

Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce

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Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Marshall Islands Resort

Meeting called to order by President Jack Niedenthal at 12:01 P.M. Approximately 35 members and guests were in attendance. The next regular meeting will be on Tuesday, February 6, 2007.

- **Minutes** – approved electronically prior to meeting

- **Guests**

- US Ambassador Clyde Bishop introduced by Jack

- **Committee Reports**

Government Relations – Jerry Kramer

There is nothing new to report.

Business and Trade – Neal Skinner

2006 retail sales are down 20% over prior years. Revenue of inbound containers is down 33% over prior years.

Financial Services – Jim McLean

There is nothing new to report.

Tourism – Bill Weza

Japan Airlines

- There will be another visit from JAL representatives on January 30-31 and another one on February 6-7, to finalize all arrangements. Satoshi Yoshii is currently assisting JAL with a production an in-flight welcome and familiarization video. H.E. President Kessai H. Note will do a brief welcome address on the video.
- The ground service equipment (GSE) has been ordered from a New Zealand company for approximately \$800,000. The decision to purchase from this company was based on a one-year guarantee, training, freight costs included, and an available payment plan. Some of the equipment is new, and some is reconditioned. The tug is scheduled

to arrive on January 30th. The other equipment that is expected will be shipped from the US West Coast and should arrive the first week in February.

- Satoshi has also met with RMI Customs and Immigration. All passport information will be provided to Immigrations prior to arrival. With three windows open at the airport to process the incoming tourists, the aircraft will be unloaded in “waves” of four color-coded groups. After each “wave” is processed, busses will transport them to their hotel destinations. Baggage will also be color-coded for easier distribution to the groups.
- The JAL tourists are paying \$1150 for a package that includes airfare, five days and four night’s hotel accommodation that includes tax, 4 breakfasts, an arrival lunch and a complimentary eco-bag from MIVA. All other activities are additional and pre-organized. The Marshall Islands Resort, Hotel RRE and Long Island Hotel will house the guests.
- A media group from the Skyward magazine, JAL’s in-flight magazine, will also be traveling with the first group. MIVA and MIT is currently organizing their itinerary.
- The second flight, scheduled for March 22 – 26, 2007 is pretty much sold out.

Majuro Clean-Up Committees

- 1) Go After the Policy Makers – Local and National committees
- 2) Community Awareness committee
- 3) “Just Do It” Clean-Up committee. So far the 3rd committee has been most active thanks to PII, DAR and MIVA in the collection of old vehicles from residential areas. Approximately 35 vehicles have been collected.

Other Activities

- January 2007 – The RMI will be represented at the Dusseldorf Boat (Boat) Show in Germany under a contractual public relations agreement with MOJO International, Inc.
- January 2007 – As part of MIVA’s preparations for the development of the medium-term RMI tourism development plan, the staff is currently conducting a community survey on tourism in the RMI to be completed this week with a report on January 12.
- January 8-19 – Media visit for the Indies Trader with assistance from Our Airline, MIVA and AMI.
- January 18 – MIVA Japan Office will conduct a travel agents’ workshop in Japan to further familiarize the agents on the charter flights bookings and activities.
- January 19 – With the slight increase in tourism activity here in the RMI and with the expected charter flights from JAL, MITA and MIVA will host a Taxi Driver’s Customer Service Training conducted by Bill Weza and Hirobo Obeketang. This training will not only involve customer service skills but also proper etiquette, hygiene, and overall appearance.
- January 22 – 26 – expected visit of the Hokule’a and Mai’su as they make their journey to Yap to present the Mai’su as a gift to Mau Pialug and continue on to Japan.
- January 29 – March 9, 2007 – Moses Alik from Hotel RRE will attend the JICA “Sustainable Tourism Development in the Micronesia Region” training in Japan.
- February 2 – RMI Tourism Symposium for the development of the RMI medium term tourism plan to be conducted by lead consultant, Ben Graham.

- February 9 – Kwajalein Liberation Day Festivities
- February 11 – JAL first charter flight.
- February 15 – Majuro Liberation Day Festivities

Transportation – Salome Andrike

Continental Airlines executive Art Day will visit Majuro next week and would like to visit with the Chamber's Executive Committee.

Communications – David Strauss

NTA is proceeding on the fiber optic underwater cable. The price appears to be 14 million. Next Week NTA executives will travel to Alaska to see how the military handles maintenance. Cell phone service is most congested in the DUD area. Two more base stations will be added in the future. 2006 was the year for GSM cell phones. 2007 will be the year for "E-Link."

Education – Carlos Domnick

A recent Bikini diver anonymously donated \$25,000 to Coop school.

Health – Dr. Alex Pinano

Our "buckle-up" sign has now been approved to be displayed near Assumption Church.

Environment – Don Hess

The solid waste corporation's Board has not yet met. The Majuro Conservation Society will host a discarded battery pickup this Saturday. Residents should place any kind of discarded battery near the curb. Two trucks will pick up these batteries. PII, MGAS, and RRE have already begun to deliver discarded batteries for recycling. There is a bin at the dump marked "White Goods" that can be used to discard old computer equipment. Waste oil will be accepted at the dump provided that it is in a sealed container.

Membership and Public Relations – Liz Rodick

There are 31 members who have paid 2007 Chamber dues.

Special Projects – Sam Smith

The 2006 annual Chamber Christmas parade was financed entirely from donations. No Chamber funds were used for this purpose. Over \$6000 in cash or candy donations were received. There is \$26 left over. The Chamber expresses its gratitude for the efforts of all involved including the staff of Marshall Islands Resort.

- **New Business**

- SK Networks will be in Majuro on January 16th and 17th to complete their “due diligence” in an attempt to acquire MEC. The US Interior Department sponsored consultant is expected to present his review of MEC during this time. SK is expected to propose that it acquire a 51% ownership share, receive favorable tax considerations, and raise electricity rates. Other bidders are not expected to ask for these concessions.
- Of the two recent fires that affected the business community, only Marshall Islands Resort (MIR) has settled its property damage insurance claim. The MIR insurance claim for business interruption is still pending. MEC has not settled its insurance claims.
- David Strauss moved and Al Fowler seconded a motion to amend the Chamber Bylaws to make the two-year officer terms become effective as of 1/1/2006 thus maintaining the present officers for another year. Jerry Kramer called the question. A majority of members present approved the motion.
- On Friday, December 29, 2006, a medical evacuation Leer jet landed at Amata Kabua International Airport to report a suspected “bird strike.” A patient was on board while the pilots deplaned to telephone their headquarters for instructions. Even though turned off and while sitting by the Mobil fueling area, one of the engines tried to start itself resulting in the wiring harness catching fire. Two AMI employees extinguished the fire using one of their standard fire extinguishers and prepared to use the larger Mobil fire extinguisher to prevent any further threats to the aircraft, its passenger/s, the Mobil fuel area, and the airport. Airport fire equipment was manned and waiting for the regularly scheduled Continental flight. Airport personnel did not respond to this fire. Airport security personnel criticized the AMI employees for attempted use of the Mobil fire extinguisher. The Chamber wishes to recognize the heroic and professional efforts of AMI employees Chee Elmi and Dave Brown. The Chamber further wishes to recognize the timely and professional response of many individuals and organizations that assisted to extinguish the Marshall Islands Resort fire.
- The owner of Budweiser, August Bush, Jr., arrived at and briefly visited the Airport today.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Minutes prepared by:

Jim McLean

Approved _____

Approved with Corrections _____