



## **Thursday, February 26, 2026**

### **MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors**

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 1:04pm by Chair Cinde Cassidy. The Catalina Island Tourism Authority (CITA) meeting was held in the Founders Room of US Bank with in-person and remote attendance. Remote attendance as posted on the agenda: Alkibay at 647 N. Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514; Say at 331 Marketview, Irvine, CA 92602.

#### **DIRECTORS PRESENT (14)**

Cassidy, Fornasiere, Allen, Beach, Bergman, Bombard, Bradley, Garcia, Hohenstein, Leyva, Maistros, Skelton, Upton, Welham

#### **DIRECTORS ATTENDING REMOTELY VIA GOOGLE MEET (1)**

Alkibay, (Say was unable to attend from Irvine)

#### **DIRECTORS ABSENT (4)**

Flathers, Say, Stevenson, Latorre

#### **STAFF PRESENT (5)**

Miller, Warner, Johnson, Cook, Hubert

#### **STAFF ATTENDING REMOTELY VIA GOOGLE MEET (1)**

Stevenson

#### **GUESTS (6)**

Heather Milburn, Rob Milburn, Bre Bussard, Tyler Wilson, Mike Bone, Rob Ledebur

#### **GUESTS ATTENDING REMOTELY VIA GOOGLE MEET (1)**

Hunter Rusack

#### **BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

Cassidy requested that all in the room and on-line introduce themselves. Welham entered the meeting at 1:07. Cassidy announced the AVX presentation is postponed to the next meeting.

Cassidy asked Fornasiere to speak of her work at Catalina Island Health (CIH). Fornasiere said CIH will bring back the Health Fair in April 2026. The exact date will be finalized within the week and the location is Catalina Island Yacht Club. CIH will sponsor a resource fair before the next art festival in May and a community health talk on March 24 addressing supplements. Fornasiere said CIH provides bimonthly updates at City Council meetings and encouraged attendees to watch or attend. She said CIH has a new chief nursing officer, Dusty Gilleland. Miller added she was impressed with the care she recently received at CIH. Fornasiere stressed completion of a survey if one is sent after a visit is important; it is anonymous and helps CIH receive funding.

Rob Ledebur is with the Catalina Island Conservancy, working in various capacities for 3 years. He has been in operations and real estate asset management throughout his working years. He said running operations is challenging but he enjoys being here.

Cassidy only received three evaluations for the January meeting and would like to see more feedback as then future meetings are crafted together through this forum.

## **APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS**

Cassidy requested approval of the January 15, 2026 Board Minutes.

Motion for approval Skelton, second Upton; passed with abstentions by Garcia, Bradley, Hohenstein and Bergman

## **DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS**

Governance Committee: Policy 2.9, CEO Board and Officer Nominations & Elections—Cassidy reminded the dedicated seats for the Catalina Island Co (CICo) and Catalina Island Conservancy were vacated due to staff changes. New representatives have been appointed by their respective companies. Hunter Rusack will take the CICo seat and Rob Ledebur will represent the Conservancy.

Motion for approval by Skelton, second Fornasiere; passed unanimously

Cassidy said Dave Stevenson as past chair was on the Governance Committee. His departure left that position vacant and Bombard being the previous past chair agreed to fill the gap.

Motion to approve Bombard as past chair by Beach, second Bradley; passed with abstention by Bombard

Cassidy informed the Board Yolanda Say amended her business affiliation for her Board seat to Catalina Coastal Tours.

Policy 2.8, Committee Structure—Cassidy said Whitney Latorre's departure from the board left a vacant seat on the Audit Financial Oversight Committee. Maistros volunteered to fill that position.

Motion to accept Maistros as a committee member by Cassidy, second Bombard; passed with abstention by Maistros

Policies 3.6, Compensation and Benefits; and 4.5.3C CEO Bonus Goals—Cassidy read Policy 3.6 and stated Luttjohann follows those requirements. She added, the final part of Luttjohann's contract is the Bonus goals. Cassidy decided to postpone until Luttjohann is available and will meet with the Governance Committee to discuss further.

Audit & Financial Oversight Committee Update—Policy 2.8.1, Audit RFP submissions was addressed by Alkibay with a recap on the RFPs received from accountants to perform the annual audit; both RFPs are included in the Board packet. He said the committee decided to retain the current auditors McGinty, Knudtson & Associates, LLP. A discussion ensued on the cost differences and details in the submissions.

Motion to accept the McGinty, Knudtson & Associates proposal as a three-year contract by Alkibay, second Bergman; passed unanimously

Policy 3.3 Financial Condition & Activities— Alkibay presented the Oct-Dec 2025 quarterly financials saying the big spend was an AVX payment explained in the last meeting. He added that mid-year budget adjustments are included in the Board packet.

Alkibay requested that Fornasiere be added to the CITA checking account as signer.

Motion for approval by Alkibay, second Bombard; passed with abstention by Fornasiere

Policy 1.2 Positive Awareness of Catalina Island—Cassidy read the draft statement from Love Catalina Island on Deer Eradication included in the packet. She explained CITA wants a template for staff and those representing CITA to use when confronted. The goal is to remain impartial and encourage visitation. The Board has a role to encourage. Bombard asked how the statement will be distributed. Cassidy said things come in from influencers, etc. that are counter-productive to tourism. This will be used as a tool for Board, staff, etc. to address negative situations when needed. Ledebur stated he as been accosted as well. Hohenstein asked if it came more from locals or influencers. Miller said a lot has been on social media. Cassidy believes the negativity is not necessarily locals stating the issue has received nationwide attention. She believes in personal opinions but individuals should not be targeted for an organizational issue.

