



## **Wednesday, January 15, 2026**

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

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 1:02pm by Chair Cinde Cassidy. The Catalina Island Tourism Authority (CITA) meeting was held in the Founders Room of US Bank with in-person attendance.

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

Cassidy, Alkibay, Fornasiere, Allen, Beach, Bombard, Flathers, Garcia, Leyva, Maistros, Say, Skelton, Upton, Welham

#### **DIRECTORS ABSENT (5)**

Stevenson, Bergman, Bradley, Hohenstein, Latorre

#### **STAFF PRESENT (6)**

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson, Cook, Hubert

#### **GUESTS (8)**

Heather Milburn, Rixie Serpas, Alexander Shaw, Wesley Alfvín, Bre Bussard, Tyler Wilson, Ziad Abughazaleh, Melody Anne

#### **MEET NEW TEAM MEMBERS**

Luttjohann introduced new staff members: Makenna Hubert, Susana Munoz, and Collier Cook, mentioning that Munoz is a new Visitor Center Specialist and was unable to make the meeting today. He said she is bi-lingual, and has lived and worked in Avalon for 30 years. Hubert provided a brief history saying she is excited to be with CITA as Events Manager. Cook, Event Director, is looking forward to working this new position. He was employed by the Catalina Island Co (CICo) until 2018 when he moved to the mainland. Say left the meeting at 1:06.

#### **BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

Cassidy is thankful that six months into the year, communication seems to be more open. At 1:08, Garcia left the meeting and Say returned. Cassidy created the quarterly leadership meetings where committee members play off each other. She holds these meetings with Mayor Marshall, Mayor Protem Lavelle, Chair Elect Fornasiere, City Manager Maistros, Assistant City Manager Francis and CEO Luttjohann to enhance mutual working relationships. The hope is to have perceptions change to knowledge allowing mutual co-marketing of events for the benefit of the community.

Cassidy asked Allen to speak on Two Harbors and his work there. Allen strives for staff to be more interactive with guests. They are expanding the Beach BBQ on Father's Day with hopes to attract a larger crowd than last year's 200 and only marketed 38 days prior to the event. Cassidy asked about the availability of the Cyclone. Allen stated it generally runs Memorial Day through Labor Day with demand extending dates especially for events. He explained Two Harbors Enterprises has the Harbor Reef restaurant and bar, six palapas, grocery store with a cool retail area, dive shop, Banning House Lodge with two villas, campground, and they manage moorings.

Cassidy spoke of her Fire Extinguisher business with its season running January to March. Previous customers will receive a visit to refresh their extinguishers but businesses can reach out. She is doing more research on insurance company requirements. She found it is the responsibility of the owner or tenant to look at the date and initial the tag on

each fire extinguisher monthly. She added this requirement gives staff the opportunity to know where the fire extinguisher is located. Cassidy also operates Snug Harbor Inn which has hosted media for overnight stays and is willing to do so again if asked.

Luttjohann was prompted by Cassidy to report on the upcoming vacancy of two seats. He said informal notice was received from CICO and Catalina Conservancy but it was too late to add to the agenda. Both are dedicated seats and each company will appoint their representative. Cassidy added, with Stevenson being the Past Chair, that position must be filled. Bombard is willing to step into that place as she was the previous Past Chair. Necessary changes will be brought back at the next meeting.

Cassidy mentioned seven responses were received for the November Marketing Conference. She allowed discussion time for feedback. One negative response was received, possibly an error if the wrong side of the survey was ticked. She requested anyone present with issues and if comfortable sharing, to please bring it forward for discussion. Bombard thought it was a great conference and would have liked to stay longer. She thinks extending the conference could be beneficial. Miller believes it might be time for one to be held on the mainland at a competitive destination or even on a cruise ship. Say left the meeting at 1:23. Miller said meetings held in another location allow attendees to make comparisons and build awareness of Catalina Island competition. Cassidy announced a possibility of a partner for a future conference. Skelton thought the conference contained important information and sees value in more time. At 1:26 Say returned. Skelton believes additional time for questions to be answered, speakers to not feel rushed, and for attendees to make connections with presenters is favorable. Beach would like sessions to be recorded as she can't close for multiple days without more notice. Luttjohann said a recording was tried previously but it didn't work, but is willing to revisit the option.

