



MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday, May 16, 2019

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:03pm by Chair Gail Fornasiere

DIRECTORS PRESENT (13) Fornasiere, Ponce, Howell-Awalt, Stevenson, Alkibay, Paret, Lavelle, Noll, Foley, Sanchez, Montano, Kielpinski, Radde

DIRECTORS ABSENT (6)

Hite, Hoefs, Salinas, Wilson, Hohenstein, Perico

STAFF PRESENT (6)

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson, DeMyer, Chavez

GUESTS (4)

Carol Elliott, Amanda Bombard, Michael Parmer, Cinde Cassidy

INTRODUCTIONS AND RECOGNITIONS

Radde introduced Michael Parmer as the new Assistant City Manager for the City of Avalon (COA). Carol Elliott and Amanda Bombard attended due to a discussion item on the agenda involving Catalina Express. Luttjohann introduced Janet DeMyer as the newest staff member of the Catalina Island Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau (CICC&VB). She began working as the event coordinator May 6 and has already overseen one concert. She gave a short bio and Luttjohann added that she will take responsibility for all events CICC&VB is involved in, touches or owns. She will grow existing events and seek sponsorships to defer costs. Montano asked if a job description on each employee could be provided; Luttjohann will update the organizational chart on file and send it out.

CONSENT ITEMS

Approval of Minutes from April 2019

Motion for approval Noll, second Ponce. Passed unanimously, Foley arrived later in the meeting.

Approval of New Chamber Member

Motion to approve Zane Grey Pueblo Hotel as new member by Ponce, second Paret. Passed unanimously, Foley arrived later in the meeting. Howell-Awalt suggested they be approached to hold a Mixer as it would be a nice location. Luttjohann stated they have already been asked but with a very soft opening scheduled for July, there would be no date commitment at this time.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Fornasiere reported she met with Foley and Noll to discuss a reserve fund policy. Currently there is a reserve fund, but no policy in place. Capital was borrowed from the reserve fund for the Visitor Center project and is being paid back. A crisis communication packet was discussed by Ponce, Sanchez and Fornasiere at a meeting that utilized the Catalina Express handbook as a tool. This looks to be a long process and will be ongoing. Cassidy asked Luttjohann if he received training for crisis communication. He stated he did not receive a certificate but has had peer-to-peer interactions and added Sanchez attended Cal Travel training. A request for volunteers willing to help with these projects was included.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Howell-Awalt began with a reminder that the March financials were not approved at the last meeting due to the incorrect heading on the report. He also presented the April financials for approval. Motion for approval of March and April 2019 Financials by Ponce, second Stevenson. Passed unanimously, Foley arrived later in the meeting. Howell-Awalt asked about the balance in the reserve account; Luttjohann replied, \$74K.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Ponce revealed that no further nominations were received for CICC&VB Board Members. Therefore, the committee would move forward with the current slate. No action required.

DISCUSSION—CATALINA EXPRESS ONBOARD SALES OF ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Stevenson opened the discussion with reasons for the program disclosing Catalina Island Company (CIC) wished to sell activity tickets on the boats for many years. A meeting he had with Greg Bombard of Catalina Express revealed that often visitors on the 9:50am boat would change their return tickets to an earlier departure because there was nothing to do. Together the two companies wanted to make visits better for guests and try to give them reasons to stay for the entire planned time. Elliott stated that 40% of passengers have made no plans prior to boarding the boat and they consistently hear “there is nothing to do.” The CIC attendant generally rides the 9:50 boat, works in a ticket booth in Avalon and then returns on a boat that generates no sales. Stevenson reported that Catalina Island as a destination has been in decline for several years while Santa Barbara and other day trips in southern California have increased visitation. CIC has invested \$4mil in marketing, has seen a 3% return on that investment and currently is cutting their marketing budget. He stated this is a scary decline with the recent investments made by CIC, the Conservancy and Museum. Elliott emphasized, this is about the customer and providing a service. She also stated that it is available to everyone, the door is open and Catalina Express will listen. Fornasiere asked if parameters are in place for consistency and Elliott replied, yes. Montano asked if CIC is selling their hotels and Stevenson said no, the focus is on activities and added that directions are given to all properties and businesses when asked. Elliott reiterated that this is purely about customer service. Cassidy brought up a complaint by one of her hotel guests. They were furious, felt pressured and were then spoken over as the CIC representative interacted with passengers seated next to them. (Foley arrived @ 1:40) Cassidy feels that a concierge is brilliant for the boat and was placated when told changes in the system were made. Greg Bombard told her he was trying to get this program going for many years and first spoke with Wayne Griffin. However, in all the years she has attended various meetings Cassidy has never heard it mentioned and her frustration is that it should have been presented to the community. Catalina Express would like to see an information ambassador at Cabrillo Mole. Passengers get off the boat feeling a bit lost, do not know what to do or where to go. Luttjohann reminded attendees the mobile visitor center was put on hold due to staffing and budget. Elliott stated that some merchants won't provide consistency or may have limited funds. When CIC approached Catalina Express it seemed to be what was needed. Miller wondered why this is any different than the Newport Flyer. Several answered that the Flyer has a table/booth for ticket sellers and passengers come to them. Catalina Express has no room for a booth/table and prefers roving ambassadors on their ships. Luttjohann asked if Catalina Express can put a reason code when a ticket time is changed and then report that data. He would appreciate possible analysis of how many early returns are day-trippers vs. over-night stays. Lavelle enforced

what Elliott said earlier, saying there is nothing to do and adding that after 2:30 tours end, restaurants close until dinner or only offer a limited menu. Fornasiere asked if Catalina Express crew could carry their magazine around, give them out if requested and answer questions of passengers. Noll stated that anyone can do it, but no one would probably be as consistent as CIC. Warner interjected that the Visitor Center staff cringes when the door opens after 3pm because it is hard to direct people when the last tour leaves around 3pm or 4pm. Fornasiere requested the meeting move on. No action was needed or taken and no further discussion was requested.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Luttjohann submitted his written report and highlighted a few items. He requests "What's New" content, please! He spoke of the unanswered letter sent on behalf of Safe and Civil, Avalon Schools to Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) and stated the community group seeks solutions. Luttjohann cited on the positive side that Paul Romo's hospitality program at Avalon Schools has grown and second-year students have a different curriculum. He also called attention to the limited staff in the CICC&VB Admin offices next week due to attendance at the Simple View Summit and other work-related events.