Marketing & PR Report—Miller began with the look-back window stats tracked directly to CTV. She said the CastAway Campaign is active through May 31 and 6,427 visitors are attributed so far. The cost of those visits is \$3.35 each but as it

is the first look-back the cost/visit will become more cost efficient. She will bring the results of the cooperative campaign back after the first quarter. Miller attended the International Media Marketplace in NYC. There she met with 24 PR professionals filling her appointment slots and there were no cancellations or no-shows. She experienced a phenomenal interest in Catalina Island. She said the newly renovated Pavilion Hotel, Scuba and ability Scuba, sustainability, activities, and transportation were often discussed. Miller has an entire book of follow-up contacts. Recent pitches were: Island of Romance and Stewardship. Content was submitted to Visit California for them to share. Bombard left the meeting at 1:51. Miller said Samantha Dunn will cover Two Harbors on her upcoming return to the island. Beach asked about tracking for those participating in the AAA mailer. Warner has some stats she can share. At 1:52, Bombard came back into the meeting.

Warner reported on Map ad sales saying the deadline was extended to tomorrow with artwork due by March 6. There are two ad spaces still available. There will be 175K maps printed for on and off island distribution. Warner was at the trade show in Phoenix, February 14-15 and received 120 entries for a give-away. In March she will represent CITA at the LA Travel Show in Long Beach, March 7-8 and the Bay Area show, March 21-22. She informed the Catalina Island Marathon was nominated in the 10 Best category and encouraged voting every day. Warner placed a link for this in the Thursday Update.

Events Report—Cook met with 62Above to discuss promotion of the island during FIFA and 2026 Olympics in Los Angeles. He attended the LA Tourism Mixer to gain contacts for FIFA but found most talked to him about the Mermaid Festival. He is looking forward to a multi-day event in '27 that hasn't been here before. He said PADI is interested in a two- or three-day event to celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October. This began with a possible idea from Luttjohann leading Cook to find a PADI contact. Cook meets with two retired Mattel executives next week and was in touch with Ben Villalobos about a possible comedy event. Hohenstein heard about a boxing event and Cook said it is in the works.

Hubert reminded of the Rotary clothing drive on Saturday. She announced the Shred event is scheduled for 12-3pm on Monday, April 20, \$7 per box at Avalon Freight Line. On Earth Day the COA confirmed a trash derby with a BBQ at the end of the day. The Pride Celebration is moving forward with a Pride walk and entertainment, noon-10pm on Saturday, June 13. The ServSafe Fixer will hold certification classes March 24-26, 9-12 and 1-4 but the updated cost has not been confirmed. The February Mixer was cancelled with the check presentation date to be announced. The March Mixer is for non-profits at the Catalina Canyon Resort Conference Room. Hubert is working on a Board Retreat at the USC Marine Institute at Two Harbors on April 23; CICO donated transportation. She shared the invoice on the screen and said a few things can be shaved off as the contract has not been signed yet. She requested discussion, agreement or opposition. Alkibay said the \$1500 cost is not too much for a Board Retreat and he confirmed the money will be found. Cassidy suggested fun team-building activities instead of a hike and said USC might be asked if they would donate the cost of the room. Cassidy thanked Hubert saying she is doing a good job and the room erupted in applause.

Visitor and Member Services Report—Cassidy presented a membership application for Island Food & Stuff LLC dba Mi Casita. The restaurant is returning as a member under new ownership.

Motion to accept the new member by Hohenstein, second Fornasiere; passed unanimously

Cassidy requested Board members mark the Board Retreat on their calendars for April 23. She also reminded the May meeting was changed to May 14.

## **GUEST & MEMBER UPDATES**

Hohenstein announced that as of last week, her company now owns the Hotel MacRae. Today the building is being scanned and a designer will keep the local history. She reminded of the Rotary clothing drive from 10-2 on Saturday. The request is for all donations to be boxed for ease in shipping. Avalon Freight Services kindly donated the freight cost for shipping to the mainland.

Bombard received a copy of the January 2026 in-flight magazine from Cathay Pacific. The publication has a 10-page spread in English and Mandarin on Catalina Island. She said paid advertising cost for something like this would be over \$15K and is grateful for the exposure.

Garcia is launching a mermaid instructor pathway with classes every month. She said it will take four classes to become a professional mermaid instructor. Cook said he was told the largest Mermaid Festival is in Portland, Oregon. Garcia agreed and added that Catalina Island is building a unique fair.

Beach reported that Avalon Beautiful is accepting on-line donations. She also stated that 1500 pounds of trash was removed from Avalon Harbor during the Underwater Cleanup. Some critters were trapped in debris but were untangled and placed back in the water.

Heather Milburn shared a video on an educational program bringing underserved students to Avalon for ecological studies. The four-minute video garnered applause from attendees. She also stated that Catalina Adventure Tours was approved for a third vehicle that arrived on the island, it has been named Osprey. She reminded the SeaView Glass-Bottom boat is back. If Board members would like to take a ride and see how nice it is, she will arrange some free tours.

Rob Milburn stated Bertram Insurance is a resource for employee benefits, worker's comp, boat/yacht marine and more. He is on the island often and easy to reach.

Bone announced the March 14 Marathon sold out for the first time since his involvement. He said it is the smallest on the list of 'best' that was mentioned by Warner earlier in the meeting. Catalina Island runs are popular events, the 50-mile run has sold out two years in a row.

Cassidy would like for the town to turn out for a Pig Roast on Saturday, 3-6pm in the Chet's parking lot. The food is free but BYOB. She is encouraging people stop to sign a card for Gary and Kellie Johnson. Gary is dealing with a health issue and appreciates any texts, etc. She is hoping a card with well wishes will lift his spirits.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Cassidy adjourned the Board meeting at 2:41pm.