

Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce

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Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 12, 2006

Monica's Restaurant

Meeting called to order by President Jack Niedenthal at 12:01 P.M. Approximately 40 members and guests were in attendance. The next regular meeting will be on Tuesday, January 9, 2006.

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

- **Guests**

- Tom Pfleeger, US State Department Science Fellow, introduced by Tom Maus

- US Ambassador Clyde Bishop introduced by Jack

- **Chamber President's Remarks**

- Jack welcomed new US Ambassador, Clyde Bishop, and his wife Cynthia to the Marshall Islands. The Chamber has 61 members with an estimated 2,000 employees who are presumed to feed approximately 16 – 17,000 people in the Marshall Islands.

- Ports Authority James Bing and Jack Chong-Gum were invited today but declined to attend.

- Even though the Chamber wasn't able to accommodate a last minute RMI Ministry of Foreign Affairs request to host a nine member trade delegation from the People's Republic of China, we've notified both Foreign Affairs and the apparent sponsoring organization in Fiji that we'd be happy to do this if given sufficient notice in the future.

- An employee of Morgan Stanley who works with Hawaii Senator Akaka has offered to assist the Marshall Islands to resolve US Postal issues.

- The Bikini people will be receiving approximately \$900,000 later this week as a result of the intended retirement of a Hawaii based trust fund. Bank of the Marshall Islands is assisting this effort with a loan.

- The next regular Chamber meeting will be held for the purpose of electing new officers according to our revised bylaws that, among other things, prescribe that officers will have a two year term and that the Chamber can now engage in political activity as it may

promote business development. Members must be “paid up” with their 2007 \$50 dues to be eligible to vote.

- The new Solid Waste Authority has been created, and Don is the Chamber’s recommended new Director. The Executive Committee held extensive discussions of the importance of this position. The Chamber will be holding the new Directors responsible for an effective solution to the solid waste problems.

- I’d like to thank Monica for hosting this Chamber meeting.

- **Presentation** – On the Move in the Marshall Islands CD by Karen Earnshaw

This is a travel guide, and it’s now in version 2. There is no advertising. If any local business would like a special edition that doesn’t feature its competitors, that can be arranged. There is some consideration for producing a Japanese version in 2007. Updates can occur as often as monthly. The price is \$10. The CD disks are available for purchase as RRE, Payless, Monica’s, Marshall Islands Resorts, and other locations.

- **Remarks** – Clyde Bishop

I would like to thank Monica’s Restaurant for an excellent buffet. I’m a career American Foreign Service officer. Prior to that I was a college professor and involved in business in New York City. My first Foreign Service assignment was in Italy. The second assignment was in Korea. Then I worked in Brazil, India, Hong Kong, Washington D.C., and the Dominican Republic. I also taught diplomacy at New York City College. It is my goal to continue the good relationship between the United States and the Marshall Islands. I’m also interested in economic development.

- **Committee Reports**

- Even though Bobby Muller is apparently still working on premises, Viola Chong-Gum is the acting Chief Secretary.

- Neal and Jerry attended a recent US Interior business development seminar in Hawaii. Horizon will be adding 4 ships to service this area. There is an interest in aquaculture. The names and addresses of businesses interested in the Pacific are available.

- The Tourism Symposium held on December 2nd was attended by four Majuro Councilmen and the Vice Speaker. The presentation was similar to that given to the Chamber at the last regular meeting and documented in those minutes. Three committees have been formed to include volunteers, traditional leaders, and action people. The revitalized Tuna plant can be expected to produce an unpleasant odor that is not consistent with tourism. MALGOV will start fining people who have junk cars on their property.

- There will be no block party this year. There is approximately \$5,000 in block party seed money available for future use. Public alcohol consumption on a Sunday was the concern. Licensed hotels will be able to serve alcohol on New Year's Eve.
- A Polynesian Society traditional sailing vessel will briefly stop here in January on its way to an outer island of Yap where it will be presented to a famous island navigator.
- The JAL final inspection of the Majuro airport will occur on December 18th. The JAL ground service equipment will arrive two weeks before the first scheduled JAL flight.
- It is now possible to obtain a Bill of Lading for shipment to and from Asia on Matson. DHL, BBB, and UPS agencies are now located at PII.
- We can use Continental One Pass to fly to Japan free and then purchase a ticket to Honolulu for \$400.
- Rongelap researchers prepaid for travel on AMI, but not all of them were allowed to board. The AMI Board suspects that the recent suspension of meal allowances for pilots has caused an attitude problem. The DCA has certified the pilots to fly for 30 days before they have to go off island to renew their certification. However, the pilots have refused to fly.
- Our Airlines may become a viable way to avoid US transit visa problems by bringing in workers through Palau. Our Airlines charges \$700 for a roundtrip ticket to Brisbane. This is good service.
- Five new yachts arrived, and 2 departed.
- The hospital's morgue has been out of service for two months due to corpse chiller problems.
- The new Board of the Solid Waste Authority is waiting to conduct their first meeting.
- The Marshall Islands Conservation Society now has a new chipper to mulch up to six tons of green waste daily at the dump. A new facility at the dump to facilitate waste separation is expected in January.
- There doesn't appear to be after hour or non-business day NTA technical support for the Internet. Cell phones continue to experience connection problems.
- The Minister of Education is back on island and is doing well.
- There are 61 paid Chamber members for 2006, and 5 paid members for 2007.
- The annual Chamber Christmas Parade will be held this coming Saturday beginning at 10AM at both Rita and Laura where each one proceeds toward the airport. More floats are needed. Donations are light. More is needed. Contact Hirobo at Marshall Islands Resort.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Minutes prepared by:

Jim McLean

Approved _____

Approved with Corrections _____