



MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday, February 20, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:00pm by Chair Dave Stevenson. The Catalina Island Tourism Authority (CITA) meeting was held in the Founders Room of US Bank with in-person attendance by the Board; remote attendance for guests only.

[Google Meet joining info/video call link was posted on the agenda](#)

DIRECTORS PRESENT (15)

Stevenson, Alkibay, Bombard, Cassidy, Allen, Beach, Bergman, Bradley, Glass, Latorre, Maistros, Say, Upton, Vega, Wright

DIRECTORS ABSENT (4)

Flathers, Garcia, Paret, Villalobos

STAFF PRESENT (4)

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson

GUESTS (4)

Tyler Wilson, Nicole Hohenstein, Jeff Skelton, Heather Milburn (no remote guests)

BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

Stevenson asked guests to introduce themselves. At 1:02 Maistros and Bombard entered the meeting. Stevenson announced a Disney Cruise Line agreement was reached with the City of Avalon (COA). He said that Valentine's and President's Day holidays were big overall for February revenue. The impact of the fires has meant less visitors on the Island but overall stats indicate mainly the drop is in international travelers. A reboot of the Events Committee begins with a meeting tomorrow. After that meeting, the Governance Committee will meet and discuss moving forward. Stevenson mentioned the Mixer tonight and asked everyone to please attend. Stevenson addressed upcoming nominations, saying the need is for individuals that will add value to the Board. This will be an agenda item at the next meeting and if Bombard's term is extended, there will be four spots open. Glass and Villalobos have termed out, Vega and Wright could serve a second term. Stevenson would like Board members to be prepared for this discussion at the next meeting. Wright entered the meeting at 1:08. He said, the Bylaws reference competencies of those needed. Beach asked what is missing and what the Board should look for in potential nominees. Luttjohann mentioned diversity and variety in businesses represented like cruise industry, tours, diving, transportation, vacation rentals, etc. Stevenson also would like them to be excited to participate and serve. Bombard stepped out at 1:09. Latorre asked if there is a Board Matrix to list out the needs and see what is missing. Luttjohann said in the past specific businesses were sought to broaden the representation. He mentioned as an example that Glass represents Vacation Rentals. At 1:10 Bergman and Bombard came into the meeting. Glass indicated his wife had inquired about the Board and possibly would serve. Stevenson reminded this topic will be on the agenda for the March meeting.

CONSENT ITEMS

Stevenson presented the January minutes included in the packet and hearing no discussion requested a motion for approval of the Minutes from January 16, 2025.

Motion for approval Say, second Cassidy; passed unanimously

BOARD PROCESS

3.3 Financial Condition and Activities

Luttjohann was directed by Stevenson to walk through any line items on the quarterly financials included in the Board packet. The reserve account was discussed with Glass asking if a portion of TOT funds could be saved and used for a time of need as a form of reserves. Maistros stated the TOT allocation was a ballot initiative and changes must be done by voters. He added that if a true-up payment is late in the fiscal year, COA will cut the check after July 1 to allow more time for CITA to spend. Luttjohann reminded about funds borrowed from the reserve account to pay for the remodel at the Visitor Center adding, those funds have been paid back. Luttjohann explained the bank service charges are being challenged, that equipment purchases were due to unanticipated breakage, and that wages are under as they were calculated prior to the CEO bonus. After no further discussion, Stevenson requested a motion to accept the staff report under policy 3.3, Financial Reports for the period ending December 31, 2024.

Motion for approval Glass, second Bombard; passed unanimously

CEO/ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Visitor and Member Services Report—Luttjohann received no new membership applications but a few inquiries were made. He explained plans to possibly reintroduce the Back to Catalina souvenir coin program, adding some new ideas to utilize the specific URL on the coin, and said this could be reinstated. Stevenson stated this campaign is meant to attract return visitors and directed staff to work on the application. He requested a check on how many coins are left, explore electronic driven methods, and bring updates back to next month's meeting.

Events Report—Luttjohann reported for DeMyer on New Year's Eve saying all bills have been paid but a reconciliation will be done after all credit card charges have been recorded. He announced the three concert dates are set and the line-up will include ABBA, Country and 80s music. The Mixer tonight is at the Catalina Courtyard Suites from 6-8pm with a ribbon cutting. Bombard asked if the Pride date is set for June 7. Luttjohann said NATJA ends June 6 and the Pride celebration is scheduled for June 7. He acknowledged that timing does bump up against Los Angeles Pride adding, national events are month-long. Cassidy reminded that the Event Committee meeting is tomorrow at Canyon Resort. Luttjohann continues to refile with the Dept of Justice (DOJ) as paperwork is still being returned. The concert raffles cannot be held until this is resolved. There was help from Clayton Herd in the Assembly Office but he is taking a position in Long Beach and will be unable to assist further. A revised edition of the Employee Handbook is included in the packet. The last edits were done in 2023. The redlines show the edits with most addressing pregnancy leave, fertility, and cannabis. There is a cross reference to the policy manual and a template can be utilized for this reference. The Hispanic Business Alliance (HBA) began with outreach to Vega and COA Council Member Delarosa. Luttjohann asked for their help so he would not seem to be an outsider pushing for members. Vega stated there are 11 Latino owners and it would be nice to have them integrate into the CITA business community. He said the intention is for their 26 businesses to engage and break down any walls. Say asked if updates can be sent to non-members as that information is helpful and needs to be shared. Stevenson said the HBA should become members adding it goes back to the Governance Committee and recruiting new members. Luttjohann said some notifications are sent to non-members and that LoveCatalina.com includes the cruise ship schedule, events calendar and more. Warner reminded that members at the Friend level pay \$105 a year, and the Trade Service category is only \$139; both categories receive the Thursday Update. Cassidy approached Addie Casillas and they plan to have their businesses Mi Casitas and Original Jack's become members.

