

Erin Dunn
Community Comment
May 9, 2017

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I watched the Eureka City Council meeting last week when the item of funding the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center came up.

A couple of things surprised me about the outcome of the meeting which was to not fund the Visitor Center between July 1, when the current contract ends, and whenever a new group is chosen to operate visitor services. I don't want to sound like I'm "getting all up" in Eureka's business, but it could possibly effect all of us in Humboldt County.

The Council offered to continue with the Eureka Chamber on a month-to-month basis after their contract expires the end of June until a new group is ready to take over visitor services.

That offer seemed somewhat insincere to me. It did not take in to consideration the fact that the Chamber is running a business. A Chamber board member addressed the Eureka Council to point out that in order to have adequate staffing and supplies, a month-to-month contract was not feasible.

The Council took exception to the Eureka Chamber asking to be paid for a six-month contract that was more than half of their prior year's allotment.

As a Chamber Executive that works with Tourism in Fortuna, that request didn't seem all that far-fetched.

The upcoming six months include the busiest months of the year—the summer and early fall. It would make sense that more money was

needed for that time rather than, say, six months that included January and February and no summer months.

The Eureka Chamber has an arrangement with the City for their current building on the south end of town. It's a great site for tourist information because it's easy to find and it has enough parking for any type of recreational trailer or motor home. The new group won't have that to offer.

The Eureka Council expressed concern that the nature of tourism is changing. And it is. But there is still need for direct contact with visitors. I see it in Fortuna all of the time.

If we are going to rely more and more on technology when it comes to tourism, we need to be vigilant about managing what's out there. For instance, countless travelers come in to the Fortuna Chamber asking for recommendations for lodging because they've been told not to stay in Eureka. That's a reality. This is not fake news.

My response to travelers is, if staying in Eureka fits their schedule better, stay in Eureka. There is plenty of lodging, Old Town is gorgeous with great shopping and there are lots of interesting places to eat all over town. Of course I give them the Fortuna pitch as well.

The point is, I don't disparage Eureka. I spend time countering what people from out of the area have heard.

The impact of not having the Chamber open as a Visitor Center during the summer months will be found in this summer's hotel tax numbers.

I wish Eureka the best with whatever they choose to do.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.