”

He pledged to meet with teachers of digital media and marketing, then with high school principals. Then, he said, they would circle back around to see how participation plays out with meeting the needs of the students.

Vosberg said her next stops would be with the community’s business leaders in an effort to make up the \$24,000 still needed toward the \$59,000 goal.