REPORT OF THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

Stevenson mentioned the committee is working on tweaking the message and that only eight percent are utilizing Jack Rabbit. He encouraged more to take advantage of the service for tracking and other benefits. Miller reminded all that member portal training is scheduled for May 29 at 10am for the new Simple View-managed website. This allows members to access their listing on the CICC&VB site and make changes on their own. This training is a webinar, can be done from any desk and will be recorded making it available for review. She reported that social media is robust and when asked why, attributed it to the social media contractor.

REPORT OF THE CRUISE COMMITTEE

Luttjohann noted the Cruise Committee meeting earlier in the day had a light agenda. He is working on cruise visitor content for CICC&VB web site. Cruise ships promote all their ports of call including Catalina Island. However, the industry will name types of activities but not the vendor as they wish to sell these onboard to their passengers. Luttjohann said that at the Miami FCCA Seatrade convention in April, cruise line executives most often asked "what's new?" and this enforced the importance of getting anything new into the spotlight. An e-newsletter for shore excursions will also be developed.

MEMBER & VISITOR SERVICES REPORT

Luttjohann began with a report on the discussion in a recent staff meeting on the restructure of membership dues. There is a need for an ad hoc committee to convene to discuss the current dues, member types, benefits received and options not being utilized. One possibility is to gain members at a lower level who would benefit from being listed in the visitor guide and provide services such as electricians, dentists, etc. Typically, there are not many current members in the service category. Lavelle, Fornasiere, Noll, Ponce and Amanda Bombard volunteered to comprise this committee and encourage others to attend to provide additional input.

EVENTS REPORT

New Year's Eve Gala—DeMyer announced the cost of this event needs approval for the \$118K estimate. New Year's Eve is next fiscal year and there is a desire to go live with ticket sales soon. However the event costs typically are approved in the budget for the coming fiscal year. The contract needs to be signed and approval is necessary to move forward with ticket sales. A motion to approve and not exceed \$118K by Howell-Awalt, second by Montano. Passed with abstention by Stevenson. At the end of DeMyer's Events Report, Noll mentioned the NYE contract needed some edits. Luttjohann agreed there were several and noted the contract is not final at this time.

Care for Catalina Community Clean-up Day—DeMyer reported on the follow-up meeting and the decision to immediately grow the event to bi-annual that coordinates a large item pick-up to collect discarded items. The group would also like to organize a community yard sale. Howell-Awalt asked about the landscaping proposed around the freight yard and Luttjohann responded, “not yet.”

Concert Series—DeMyer stated that July 13 is Abba and then to come will be Woodstock and Queen. She spoke with Mary Stein to book local bands for few extra concerts this summer. Local band, The Isleños will perform on the stage during the Taste Around event on May 30.

Mixers—DeMyer reminded all that the Mixer tonight will be in The Shops at Atwater and will feature tours of the Hotel Atwater. This is a construction site so the hard-hat tour requires closed-toe shoes. On June 6 the Trailhead is the location for the Catalina Island Conservancy Mixer.

Annual Meeting—DeMyer disclosed DC3 is the likely venue for the Annual Meeting & Installation of Officers and Directors dinner meeting on July 18. Transportation is the next obstacle to tackle with cost being an important factor.

Taste Around—Held on May 30, DeMyer is still chasing participants; typical for this event. Cards will be available for purchase beginning May 27 at the Visitor Center. Restaurant Week follows and is growing as an event.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Fornasiere announced the Museum will show Houdini film, The Grim Game on May 17. This event will be held at Overlook Hall due to forecast of wind; begins at 7pm and the movie will be shown at 8pm. She also stated that the Silent Film Festival is this Saturday, featuring Colleen Moore in Why Be Good and should be fun! Charles Phoenix will return on June 2 to the Casino Theatre, followed by a book signing at the Museum. He is known for his southern California acts like Palm Springs Land. He visited the island often while growing up and gives a fun presentation. The Museum hopes this will become an annual event.

Kielpinski mentioned the Airport-in-the-Sky will have a fly-in on May 25 to commemorate 60 years of aviation on Catalina Island.

Ponce encouraged sign-ups for the Rotary Club Catalina Island Chili Cook Off, 1-5pm on May 25 which also features a salsa competition.

Lavelle announced mobile ordering recently launched and that pre-tastes would be available as they work on their Taste Around items at Catalina Coffee & Cookie Company.

Sanchez brought summer schedules for Catalina Express and passed them around. Bombard mentioned the addition of text messaging for weather and/or events. Passengers must sign up for this feature. All media requests should be sent to Catalinaexpress.com/pressroom for travel comps.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Sanchez requested the topic of the mobile visitor center be a discussion soon.

Fornasiere reminded all Board Members to sign the new Conflict of Interest Statement and requested hard copies be turned into staff member Johnson. It was reported that Fornasiere and Howell-Awalt completed their forms.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Fornasiere adjourned the meeting at 2:50 pm