



MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday, March 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; remote attendance at Catalina Beverage, Bishop office for Board member John Alkibay; and two guests attended on-line.

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

DIRECTORS PRESENT (14)

Stevenson, Bombard, Cassidy, Allen, Beach, Bradley, Flathers, Garcia, Maistros, Paret, Say, Upton, Vega, Villalobos

DIRECTORS ATTENDING REMOTELY VIA GOOGLE MEET (1)

Alkibay

DIRECTORS ABSENT (4)

Bergman, Glass, Latorre, Wright

STAFF PRESENT (4)

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson

GUESTS (Remote guest in *italic*) (7)

Tyler Wilson, Jeff Skelton, Heather Milburn, Alexander Shaw, Lynn Stevenson, *Kaila Fearheller, Heidi Barrios*

BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

Stevenson asked guests to introduce themselves. At 1:01 Maistros entered the meeting and at 1:02 Alkibay came on-line to attend. Stevenson reminded of the Brown Act requirements for a remote attendance. At 1:03 Skelton entered the meeting, introduced himself and said that eight more horses are arriving on tonight's barge, adding Catalina Horseback Adventure has rides daily when it is not raining. Stevenson requested that Board Members attend the Mixer tonight at Maverick Helicopters, 4pm. Stevenson requested a vote as Bombard is eligible to extend her Board Member term but a vote is required to accept her offer.

Motion to approve Bombard's Board Seat be extended to June 2027 by Cassidy, second Garcia; passed with abstention of Bombard.

Stevenson mentioned the upcoming Board nominations and requested volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee. He stated that Julie Glass, Heather Milburn, and Nicole Hohenstein are willing to serve along with two Board members eligible to serve another term. There are four seats available and five are currently interested. Luttjohann reminded that recommendations are still being accepted. Stevenson said the Nominating Committee is comprised of Bombard, Cassidy and three or more active Board members. Volunteering for the committee were: Beach, Villalobos, Garcia, Upton, Bradley and Say.

CONSENT ITEMS

Stevenson presented the February minutes included in the packet. He requested an edit to the minutes under his Chair Report. The minutes will be amended with a change stating "... impact of the fires is unknown but may mean less visitors ..." and no further edits were requested.

A motion approving the edited Minutes from February 20, 2025 with one change in the Chair Report by Say, second Beach; passed with abstentions by Flathers, Garcia and Villalobos.

BOARD PROCESS

2.8.1A Audit/Financial Oversight Committee

Luttjohann provided an overview of an email exchange with Alkibay on the required annual audit. The Oversight Committee should present RFPs at the March Board meeting from accountants seeking to perform this audit. The RFP process at this time of year is tough due to tax season. If RFPs are requested later in the year there is a better chance for multiple replies. A recommendation to retain the same audit firm for another year is more practical so Luttjohann received a formal proposal from McGinty, Knudtson & Associates which is included in the Board packet.

Motion by Bombard to hire the current auditor for one more year and accept the McGinty, Knudtson & Associates proposal, second Villalobos; passed unanimously.

CEO/ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Visitor and Member Services Report—Luttjohann presented a membership application for Kids on the Move.

Motion for approval of new member Kids on the Move by Beach, second Bradley; passed unanimously.

The Hispanic Business Alliance (HBA)—Luttjohann stated that the Disney cruise ship date change meant the meeting did not convene. Vega has 12-13 businesses interested that could integrate or be separate. Luttjohann believes it is better to integrate and not be separate organizations. Stevenson said during Cassidy's year an oversight committee might be formed. Cassidy feels there are times speaking in Spanish is better for the HBA. Garcia suggested a translator be part of CITA Board meetings. Luttjohann recommended Google translate or a CITA staff member. Cassidy would like to see quarterly HBA meetings under the umbrella of CITA.