Cassidy considered date conflicts for the April and May Board Meetings. It is proposed to move dates to April 23 and May 14. The room agreed and no other issues were made known. Luttjohann will update the Calendar and Cassidy reminded the monthly Business Mixers will also change to those dates.

Ralph M Brown Act updates for 2026 are included in the packet. Cassidy read the notes with pertinent details on remote attendance, other languages, and oral reports on salary and benefits. This meeting the agenda was published in Spanish to adhere to the 2026 guidelines. Luttjohann requested the City of Avalon (COA) invite CITA to Brown Act training meetings that discuss changes. Alkibay left the meeting at 1:32.

Cassidy said she tried to make updates after the reminder to engage on LinkedIn but couldn't figure out how to make changes without creating a new account. She requested that anyone skilled in this platform to please help her. Beach asked if she was using the volunteer section. Cassidy was on the volunteer portion but needs guidance. Luttjohann promised to send follow-up information to the board on how to add Love Catalina service to your LinkedIn profile.

### **APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS**

Cassidy requested approval of the November 13, 2025 Board Minutes.

Motion for approval Fornasiere, second Bombard; passed with abstentions by Say and Beach

### **DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS**

Governance Committee Report: Policies 4.4 & 4.5, CEO Monitoring, Annual Review, Contract & Wages—Alkibay reentered the meeting at 1:35. Cassidy explained the committee met to review the CEO. She added that his contract was expiring and will be extended two years. She explained the policy is included in the packet. Luttjohann asked if he should step out of the meeting to which Cassidy apologized for not sending him out prior and Luttjohann left the closed room. Cassidy explained the agreement and stated that Luttjohann and the committee agreed to the needs.

Motion for approval of the new contract by Beach, second Upton; passed unanimously  
Luttjohann was brought back into the meeting to thanks and applause.

Audit & Financial Oversight Committee Update—Alkibay mentioned the memo circulating on the obligation to contribute to AVX undersea fiber. Lance Ware will be at the February meeting to present on the AVX transfer. Bombard said two \$50K payments were promised. Luttjohann agreed and said the second year passed with no payments meaning that \$100K was made in one payment. Cassidy reminded of this incredible opportunity for our community, a direct win

for all that live and visit here. Luttjohann added that an evolving AVX website will develop FAQs to answer questions about the project and services.

**Policy 1.2 Positive Awareness of Catalina Island as a destination**—Luttjohann said this is a routine update of internal monitoring. Fornasiere asked about the missing total on Kind Traveler donations. Luttjohann is awaiting figures and will add to the Board follow-up report.

**Policy 3.2 Treatment of Employees & Volunteers**—Luttjohann reported compliance as of 12/31/25. He will add the fire extinguisher tag to the list in the future. The volunteer manual and Employee Handbook were updated Spring 2025.

**Marketing & PR Report**—Miller asked attendees to Buckle in as much has happened since her last report at the November Marketing Conference. The ad conversion look-back window tracks the number of visitors coming to the island attributed to paid media campaigns. The numbers reported only calculate visitation tracked directly to CTV and Prospecting and Retargeting Display advertising; META cannot be tracked. Total visits through December are 49,378 in the look-back window. Fornasiere left the meeting at 1:47. The numbers for November were good for that time of year and the December look-back numbers go until March. Individuals exposed to VIA62 ads are 62.5% more likely to visit than those not exposed to 62Above ads. Paid Social Media CTR dropped slightly to 2.82% but continued to outperform the industry standard of 1.25%. The Best of Winter campaign continues and next year will expand to include other businesses. LOCALE began in November covering Shop Catalina and promoting holiday visits. This was a robust campaign and can be tracked on a variety of channels such as TikTok, Google ads, and more. The CTV and prospecting display visitation rates more than doubled compared to November, an outcome potentially bolstered by LOCALE's support on Shop Catalina. The GoTo Catalina Search Term co-op launched on January 1 and will run through December 31, 2026. The campaign cost is equally split, jointly buying ads and working together not competing. Bombard added that AI has brought click through numbers down but AI is going to Catalina businesses. Beach agreed, saying customers have found her business on ChatGPT. Miller agreed that AI scrubs everywhere. Bombard gave an example of using ChatGPT to plan an itinerary which younger travelers utilize. Miller said viewers of digital ads can directly talk to an AI assistant on Love Catalina. The transition from holiday ads and 'Tis the Season to the CastAway Campaign is now active. Visit California will email later in January showcasing a Catalina Island winter message featuring boat and hotel packages. Miller requests businesses update their specials and more on the CITA website so this eBlast links to accurate information. The March issue of 805 magazine will be polybagged with the 2026 Visitor Guide and sent to their subscriber list. The 805 publication will include an ad and social media posts. There are upcoming media and influencer FAMS; The Beacon this month, Today's Wild West in February, Samantha Dunn will visit again in March/April, and Pamela Holt of Me, Myself and the World is awaiting sponsorship. Miller attends the International Media Marketplace in NYC next week and received a strong interest of 50 requests with only 24 appointment slots. Her time is filled and an additional list is banked of media to work with in the future.

