



MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday, September 19, 2024

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 and remote attendance for board; remote attendance locations were posted on the agenda.

Google Meet joining info/video call link was posted on the Agenda

DIRECTORS PRESENT (16) *Italics indicate remote attendance*

Stevenson, *Bombard*, Cassidy, Villalobos, Alkibay, Beach, Bradley, *Garcia*, Glass, Latorre, Maistros, Paret, Say, Upton, Vega, Wright

DIRECTORS ABSENT (3)

Allen, Bergman, Flathers

STAFF PRESENT (4)

Luttjohann, Miller, Johnson, Warner

GUESTS (4) *Italics indicate remote attendance*

Bre Bussard, Heather Milburn, Kayla Fearheller, *Bryce Noll*

PRESENTATION

The Q2 Update for Board & City Council, September 17, 2024 video was viewed. Luttjohann noted it was not shown at the City of Avalon (COA) council meeting this month and will be presented at the October 1 meeting. Maistros entered the meeting at 1:04, Bombard came on-line at 1:06, the video finished at 1:07pm.

BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

Stevenson recognized his first meeting as Chair by asking Board members to attend ready to engage and speak up. He said they will not always agree but requests discussion without criticism; tactics should drive TOT. The meetings have a new process but that should not impede progress. The guest experience can be improved, especially in the off-season. He would like to see restaurants cooperate with their closures and get together to work on a schedule as the food experience is important. He feels the Christmas lights can create a unique experience for families and would like to see 62Above PR team work on holiday marketing. Stevenson knows guest services could be improved, and acknowledged some customers are tough. He announced an orientation for new Board members will be scheduled, adding the session is open to more than just the three new members; any Board member may attend.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Stevenson asked for discussion and approval of Minutes from June 20, 2024 CITA Board meeting.

Motion to approve Glass, second Cassidy; passed with abstention by Say.

BOARD PROCESS

Luttjohann explained the new reporting templates provided by Charney Associates require reports to be presented each meeting. Hearing no discussion a motion was requested to adopt **3.7 Emergency Management Succession**.

Motion to approve Glass, second Paret; passed with abstention by Say.

3.8 Board Awareness and Support, included in the packet, was presented for discussion. Stevenson requested a motion to accept the policy.

Motion to approve Paret, second Bradley; passed unanimously.

CEO/ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Luttjohann expressed concern about the Board packet size and time required. Stevenson agrees, believing Luttjohann's time is better spent on other matters. He feels the file is more than Board members should need to read each month. Luttjohann will continue to scale back the monthly packet. Glass recommends contacting Luttjohann if more detail is needed. Cassidy likes the idea of bullet points which are good for record keeping and protection for Luttjohann.

Care for Catalina 501(c)(3) applications have been legally filed and are awaiting approval.

An accessible travel initiative is being coordinated with JourneyAble. Luttjohann reminded that disabilities can be obvious but many are not, like neurodivergence. Special needs travelers do research prior to visits deciding if a location works for them. Luttjohann has recently observed those with a visible disability to get an idea of numbers. One quiet day, while walking downtown, he counted six with various means of mobility issues.

Guide Star Gold Seal for transparency status was achieved for 2024.

Audit Status will be updated at the October meeting as finalization of some documents is still needed.

TOT True-up is projected to be \$186,295 by COA's Matt Baker.

Negative press/social media re Avalon's beach water quality is inaccurate. Luttjohann believes historic data is being used which is now incorrect. This content reports Avalon beaches among the worst and subsequent improvements are not included which impedes future visitation. Luttjohann is reporting current content to see if it helps.

CalTravel Summit reported that statewide, hotels have leveled off and are on par with 2019. A Destination Stewardship presentation attended by Luttjohann advised against bragging about clean-up numbers. This may encourage some to leave trash knowing it will be collected by others. Reporting a decline in trash, if it happens, is better. Miller said it was mentioned that groups are slow to come back but 2025 is expected to pick up. Upcoming events like Olympics, World Cup, and Super Bowl will bring visitors. Villalobos reported on a session he attended with focus on travelers from the Middle East and China. They have a bitter taste in their mouth due to Covid blame placed on their countries. They travel less to the USA and 2025 is predicted to remain lower from those areas. Miller added visitors from China took a big decline but they remain a top market. Luttjohann learned that Chinese travelers have changed their behavior and are more likely to rent a car.

