**CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE 2016/2017 MARKETING PLAN**

The plan presented on May 10, 2016 is a draft and should be considered for discussion only.

The plan has been developed with several considerations:

* Feedback and input from staff
* Past performance and budgetary parameters
* The 2016-2017 BID Annual Report – specifically, the budget and recommendations on expenditures regarding the additional funds received from MCLA
* Input, lengthy discussion and recommendations from Carl Ribaudo – Marketing & Research Consultant who performed a marketing research study for VMC in 2013 and has helped in the development of the past 3 marketing plans
* Considerations and recommendations from current vendors including Scott Schneider (DMO Consultant), Brandhound (website), Brendan McGuigan (social media) and Alison De Grassi (PR & Marketing)
* Discussion and feedback from the marketing and visitor services committees

Some specific areas of the plan need further development – preferably through either Board or Committee discussion. These areas include:

* **Festivals and events** – participation amongst local businesses has been on a downward trend. Analysis should be done to determine how MCTC can best utilize both its current festivals as well as future possibilities in order for this trend to reverse and, once again, move upward. The efforts (both time and money) put into festivals and events should have a strategic focus of driving increased visitation in the shoulder season as well as increasing average spend and time spent in the county
* **Marketing** – While the amount of money that should be invested into marketing is clearly defined, the specific programs are still being worked out. The Marketing Committee has been working on defining these programs, but more discussion is needed to finalize them. The committee is encouraged to work diligently in order to have a clear, yet flexible plan it recommends in time for the final presentation of this plan on June 14th
* **Visitor Services** – The Visitor Services committee should discuss the future of the visitor guide, “mini” guide, wall calendar and other promotional materials. These programs have been left out of the draft marketing plan. If this is the committee’s recommendation, the Board should discuss the pros and cons of eliminating these long standing, traditional means of promoting the destination
* **Visitor Services** – It is recommended in the plan for MCTC to invest in capital improvements (bathrooms in Boonville) in the draft plan. This recommendation originates from the Visitor Services committee. The Board should discuss whether capital improvements are part of the organization’s mission as it is currently not a part of the core strategy or goals of the organization
* **Group Sales** – This program should be further analyzed by the Board based on the number of specific businesses that benefit from the efforts and the overall return on investment. Either the effort in the coming year should significantly focus on at least doubling the number of businesses which participate in the group sales programs through contracts with tour professionals or the Board should consider this program becoming more of a “pay to play” situation with more staff resources focusing on driving visitation to the website, stakeholder engagement, etc. Currently, no committee is responsible for overseeing these activities. This should also be addressed by the Board
* **Operations** – This section is currently blank and needs development through either staff or Board discussion. It is recommended the Board analyze the continued need for a Ukiah office. It is also recommended that either the Board evaluate current staff structure – including job descriptions, roles (employee vs. independent contractor), location of staff, etc. or make this evaluation a priority of the new Executive Director. Through reorganization of staff and location of offices, a significant increase in work product would result. Ultimately, this increases the effectiveness of the promotional efforts raising the return on investment for lodging and the community as a whole. This analysis should have one fundamental question in mind, “Does the current structure help implement the core strategies and goals of the organization?”
* **Return on Investment** – It is recommended either staff or the Board work with Carl Ribaudo on developing a clear matrix to measure the plan’s return on investment. Goals should be reviewed and adjusted, as appropriate, to support this matrix. The matrix should be one not only staff and Board members can clearly understand, but lodging and the community as a whole as
* **The biggest consideration in the development of all programs should be attaining the goal of 240,000 unique visitors for the fiscal year (20,000 per month). Investments both in time and money should consider this goal when being discussed**

This time of transition is a great opportunity to take a close look not only at the specific areas mentioned above, but at the entire program. Whether the Board decides to task its standing committees to evaluate these areas or chooses to do it as a Board, any discussion and further changes and/or recommendations to the draft plan should take place in time for a final draft to be presented at the Board’s next meeting in June.

Also important to note is the budget cannot be changed, at this point in time, too drastically as it matches the budget approved in the 2016/2017 BID Advisory Annual Report. Once the report is approved by the Board of Supervisors and a new contract between the County of Mendocino and MCTC is signed, the Board can make any changes it desires to improve the program and its results.