



MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday, January 16, 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; remote attendance at Maverick Helicopters Long Beach office, though no Board or guests did so.

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

DIRECTORS PRESENT (18)

Stevenson, Bombard, Cassidy, Allen, Beach, Bergman, Bradley, Flathers, Garcia, Glass, Latorre, Maistros, Paret, Say, Upton, Vega, Villalobos, Wright

DIRECTORS ABSENT (1)

Alkibay

STAFF PRESENT (4)

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson

GUESTS (4)

Tyler Wilson, Jeff Skelton, Heather Milburn, Alexander Shaw (no remote guests)

BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

Stevenson stated with the news coverage of recent fires in Los Angeles, there was not much he could add. He had a chat with Latorre about Board involvement. At 1:02 Maistros entered the meeting. Stevenson reminded that other disasters unexpectedly became an economic benefit for the island adding that Miller halted most on-line advertising out of respect for fire victims. He thought the topic might be good as a future agenda item. Villalobos added that flying domestically numbers are down for an unknown reason.

Stevenson suggested the approved 15% increase to the concert budget should satisfy guests and thought there was good dialog at the last meeting on this subject.

Stevenson has heard talk of the high cost of a Catalina Island visit and mentioned Luttjohann is working on spreadsheets with the cost of parking/transport/accommodations and the effect to the visitor. He hopes this is ready to share at the next meeting. Luttjohann added that not all businesses wish to disclose which makes it difficult at times to compile accurate numbers. Stevenson said all costs have grown with some at a higher rate.

Stevenson reported the Governance/Executive Committee met for the CEO review; Alkibay, Cassidy and Villalobos were in attendance along with Stevenson.

CONSENT ITEMS

Stevenson presented the November minutes included in the packet and hearing no discussion he requested a motion for approval of the Minutes from November 21, 2024.

Motion for approval Say, second Bradley; passed with abstention by Glass

BOARD PROCESS

3.2 Treatment of Employees and Volunteers

Luttjohann stated the policy manual should be edited and brought back to the next meeting. The recent fires bring up the need for crisis review. A motion was requested to accept the staff report under policy 3.2

Motion for approval Beach, second Glass; passed unanimously

2.3.6 CEO Annual Compensation Review, 4.4 Monitoring CEO Performance and 4.5 CEO Compensation

Stevenson reminded that the Governance Committee review was moved from the November meeting to today's agenda. Moving forward there will be key performance indicators to assist with the review. At 1:14 Cassidy entered the meeting. Stevenson added that Luttjohann did a stellar job on the massive Bylaw's project. The committee agreed that Luttjohann has a good knowledge of technicalities of marketing and that his attention to detail is stellar. Stevenson noted that Luttjohann is always willing to help other entities, giving the CARB legislation issue as an example. Stevenson appreciates the clarity and transparency presented to the Board. He encourages Luttjohann to lean more on the Board with things like membership. Stevenson asks the Board to stay engaged and hopefully help when Luttjohann asks. He also urged each Board Member to reach out to non-members, ask why they have been silent. The Governance Committee is working on a grading template. Luttjohann reminded that several of the Charney recommendations are new, like moving to quarterly financials. The financial change will give the auditors additional time to get their copy back but the outside accountant will need more time to prepare a quarterly bundle. Stevenson said the committee recommends a 4% raise and \$15K bonus for the CEO. He stated it was a tough TOT year with some challenges. The bonus structure moving forward is based on 15% of salary and to earn that rate there will be five pieces: 30% based on TOT performance; 20%, cross-channel visitation; 15%, membership growth with a target of 10-15 new members; 15%, marketing and media hosting; 20% is discretionary. Discussion included Latorre asking if the metric and success indicators were as discussed with Charney. Stevenson reminded that bonus plans never work exactly. Luttjohann warned that Catalina Island is a fair-weather destination and his only paranoia is due to the possibility of a bad weather year. Cassidy recommends the committee meet every three months and feels the 20% discretionary is helpful as the goal is to give Luttjohann the full 15% but there is a need for measurements. In regards to memberships, the committee requests Board Members help Luttjohann meet those goals. An increase of members should not just be Luttjohann or the committee, all the Board should be involved. Bombard said weather is a big reason why discretionary is a higher percentage. Cancelled boats affect TOT along with lower boat counts and hotel stays when bad weather hits. A motion was requested to accept the Governance Committee's recommendations for 2025.