Assemblymember Lowenthal was on the island twice in recent weeks. He has an in-depth knowledge of the island, understands and supports our Undersea Fiber connectivity and local hospital which are important issues.

Visitor Stats Reporting had a glitch and Luttjohann is chasing the correction. Through July numbers are up from the previous year. Say asked if the numbers include harbor counts and Luttjohann replied, yes.

Cruise Committee met earlier today. COA Cruise Policy has been kept in place and wharfage fees increase January 2026.

Luttjohann referred to June unaudited and the July/August combined financials included in the packet. The July/August is a preliminary financials report and with the June audit incomplete no vote is needed. Luttjohann asked for any questions or concerns regarding the presented and incomplete financials. Hearing none the meeting moved on.

STAFF UPDATES

Miller began the Marketing and Sales report saying overnight stays were soft in early summer and August due to changes in school vacation dates. For the first time in many years, a campaign ran beginning August 1 and switched

September 3 to promote mid-week stays, buy 2 nights and get the 3rd for free. An email blast sent by Visit California was sent on August 2 with strong metrics. The paid search co-op was dark in July but ran in August. Great media coverage is posted in each Thursday Update. Miller thanked partners that provided media hosting product. KCAL made a visit to the island and showed live and taped coverage during the morning of September 12. Their visit was tough behind the scenes but the host was delightful. The KCAL video presented kept buffering due to an unstable internet connection; a link will be sent to attendees to view later. Miller passed Location California magazine around the room. It features a two-page spread on Catalina Island and the publication is distributed at places like Cannes, Toronto, and Sundance Film Festivals. Content is continually fed to Visit California which performs well. The video, Top Things to Do with Kids on Catalina had a high interaction rate of over 72% and a story click through rate of over 10%. Visit California organized a media event on October 10; Love Catalina staff will attend. Miller requested Board Members please RSVP to the upcoming Marketing Conference, October 17 at TopSide by NDMK. She announced the Catalina auction package earned over \$6K at CalTravel Summit. It was purchased by Adam Burke as an incentive prize for his staff.

Warner reminded that the 2025 Visitor Guide has a final deadline tomorrow. She reported ad sales are going well but more information is needed from some. This publication will add four pages and brings the cost down. The RFP for printers is still out, but 65K Guides should be printed the first week of January.

Luttjohann read DeMyer's statement of events. Catalina Pride, June 15 had good attendance as evidenced from the photo at the Casino turn around point for the Pride Walk. Title sponsor was US Bank with a \$7.5K donation. Entertainment included 2 DJ's and several live bands on Wrigley Stage. After parties were found at a few restaurant venues and the Chi Chi Club. Pride T-shirts and other memorabilia were sold from the Love Catalina booth; 19 businesses participated with booths offering Pride related items in celebration of Catalina Pride.

July 4th: 30 donors contributed \$27,998.25 toward the fireworks with possible additional monies the COA collected. Sponsorships included: eight at \$375, eight at \$700, and three at \$2.5K. Several individuals donated various other amounts. A "Thank you to our Sponsors" banner was displayed on Crescent Avenue.

Catalina Concert Series with The Perfect Event: July 20, The Highwayman; August 10, Taimane; and September 14, ABBA Tribute. ABBA is always a popular performance generating a large crowd and bringing many visitors to the island. Raffle proceeds: The Highwayman Show, \$865; Taimane, \$915; ABBA, \$2070. Total raffle proceeds for the concert series: \$3850.