Events Report—Luttjohann met with the events subcommittee and also has updated the capacity list. He reminded all in attendance that the Mixer today begins at 4pm due to helicopter flights being offered. He announced Otillo is back April 27 and the delay due to Covid means it will not be an Olympic event when the Summer Games come to Los Angeles. The Taste Around is scheduled for May 29 but due to lack of participation staff recommend Restaurant Week be dropped. Pride confirmations are in the works for June 6-7 which will drive overnight stays. The Summer Concert series is set with three different performances on the downtown stage. Luttjohann reported that New Year's Eve (NYE) shows a loss of \$1K+ and the expense of the NYE Rack Cards was spread out as they will be used multiple years. There is work in progress on a possible Book Festival in February and Pickle Ball event in October. Discussion on the Book Festival included how it fits in a need time and that Winter is a good time for reading.

Department of Justice (DOJ) Update—Luttjohann is celebrating the long-fought DOJ approval giving permission for raffles to be held during the Concert Series. It's finally agreed that approval through November 2024 is now processed. Allen stepped out of the meeting at 1:26.

Cruise Committee Update—Luttjohann said the Cruise Committee met and the Disney Term Sheet gives Disney priority for Tuesday calls. Since the Disney agreement, Royal Caribbean and Carnival have reached out to the City of Avalon (COA) for similar agreements. He reported 28K Back to Catalina souvenir coins are ready for use if the program is reinstated or redone. To bring traffic to the Visitor Center, they could be distributed there. Say asked if there was tracking during the previous program. Luttjohann says there is not a good reference due to the manner in which they were given out. Stevenson directed staff to do some outreach and report back with follow-up at the April meeting. Cassidy suggested the prize be five Catalina Island trips which allows the gathering of email addresses and then would end the program when all coins were distributed. Allen returned to the meeting at 1:32.

1.3 Public Policy, Legislation, and Infrastructure—Luttjohann referred to the packet saying there are frequent requests for a lactation station. CITA could help find a location but Maistros asked who would maintain them. Beach reported she has seen them at airport locations and they are quite nice. Bombard reminded that they need to be secure to ensure they are only used for that purpose. Upton has seen an App that allows scheduling a reservation time and unlocks the facility. Maistros proposed an indoor public space as an option. Luttjohann wondered if it could be incorporated in the Mole Project and Cassidy suggested the Post Office Arcade.

JourneyAble can help with prospective visitors that have travel disability needs. Guest Heidi Barrios joined the meeting at 1:41. Avalon Beautiful received initial approval to present tweaks for the bathrooms at Casino Dock. Cassidy asks why these are consistently closed as they were built for diver's use and changing. Maistros is unhappy that the tenant places a 'closed' sign without COA approval. He added, the restrooms are not locked, just a sign discouraging use. Beach will now turn the sign around when she sees it posted. Maistros reminded that in November there was a legit closure but otherwise they should be open. He went on to say the Pleasure Pier restrooms will have a partial closure next week and those renovations will be finished prior to the season.

Catalina Island internet service via the proposed undersea fiber was not awarded funds in recent possibilities.

The City of Avalon will be adding 23 units of affordable and hopefully workforce housing near the back of City Hall.

Paret said Catalina Island Health (CIH) is looking for grants to help operate now and also to build the new facility which will help provide access to healthcare for residents and visitors. CIH is attempting to utilized funds via sales tax that is paid to the state and feds and then back to CIH through LA Care which will make up some of the cost of provided medical care. The new build has been dealing with regulations of the California Coastal Commission and other agencies.

VP OF MARKETING AND SALES UPDATE

Miller revealed that 20,963 visits to Catalina Island are attributed to consumers who were exposed to CITA programmatic advertising. The CastAway campaign brought 87,529 visitors to the island since September 5, 2024. The highest volume of visitors are encouraged by display advertising but it is a combination of CTV, display and video that are building awareness and ultimately visitation. The CastAway campaign is also running on paid social media using video and display. Miller explained that organic social media appears naturally in a consumer's feed and paid ads are content shown to specific audiences. Paid ads have the ability to target specific groups and pivot to new audiences as needed. Paid social will target profiles that are not loyalists and brings more people to CITA's website. Cassidy asked how the return is known. Miller said charts show engagement, how many saw an ad, how many clicked through, etc. Garcia agreed that Meta social media ads are the most beneficial for her business. Miller stated that some targets are not always available using an example that gay cannot be targeted for Pride events. The co-op campaign keeps going all year and that for a small destination CITA has been ahead of the game.