Motion for approval Garcia, second Paret; passed unanimously

CEO/ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Positive Awareness of Catalina Island—Luttjohann said that beyond on-going reporting of things like DDT, the deer, etc. that overall, it has been positive. He likes to share how all can work together, using the PR agencies of stakeholders and taking an active role. The island is a welcoming destination with Placer tracking events like Pride and a sustainable goal is in the works over the next year with Pepperdine students involved in the development of a sustainable tourism plan.

Visitor and Member Services Report—Luttjohann stated a new membership application from Catalina Caddie Services is seeking approval.

Approval of New Member Catalina Caddie Services. Motion for approval Glass, second Say; passed unanimously.

Events Report—Luttjohann reported for DeMyer reading her written report. Shop Catalina on December 7, 2024 was very successful with 30 businesses participating. An aCapela group, The Jingle Singers, strolled through the streets from 4-8pm performing in and in front of participating and non-participating businesses as well as on stage from 4:30-5pm prior to the tree lighting and Santa's arrival. Other festivities taking place around Wrigley Stage during the day: Winter Wonderland of fun from South Beach to Step Beach; ornament decorating for kids to be hung on the Christmas tree in Sombrero Fountain; Humane Society pet photos; Avalon Community Theatre Players; Catalina Kid Ventures; Avalon High School Rotary Interact selling popcorn & hot chocolate; pictures with Santa; and the business decorating contest. Thank you to all who participated: Catalina Art Association and City of Avalon; Catalina Express, Catalina Landing and Catalina Canyon Inn for providing transportation, parking, and accommodations.

51st Annual New Year's Eve Gala (NYE) had 612 paid guests (including 28 volunteers and staff), five Board Members with one guest each, nine no show reservations (unsure of the number of people this represents). The event brought guests from many states with the furthest being from New Hampshire. No firm financials to report yet. Special thanks to 15 volunteers who helped decorate the ballroom, additional volunteers who seated guests, and three Avalon High School

Rotary Interact Students for inflating 1000 balloons for the midnight drop. Thank you, Bryce Noll, Cameron Hubert, and Leo's Drugstore, for the use of the air compressor.

Mixers: tonight's Mixer is at the Catalina Island Yacht Club, 6-8pm and is co-hosted by AVX Networks and Original Antonio's Pizzeria. It's not too late to attend! Mingle and enjoy Mamma Mia's Day-Old Spaghetti with garlic bread and a no-host bar. We hope to see you all there. Mixer calendar looking ahead: February 20, Catalina Courtyard Suites with a ribbon cutting; March 20, Maverick Helicopters. Fixers in the works: ServSafe Class for managers and Lifesavers Guide American Foundation for Suicide Prevention both with dates TBD.

Luttjohann shared on the screen, using Pride as an example, how Placer can track visitors. Placer receives info from those cell phones where the owner leaves their setting on that allows tracking. Indicators showed 25-30% were in and out of hotels; in the number one position was Hotel Metrople then Vista del Mar, Pavilion Hotel, with Bellanca in the fourth spot. Overnights are an important measure and this tool will continue in use within 30 days of an event. The NYE sample was not enough for the one-night event.

Luttjohann reported that taxes have been filed and shared with a posting on CITA's website. Taxes will be presented to COA City Council on January 21.

Luttjohann explained a need to refile with the Dept of Justice (DOJ) for the concert raffles and has done so for each of the past years. Even though payments were submitted previously and checks cashed, new paperwork must be accompanied by payment. None of the new checks have cleared the bank. Clayton Herd in the Assembly Office has helped with the progress.

VP OF MARKETING AND SALES UPDATE

Miller pointed out a one-sheet placed near every seat with 2024 3rd quarter marketing results and stated she is beginning to work on the 4th quarter. On screen, a recap video of Q3 results put together by 62Above was shared. Another video of Maistros with reporter Vicki Johnson was shown. This feature aired December 4 on NBC CA Live in the LA market, promoted overnight stays, Shop Catalina, and the island's holiday season. Miller asked hotels to keep their packages up to date on CITA's website as promotions are highlighted in campaigns running through June 30. Miller is happy with results that track foot traffic directly from advertising. The visitation data report pulled January 10 included anyone interacting with CITA messaging, Sept 3-Dec 22. Data indicates 56,677 consumers visited the island by January 10 after seeing CITA advertising in that timeframe. Miller is working toward connecting the foot traffic report with Placer data. In the fall, visitation dipped so a campaign targeted San Francisco, Dallas, and Phoenix to increase overnight stays. This brand awareness campaign delivered over 8.5mil impressions, received over 105K site visits that generated 30K clicks to partner sites; numbers well above industry averages. Miller announced the GoToCatalina co-op campaign needs funding. The budget being on a different cycle runs through December 2025, into the next fiscal year. Approval is needed to continue after June 30, 2025. Stevenson stated this is a timing ask not a strategy ask. Miller said the contract signed last year now needs \$25K to cover the rest of 2025.

