



Thursday, May 14, 2026

MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:04pm by Chair Cinde Cassidy. The Catalina Island Tourism Authority (CITA) meeting was held in the Founders Room of US Bank with in-person and remote attendance. Remote attendance as posted on the agenda: Alkibay at 647 N. Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514.

DIRECTORS PRESENT (16)

Cassidy, Fornasiere, Bombard, Allen, Beach, Bergman, Bradley, Flathers, Garcia, Hohenstein, Leyva, Say, Skelton, Welham, Ledebur, Chilton

DIRECTORS ATTENDING REMOTELY VIA GOOGLE MEET (1)

Alkibay

DIRECTORS ABSENT (2)

Maistros, Upton

STAFF PRESENT remote staff in *italic* (6)

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson, Hubert, *Cook*

GUESTS remote guest in *italic* (14)

Greg Carson, Yifei Ye, Xiomara Ferneti, Heather Milburn, Kayla Fearheller, Jon Council, Bryen Barcena, Laura Hyatt, Alexander Shaw, David Hart, Tyler Wilson, Angelica Olivas, Emily Teachout, *Jessica Blotter*

BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

Cassidy thanked Hubert and staff for their work on the Board Retreat at USC Marine Science Center and said some of the best conversations were that day. She said six evaluations were received after the meeting and thanked those that completed the survey. Cassidy attended New Board Orientation on May 5 with Luttjohann, Ledebur, and Chilton saying it was great. Cassidy explained there are three presentations today and the Board can choose to take action if needed.

PRESENTATIONS

Cassidy asked Barcena and Hyatt from Los Angeles Nomadic Division (LAND) to give the first presentation. Barcena shared about a city-wide public art exhibit currently being organized. Part of their PowerPoint presentation showed they work with contemporary artists in LA County. The installation in Avalon is planned for May through October 2027 displaying the work of 14 artists. Barcena said the artists are encouraged to learn more about history, politics and eco systems with the art being site specific to Catalina Island. He believes the project will be an added benefit to visitors. Hyatt explained that LAND works with partners on Catalina Island to get this done and hopes to raise \$750K. LAND is looking for volunteers and other support. She mentioned they need partners on all levels. Barcena added they would like local artists to participate.

Blotter was online making a revised appeal for continuing CITA's Kind Traveler membership that displayed on the screen. She reported Marine Animal Rescue (MAR) and Bleu World are recipients of funds collected at participating businesses. Blotter feels the membership creates a message to travelers sensitive to environmental issues. Council relayed how his organization has grown beyond the marine mammals. He had a cage with two young owls emphasizing he gets calls for everything and it is much more than pinnipeds. Donations are helpful and community support is welcome. He added that birds and others not covered by MAR are fed out of his own pocket. Blotter informed that Madison the Mermaid

and Newport Aquatics recently signed agreements with Kind Traveler. Partners are featured in newsletters that go to 100K and CITA is promoted on that platform. Blotter feels membership positions Catalina Island as a destination caring for the environment. She reported 73% of travelers want their vacation dollars to make a difference. Kind Traveler is not only a donation program—Kind Traveler creates impact; does destination-wide story telling; connects directly to visitor experiences; creates press, newsletters and social visibility. Existing partners participate at zero cost and new partners pay \$500 per year. The revised agreement also brings the \$12K CITA annual membership price to \$5K. Fornasiere asked about Visit California funding. Blotter explained that Visit California members join for half the cost but renewals are at 100%. Bombard wondered how many years CITA's cost would be discounted and Blotter assured it would be maintained each year. Garcia checks average click-thru rates and asked about her business. Blotter said it is a story-telling platform with click thru on the dashboard but not Catalina Island specific. Kind Traveler is in 14 countries, a mini documentary reached 15.5 million households, and their pressroom has over 500 stories. Say asked if partners can remain if CITA is not a member. Blotter said yes but the reduced cost changes to \$2500 per year. She explained each partner receives a marketing package with PR, content management, social media; if googled there are many media articles. Hohenstein questioned the amount hotels charge per guest. Blotter stated rates for hotels with under 50 rooms is \$1 per night or \$2 per stay but it can slide down. Fornasiere asked about Kind Traveler's membership retention rate and Blotter said approximately 90%. Bombard would like to see a model where visitors can choose to pay or not. Blotter explained if it is a line item on billing, a visitor can opt out adding very few decide to opt out. Blotter was thanked and left the meeting. Beach said Scuba by Design is a partner but she still supports a vote to not continue the membership. Council does not know how much his organization benefits as the funds are sent to their mainland office. Fearheller said Bleu World has been a recipient since the beginning. They receive donations monthly used toward student travel to the island. She added, working with Kind Traveler has been difficult. She would like to partner with CITA and Care for Catalina directly to receive funds saying maybe CITA could donate the membership fee. Cassidy feels this belongs under Care for Catalina and Fornasiere said CITA can promote. Fearheller also promotes online and is willing to help others.