Warner presented early copies of the 2026 Visitor Guide to attendees. Precision Services is awaiting delivery so they can distribute to Certified Folder, mail requested copies, complete a member and SoCal hotel mailing, and ship to the island. The annual AAA mailing opportunity allows six businesses to insert a flyer with the Guide going to 260 AAA offices; deadline for participation is January 30. Warner announced Map ad sales open next week with previous advertisers approached first. This will be produced by Bob Co, distributed on and off the island, and available on the ferry boats. Ad pricing remains unchanged from last year and a total of 175K maps are to be printed. The ads will be sold on a first come basis. She mentioned the trade show season begins in February and continues into March. She will partner with Catalina Express for these shows and one additional partner can participate each day if interested. Warner reminded of member opportunities including the free rack card display at the Visitor Center. She said Lynn@LoveCatalina.com is the contact for interested businesses wishing to have a banner ad on the CITA website for a month or to be featured on a consumer eBlast, sent twice a month. Warner repeated it is important to keep business information and hours current on the CITA website for upcoming media visits, promotional opportunities, and visitor referrals. Cassidy commented on the incredible Visitor Guide cover photo with an awesome perspective. Warner stated submissions are to be made to Jim by Friday, January 23 for businesses planning what to do to be sustainable in 2026. Luttjohann mentioned the new novel Ironwood by Connelly will be released soon.

**Events Report**—Cook stated it is fantastic to be back on the island and he is looking forward to facilitating new events. He met with Mike Bone, Chair of the Events Committee, has ideas for three new possible events, will keep updating the

events calendar to minimize the risk of multiple events at the same time, met with hoteliers, and is reviewing options for software to monitor event impact. Luttjohann said the February Board meeting will have a special session on FIFA and Olympics recommendations. Cook requested his contact information be given out to any group considering Catalina Island for an event.

Hubert reported Shop Catalina went well with 32 businesses participating. The Jingle Singers returned; the tree lighting, Santa and a snow machine were included. She thanked businesses for their support. New Year's Eve went smoothly with 612 guests, 35 volunteers and staff, and two Board Members attending. She thanked the volunteers that helped both December 30 and 31 along with student workers. The Mixer tonight is at the Catalina Island Museum, 6-8pm and there is still time to sign up. March Mixer will be a non-profit event with several combined participants. Fixers in the works include ServSafe, alcohol service, Disney institute training, and TripAdvisor. Pride is scheduled for June 13. Alkibay left the meeting at 2:23.

Visitor and Member Services Report—Luttjohann presented membership applications for Jazz Trax and Bertram Insurance saying JazzTrax is returning after a hiatus.

Motion to accept the new members by Say, second Skelton; passed unanimously  
Cassidy is glad to have Art Good and his son Austin from JazzTrax back as members. She and Fornasiere will meet again with them to assist in growing the JazzTrax event. Cassidy is impressed with Bertram Insurance (Milburn's husband) feeling he is the best agent ever. At 2:25 Alkibay returned. Cassidy could talk for hours on how fabulous he is, mentioning he is on the island and connected.

Luttjohann explained the Visitor Center Lease was extended to April 1, 2026 providing COA time to navigate upcoming construction on the Pleasure Pier.

#### **GUEST & MEMBER UPDATES**

Bombard said the Spring Catalina Express schedule is out and covers through June 21.

Flathers announced Food Tours will begin again on February 13 with restaurants reopening.

Maistros reported the Pebbly Beach hillside scraping is done and brought down tons of rock. The road is open and COA workers continue with clean up.

Melody Anne has spoken to several businesses about her Catalina Mystery Hunt. This is a scavenger hunt with bonus entries related to her book Never Have I Ever. She has published several romance novels but began working on a thriller series with Catalina references.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Cassidy adjourned the Board meeting at 2:32pm.