



CHANGE OFFERS OPPORTUNITY

HSEF lookin' for fresh blood

By Rick Phelps

“The time has come,” the Walrus said, “to talk of many things: Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax — of cabbages — and kings ...”

-The Walrus and the Carpenter, Lewis Carroll, 1871

... and the High Sierra Energy Foundation Board of Directors.

The High Sierra Energy Foundation started operations in 2005 with the mission “to develop and showcase energy efficiency and renewable resources in Mammoth Lakes and the Eastern Sierra.” It’s been a productive six years and the Foundation has helped save millions of kilowatt-hours, published energy efficiency and renewables booklets, conducted several educational classes, man-

aged the ongoing LivingWise® program for sixth grade earth science students, helped a local developer to incorporate geothermal space heating into his planned project, and connected homeowners with solar and geothermal heat pump contractors. Like any organization we have had our ups and downs, and challenges with funding and project specific activities, but we have had a board that continuously supported our progress.

Unfortunately, the board resigned in July after appointing me to the board, and left the future of the Foundation in the hands of a yet-to-be-identified new board. As with any big change there has been a lot of speculation as to the cause, but former board member Charlie Eddy summed it up best in an email to the media: “Almost the entire board has been in place for 6 years, following two years serving as the core of the Town’s Renewable Energy Task Force. We reached a consensus that after 8 years it’s a good time for fresh faces and ideas on the board. Several other members and I had stated a year ago that we would be leaving the board this year. Each of us has expressed a willingness to continue to assist and support HSEF.”

After reflection, I realized that this change is really an opportunity to re-shape and re-energize the Foundation. We were fortunate in recruiting three well-known individuals from Mammoth Lakes to serve

on an interim advisory board tasked with forming a new HSEF board by the end of the year. Retired Mono County Superior Court Judge Ed Forstenzer, Mammoth Hospital CEO Gary Boyd, and Mammoth Mountain’s Jack Copeland will be working with me to identify candidates and help with the process.

As we begin to think about new board members, I recall a conversation I had in my down-south years with the then-president of Caltech — The California Institute of Tech-



HSEF Executive Director Rick Phelps

and it’s helping our advisory group and me as we put the new board together.

After just a brief pause, he said, and this is an exact quote: “We get people on our committees or boards for three reasons: the first is a name the world recognizes, the second is that they donate a lot of money, and the third is they know how to get things done. You figure out where you belong.” I took another sip of wine, chuckled, and knew my place in the world.

For the High Sierra Energy Foundation board, it would be nice to have big names or big donors, but the most valuable board members at this time in our history are those who know how to get things accomplished. Practically, that means a board that does more than meet every few months and discusses what might be done. Instead, it means board members that take ownership of issues and work with our very limited staff to make it happen. It also means that board members use their expertise and contacts to promote the mission of the Foundation. And, it means that board members will work with staff to seek creative solutions such as how to motivate short-payback energy retrofits in these very difficult economic times. In other words, we are looking for very special people, which we know are in the Eastern Sierra. We just have to find them.

If you are reading this and have an interest in the Foundation and our mission, please contact me and we can talk further, because we really need you help.

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-Thomas Everhart

nology in Pasadena. My wife and I co-chaired a Caltech Committee to promote the Beckman Auditorium as a cultural and entertainment resource for the greater Pasadena Community, and we recruited a diverse group of Pasadenans to help us. Caltech supported the committee by holding several events around Beckman to showcase the entertainment venue. One of those events was a glorious “Night in Venice” dinner and my wife and I sat at a table with the aforementioned president, Thomas Everhart.

After a couple of glasses of very good Italian wine, I turned to the president — a world-renowned physicist — and asked him why we were asked to chair this committee. I remember his response very clearly

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