City of Avalon (COA) is seeking joint funding for a mobile event screen. Hart noted LA is encouraging promotion of watch parties for the upcoming World Cup. He said the proposed screen has a 10-year warranty and might have a longer life. This can be used for Olympics, Superbowl, Pride, JazzTrax, races, concerts, movies on the beach, a welcome sign, or city notices. The screen is 12' x 7' and has a hydraulic system to raise it seven feet in the air. The unit includes a trailer, speakers, and has a five-year warranty for display. Hart proposed that COA and CITA split the \$72K cost at \$36K each. He stated cross-training would be provided to staff of both organizations and set up takes five minutes. The company ROI reports normal rent at \$2.5K per day but Hart is unsure if events would pay that much. Hohenstein reminded it is preferred for watchers to be in the bars to support local businesses. Hart said the games go all day but visitors want a place for their entire family. He reminded visitors still need to eat and drink but feels there are not enough restaurants as the wait lines are long. He said COA wants to provide an experience and won't make money from sporting events because if a watch party is free there is no charge to show these events. Discussion included when patrons are charged, the possibility of a test run for a week, a one-year lease instead of purchase, and who provides electricity. Cook was at the demonstration and said it is an impressive piece of hardware. He ran the numbers at five years which worked out to \$128 per use. He went through the events calendar and asked promoters of their interest; some said it depends upon cost but overall, the response was positive. Skelton left the meeting at 2:06. Chilton brought up that rules would be needed for advertising and Hart ensured it would not be placed to compete. Skelton returned at 2:08. Hohenstein asked if the Film Festival would rent the screen. Ferneti would like to use it but it depends upon the cost saying \$2.5K per day would be too high. Hart found that Breckenridge, CO leaves their screen outdoors 24-hours a day, all year, and in FL they are placed outside so weather doesn't seem to bother the equipment. Skelton wondered who will approve locations, cost, permitting, etc. Cook spoke to Ron Truppa and he said if AV products were one of the Film Festival's sponsors, they might not be permitted to use this device. Hart re-stated that it could be used outside the Casino during JazzTrax. Hohenstein believes Art Good would not approve of this as it would take away from ticket sales. Cook said the Mike Bone was positive if it could be used as a scoreboard but cost would be a factor. He didn't get a response from Art Good and Ray McKewon is unsure about using it. Cassidy asked Luttjohann and Alkibay about the budget and wondered if funding could be found. Luttjohann said the current budget is through June 30 and he would require Board direction if it were to be added to the July 2026-June 2027 fiscal year budget. He stated a multi-year payment option would be the only feasible way. Alkibay asked if there is an estimated down payment. Hart said no, but financing over three years is a possibility. Chilton would like to know how this brings visitors because it seems it would benefit locals more. She is fully supportive for the town but is unsure about CITA funding. Hart said CITA partnered with COA on other items like the

Christmas lighting that doesn't bring visitors but enhances their experience. Hohenstein informed Hart that \$36K could be hard as it comes out of marketing funds. Cassidy ended the discussion saying it must be brought back at the June meeting. She encouraged Board Members to think about a few things; does it bring tourism, if CITA participates any funding options, is a one-year lease possible, and location placement. She added that as a hotel owner, she would not like it outside her hotel rooms and Bradley agreed.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

The minutes of the Love Catalina & Care for Catalina Joint Meeting on April 23, 2026 were presented for approval.

Motion for approval Hohenstein, second Bergman; passed with abstention from Say

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Marketing & PR Report—Miller and Carson provided results from the annual campaigns. Ye explained her year-to-date reporting slides. She said the goals are to increase overnight visitation, maintain a presence but heavier in need times. For their creative, Island Time is the best performer. Welham left the meeting at 2:30. Ye showed single image and carousel ads for CastAway. She explained that display banners expose people and then Via62 can track and retarget. Welham returned at 2:32. Ye said when they retarget the large tall ad is the best performer but for prospecting the square image is the most common. She informed that using Via62 for tracking Pride is new this year. She reminded of the Visit California, LOCALE, and 805 Living promotions. For the fiscal year 25-26 they tracked 94,288 visitors from first impression to an island visit. She added starting May 14, for four weeks and ending before Pride weekend there are ads on KGAY 103.1FM in Palm Springs/Coachella Valley. Carson says his team pushes to do new things. Ledebur wondered how they track and Ye explained Via62, the geo-fence area in COA, the use of a control group that didn't see our ad, and how CTV and phones are used for tracking. Miller explained that changes are spontaneous when a specific package isn't working. Ye moved on to the Catalina co-op that joins Catalina Express, Catalina Island Co, and CITA to maximize impact and minimize cannibalization. This group pools funds to reach a larger audience and the KPI shows increased numbers over the previous year. Ye's presentation included slides with the geographic breakdown of the promotion area. Beach left the meeting at 2:54. Ye explained that AI pops up everywhere and the goal is to not send to another place but keep within partner sites. Leyva left the meeting at 2:56. Olivas and Teachout said Catalina Island is a popular conversation. Their PR is always talking about the island and currently is promoting Pride, Catalina Wine Mixer, Taste Around Avalon, and the book Ironwood. Teachout hears from media and requests any merchants hungry to host to please contact her. She explained the current popularity of stay-cations, day trips and weekend travel. She noted that multi-generational groups and adventure travelers are increasing. Beach returned at 3:00. Miller said her research for the marketing conference narrowed to the two best options, presented on the paper given to each Board Member; Annenberg Beach House, Santa Monica and La Valencia, La Jolla. She requested discussion and direction stating generally Board Members pay \$65 each but the price could increase to \$85 if a reception is included. After discussion, Cassidy requested a motion.