CITA staff are registered to attend and learn at upcoming conferences which are beneficial for implementing new ideas and strategies. SimpleView was purchased by Granicus over a year ago and is now merging and streamlining their processes and teams. CITA is unsure of the effect this will have but staff must forge new relationships and learn what works for other DMOs. Tech changes in a flash and CITA staff must keep up with advances.

A spring photo shoot with Ryan Longnecker is planned mid-May to add content. Miller thanked Beach as she assisted in the addition of some nice underwater photos added to CITA's library.

Miller listed upcoming media and influencer visits adding that Samantha Dunn of Southern California News Group is here now and staying overnight; five more upcoming visits are scheduled.

Miller requested feedback on the Marketing Conference which will be held in the fall. Options include November 13 or with no Board meeting in December, CITA could be dark in November and hold the annual conference December 4. She mentioned the staff preference of early December but recognized the conference has mostly been held in November. Board preference is November. Beach stepped out of the meeting at 2:18.

Warner provided a recap of the recent travel trade shows where she represented CITA. She went through 10 boxes of Visitor Guides at the Phoenix show; 16 boxes at the LA show; and 14 boxes at the Bay Area Trade Show. She re-signed for next year at a discounted price for each of those shows. The Bay Area show is attended by those with higher incomes and they show good interest. She mentioned the possibility of Dallas next year. At 2:21, Beach came back into the meeting. Warner will look into the Pacific Coast Sportfishing show at the Orange County Fairgrounds for next year. She reported that 265 AAA offices west of the Rockies received 2025 Visitor Guides and gathered a good response for

reorders of guides for them to share with their clients. Warner announced the map ad space is sold out; listing spaces are available but those must be received no later than tomorrow. The maps are distributed on the mainland, mailed, available on-line, and on the island. Warner said sign-up forms for the 19th annual Taste Around Avalon will be available soon. Luttjohann added that in recent years this event has seen increased visitor participation.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Villalobos found the Visit California Outlook Forum informative. Miller will add a link to next week's Thursday Update for those interested in viewing some of the sessions. Villalobos announced that Maverick Helicopters is giving away one tour per day to those that sign up for tours. He said Mike Waterman from Visit Anaheim, is working with Mario Lopez on a kid's itinerary. Villalobos believes CITA may wish to consider an App to communicate with visitors and help build an itinerary. He reminded us of the time change for the Maverick Helicopters Mixer tonight; it begins at 4pm as it must end prior to sunset due to the six-minute free helicopter tours. Food will be provided by Café Metropole.

Bombard is excited that the Catalina Express new boat contract is set for construction in San Diego and said this Tier 4 vessel will take two years to build. Catalina Express hosted 36 concierges yesterday and is working on more FAM trips.

Cassidy announced that member business, Catalina Compass Tours operated by Shana Cassidy and Michelle Upton, is offering a code to try their tour for free. This is a walking tour and the code is good through the end of March. They are seeking feedback to fix any glitches, etc. and appreciate locals taking advantage of this offer.

Garcia said her business Catalina Island Mermaids is partnering with Avalon Bare Bottom, a boat cleaning service. She said they are consistent and reliable. Boats must move inside the harbor for cleaning. Bare Bottom offers service at \$4/foot and a local rate of \$3/foot.

Say reported on the first Brave the Shave event which raised \$47K for childhood cancer and their goal had been \$10K. There were 59 participants and she thanked COA for their help and participation. Villalobos left the meeting at 2:38.

Luttjohann said he sent out evaluation forms after last month's meeting but none were returned.

Stevenson reminded of the date change for the April meeting; TUESDAY, April 22.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Stevenson adjourned the meeting at 2:39pm.