VP OF MARKETING AND SALES UPDATE

Miller said that after reviewing recent research from Visit California regarding consumer perceptions of the LA fires, CITA resumed paid media on February 5. Much of the January budget was run in February to make up for the dark period. A new market, Phoenix, has been added to hopefully help boost overnight stays. The CastAway Campaign is back and will run until the end of May. The GoToCatalina search was turned on immediately after the January Board meeting, but was not turned off due to fires. The Visit California email scheduled for January, during the height of the fires, was moved to April 29. Hosted media visited the island and four upcoming visits are scheduled with one arriving today. Miller added a thank you to businesses that contributed for the Catalina Stay prize to be awarded to a winner in the AAA Westways Photo Contest.

Warner reported that 65K Visitor Guides were printed for 2025. A mailing in early February went to 2,505 hotel concierges in the LA/OC/SD areas, 163 yacht clubs, and all Love Catalina members. There were 260 Guides mailed to AAA offices in 11 states and she has already received AAA reorders. Beach asked if the additional flyer some businesses added to the AAA mailing would go out with reorders. Warner replied they only go with the original mailing. The Guides are also being distributed at the Visitor Center, mailed upon request, placed in mainland terminals and at trade shows. Warner is currently working on the 2025-26 Map and Directory and still has standard ad placement spaces available. The deadline for payment and artwork is March 11. She said details are in the Thursday Update or people can ask her. There will be 175K maps printed in mid-April. Cassidy and Hohenstein mentioned they received multiple copies of the 2025 Guide in the mail. Warner tried to pull any duplicate addresses and thanked them for letting her know. She reported the Phoenix trade show last weekend had good interest and she distributed 500-600 Guides. This weekend is the LA Travel show and it was announced this show's pre-sales are the largest. Next month Warner will represent at the Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show. Glass mentioned the Fred Hall Fishing Show which changed to Pacific Coast Sportfishing and now uses the OC Fairgrounds. He said the rebranded show is huge. Warner previously worked the Fred Hall and always received a good response; she will look into the sportfishing show. She spoke with many former Calif residents at the Phoenix show that now live in AZ; they are familiar with Catalina Island but most never visited. It was also noted that several New Year's Eve attendees were from AZ. The Visitor Center received a call right after the Phoenix show from people wishing to purchase NYE reservations. Glass said that Phoenix is hot in the summer and residents want to escape to cooler places. Beach reported an increase in visitors from Utah. Luttjohann stated Utah is in the top ten states for California visitation.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Cassidy gave a shout out to Catalina Horseback Adventures saying Skelton has been coming to meetings for over a year and their business is not even open yet. She likes that he is around town, engaged with the community and active with events. She asked if CITA could revisit the Gift Certificate program as she has redeemed them even though her business is not listed on the back. Luttjohann asked her to call the Visitor Center and request her businesses be placed on the back, but to be aware that older gift certificates are still out there and the back can be outdated. Cassidy said Island Fire Extinguisher is only refreshing for a portion of the year, their season will end in about two weeks and then service will not be available until next year. They are serving customers but would like the word out to those that require extinguisher service to call and request service soon.

Bombard announced the Catalina Express June 23-Sept 1 summer schedule will be out soon and sent to their Paradise partners. She stated it is pretty much the same as last summer with hope for a lot of visitors and room for more boats to be added.

Maistros reported on the Disney Cruise Line and COA written agreement that begins September 2027. The Disney ships will port in the shoulder season Tuesday and Saturday but not all through the busy season. Disney will pay a premium and guarantee 50-60 voyages with vessels holding less than 3000. Disney customer service training will be offered to Avalon workers and Cabrillo Mole project engineering services are also part of the agreement. The next step is with other cruise partners; Maistros will deal with Carnival. Disney caters to multi-generational passengers that diversify their spending, spreading the revenue around more. Luttjohann said that Disney cruisers are planners that book before their trip. He also feels Disney is a stamp of approval when other visitors see the ship calling on Avalon Bay. Maistros said Disney is only 2% globally of the cruise industry but is 50% to Catalina Island. He added Royal Caribbean is looking at Wednesday, which is now the new premium day with so many Tuesdays now taken by Disney.

Skelton is thankful Catalina Horseback Adventures has been welcomed. He thanked COA, Catalina Island Co and so many that are behind getting his venture going. He is happy to bring this special activity back. Their certificate of occupancy should be final tomorrow or Saturday, then they can open and get customers out on the trail. Without any announcement, the reservation system was turned on to test, and reservations were made. The mini horse was taken to the school along with coloring pages as part of a contest. Over 200 entries were received in the coloring contest and naming the mini horse; winning name is Peanut.

Luttjohann will follow up with the Board Matrix and the Back to Catalina souvenir coin program for next meeting. The Cruise Committee will meet prior to the next Board Meeting March 20.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 2:20pm.