Motion to move forward with the La Jolla location at \$16,461 proposed cost from Bombard, second Garcia; passed with abstention from Hohenstein

Events Report—Cook is working with Skelton on concerts at Catalina Horseback Adventure Ranch. These will be on Thursdays allowing locals to enjoy them. He reported Mermaid Fest will include a ticketed event, Saturday, October 24 onboard a Catalina Classic Cruises vessel. Cook said PADI is experiencing budget issues and he has been pushing hard to ensure PADI not postpone their 60th Anniversary event for a year. He hopes they keep the scheduled date in September 2026. PADI would like to promote and share this information at the Dive Show later in May.

Hubert reminded tonight's Mixer is at St. Catherine's of Alexandria Church. June 18 the Mixer is at Catalina Adventure Headquarters and July 15 is the annual Installation Dinner at El Encanto. She has been working on Taste Around Avalon sign-ups. Catalina Pride Celebration has all entertainment finalized and the event is June 12-13. Hubert reminded of the three summer concert dates: June 27, July 25, and August 29.

Authorize New Year's Eve Gala Venue Contract—Cassidy requested discussion on the fee increase noting the contract states menu pricing can change prior to the event. There was discussion on this aspect in the contract, possibly inserting a cap or not to exceed number, and that contracts once signed should hold costs. Cassidy reminded that last year there were food issues at the event; meat dishes were gone by the time staff went through the buffet and the dessert table disappeared prior to the last seating. Luttjohann recommended a vote adding a max cost for food.

Motion to cap the contract price at \$95 per person for buffet by Hohenstein, second Bombard; passed with abstentions from Allen and Chilton

Policy 2.6.2 Board Member's Individual Responsibilities—Cassidy reminded that each Board Member must attend 70% of meetings or they resign their seat. She requested waivers for Bergman (with a recent medical absence) and Say (absent when a meeting date changed due to weather).

Motion to waive forced resignation of Say and Bergman by Skelton, second Beach; passed with abstentions from Bergman and Say

Policy 2.8.3 Appointments to the Membership/Business Community Linkage Committee—Fornasiere requested volunteers to serve on this committee. Beach, Flathers, and Bombard agreed to remain on the committee and no others came forward.

Policy 2.9.3 Amended to Include Ballot Provisions Discussed at April 23, 2026 Meeting—Cassidy stated the ballot protocols discussed at the April meeting require approval.

Motion to approve by Hohenstein, second Ledebur; passed with abstention from Say

Policy 2.9.4 Solicitation of Candidates for Officers FY 2026-27—Fornasiere said next month is the vote for Board seats and according to bylaws officers are selected. Remaining officers would be Cassidy, Fornasiere, and possibly Alkibay. A chair-elect can self-nominate and that person must have served on the Board for one year and cannot be exiting the Board in 2027. Anyone interested was asked to email Luttjohann and make sure the subject line says nomination for chair-elect.

Policy 3.3 CEO Monitoring Quarterly Reporting on Financial Condition & Activities—Luttjohann reminded a vote is needed. Alkibay said this month's reports are fairly clear and he has no questions. Cassidy called for a motion.

Motion to approve March Quarterly Financials by Fornasiere, second Garcia; passed unanimously

Visitor and Member Services Report—Cassidy presented an increase for annual dues of 4% as included in the Board packet. She stated dues have not increased since 2022.

Motion to raise dues 4% by Say, second Bergman; passed unanimously

Bombard and Welham left the meeting at 3:31pm; Cassidy explained they had a boat to catch.

GUEST & MEMBER UPDATES

Bergman announced that on June 5, an artist will return to Catalina Museum for Art & History. Narsiso Martinez will be on the island and that same date the LA Opera will perform at the museum. Bergman thanked Fornasiere for her assistance in securing this event.

Ferneti asked when the Film Festival can be added to the agenda to request financial assistance. She said Art Good is also frustrated with a lack of financial support. She feels the Film Festival and Jazz Trax bring people to the island and that should qualify their events to receive funds from CITA. Cassidy suggested she present to the Board saying a discussion and vote are needed prior to a grant for funding. Luttjohann relayed that June already has three presentations. Cassidy asked Ferneti to email Luttjohann to schedule their pitch which will be added in June if time is available, but it might be delayed to September.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Cassidy adjourned the Board meeting at 3:37pm.