Approval of \$25K for the CITA partnership of the GoToCatalina June-Dec 2025 campaign. Motion for approval Paret, second Glass; passed with abstentions by Stevenson and Bombard.

Miller requested newsworthy updates to be shared with the media and said there are several upcoming Spring visits. She attended the Visit Anaheim meeting yesterday and is working on a FAM for a Palm Springs event. Luttjohann sits on the NATJA board of directors and he is working with 62Above to be certain travel reporters are valid. Warner provided an update on the 2025 Visitor Guide saying that copies are in circulation and distributed. She reminded all in attendance of an opportunity to include a flyer in the annual AAA mailing with more information in the Thursday Update. Warner stated an email went out yesterday with new specials, member benefits and opportunities for the entire 2025 calendar year. Miller praised Warner on her work because she makes changes to improve the Visitor Guide each year and it keeps getting better. Warner said map ads will be offered in a few weeks. There was a round of applause for Warner.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Bombard announced Eric is working on the Catalina Express schedule for April-June 22 and then the summer schedule will be next. Greg attended a Port of LA meeting and is excited to receive a grant from CARB to help

build a new vessel. They are looking at ship yards and then are ready to go. The intention is to sell three vessels that can't be upgraded. The new boat which will hold over 500 passengers should be ready in 1.5 to 2 years. Catalina Express is looking forward to the new tier 4 vessel that should be in service about the same time as the new mole improvements. This tier 4 vessel is one of the first privately-owned as others are in the Bay Area and owned by the public. Cassidy asked about the transition to the new commuter system. Bombard said it stemmed from one discriminatory complaint and the company had no choice. They are working with Fare Harbor to fix names to be only one name per book. Bombard said members can add sub-members like children that may not have emails. Cassidy asked about the IDs checked in Long Beach as commuters board the boat stating it seems to be spot checking as it is sporadic. Bombard said it should be every time unless a docker recognizes a certain individual.

Maistros said new subsidy cards available at City Hall are being phased in. He mentioned the island was lucky with the fires and that 10 extra firefighters came to the island before the Palisades fire broke. None could have been spared if the firefighters were not sent when they were. The harbor patrol brought all boats into the harbor, saved a mother and child before a boat sank, and a cement boat was placed back on a mooring. He thanked the volunteers that have worked greeting the larger cruise ship but said COA council will approve new employees that will do the job. City staff will be trained to handle boarding, questions, etc. Glass said the bigger ships mean more people and does not like that it takes ½ hour to get a taxi for a one-mile ride. Maistros believes the new mole will make that situation better.

Villalobos thanks all that helped make the Maverick Helicopter toy drive a success. Santa arrived on a helicopter and distributed good gift contributions to children. He hopes this event can go on forever. An Atlantic Records music video will be released January 22 with Catalina Island footage. Maverick is offering new packages including some with horseback riding. They have provided flights to those affected by fires, agencies that wish to examine the sites and those deciding how to bring tourism back.

Flathers reported she went aboard The World ship as a meet & greet ambassador, giving information from 10-4 on Saturday. She was allowed to go into the crew area and eat in the crew mess. Luttjohann said when the ship is on the west coast it has less people onboard as many are from the area and take the opportunity to visit family, doctors, etc.

Beach said it took her about an hour to submit information to JourneyAble and then they put information on Instagram, etc. after Scuba by Design was accepted. She is also soliciting donations, sponsors and volunteers for the Underwater Harbor Clean-up scheduled for Feb 22.

Skelton said Catalina Horseback finished the first phase last week—steel fencing and three paddocks. He is thankful for the community making him feel so welcome. They hope to open soon with 12 horses and one mini horse. The mini has a birthday Feb 11 and its name will be announced. There are still some final elements of approval and vet checks on more horses. The horses need exercising so members of the community might be able to ride for free if they come talk to staff. Cassidy asked how the horses are doing with people on the trail. Skelton said a team goes through to pick up after the horses, the deer don't spook them and bikers have waited for horses to pass. The plan to offer 45-minute and 1.5-hour rides, pricing will be affordable and locals can receive a discount. Bombard asked about kids that are too young to ride and Skelton said they are welcome to come watch and hang out.

Milburn said the Newport Flyer is out for annual service. They are offering commuter pricing and a smaller boat Friday-Sunday until the Flyer is back in February.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 2:45pm.