Mixers: July 18, 75th Annual Installation Dinner at The Catalina Museum for Art & History had 71 attendees. Several awards and special recognitions were given at this meeting: Harvey Cowell Business of the Year to Catalina Island Mermaids; Care For Catalina Award to Bleu World; Wayne & Susie Griffin Community Service Award, Earl Schrader; and President's Awards were presented to Gail Fornasiere and Tyler Wilson. September 19: tonight's Mixer is hosted by Catalina Art Association, 6-8pm at the Cafe Metropole in the Metropole Marketplace. October 17, COA Fire Dept, 6-8pm, invite coming soon. November 21, Topside by NDMK and The Catalina Conservancy will host. 2025 Mixer hosts are needed for February, March, and November; please email janet@lovecatalina.com if interested.

Fixers: Susan G. Komen 2024 Catalina Island Walk & Paddle. Approximately 40 people participated in the walk to the Casino, Mole and back to Wrigley Stage. Two mobile mammogram trailers were brought to Catalina to offer testing, Saturday and Sunday, 9am - 5pm, in partnership with Catalina Island Health. Over 40 people received screenings on Saturday with more following on Sunday. Paret said 85 mammograms were performed by the mobile unit during the September 14-15 weekend. The Kayak Clean Up originally scheduled for September 17 was rescheduled for Monday, September 23, 9am - 1pm; all other details remain the same. October 28: Dr. William Manos will give a presentation, 10-11am in the US Bank Founders Room for any restaurants and/or hotels wishing to attend. This is on safe sanitation solutions and products he represents through his company, Germstar. There is no fee to attend. (This is not a ServSafe class with testing and certification, but a presentation).

51st Annual NYE Gala: As of September 19, there are 72 reservations and 262 people booked vs 87 reservations and 313 people at this time last year (sales began earlier in 2023). Volunteers are needed to decorate on December 30 and seat guests on December 31. Please email janet@lovecatalina.com if you would like to be considered to assist.

Visitor and Member Services Report—Luttjohann presented new membership applications for approval: Ryan Longnecker Creative (in-kind member) and Noelle Denisi Videography (in-kind member); Sir Speedy Printing (returning after an absence); and 62Above. He announced new ownership of Island Enterprises, that Catalina Concierge membership was rescinded before fully processed, and Catalina Classic Cruises is pending (along with Catalina Compass Tours, not included in the agenda).

Approval of New Members Ryan Longnecker Creative, Noelle Denisi Videography, Sir Speedy Printing and 62Above
Motion for approval Say, second Paret; passed unanimously.

Non-renewal notice was received from Avalon Destinations, Captured Memories, Coyote Joes, Empress Wellness, Island Threadz, Silver Seas Yachts, and Signcrafters.

Say asked about Hohenstein's previous role in Member Services and would like to know how many businesses in town are not members. Luttjohann said about 80% are members. Stevenson suggested the Board split up the list of non-members and contact them. This could be effective by sharing the benefits and making those businesses aware of CITA's purpose. Cassidy expressed a desire for her fire extinguisher and refrigeration businesses to be members but the categories were not beneficial for them. Luttjohann stated a service category was added after her previous suggestion. Warner reported the cost is \$135 per year for non-retail, trade service members.

BOARD MEETING EVALUATION

Luttjohann asked for any feedback or discussion on the Board meeting and process. Villalobos stated that Maverick installed Starlink at Pebbly Beach and Long Beach. He made a motion for CITA to purchase Starlink equipment and have it installed. He feels it is necessary for efficient daily business and meeting days. Paret agreed stating the hospital installed Starlink which provides smooth service. Say added that Hotel Metropole has both Starlink and Catalina Broadband (CBB). Luttjohann reminded that there is an agreement in place with CBB. Stevenson believes CITA should have both to remain effective. Villalobos says internet down time makes an organization seem unprofessional. Villalobos made a motion to purchase Starlink equipment and a second by Glass was heard. Latorre stated a vote is unnecessary as Luttjohann can make the purchase without Board approval. Stevenson then directed Luttjohann to research, purchase and get landlord approval for installation.

Glass requested that in the future, the Annual Marketing Conference not conflict with JazzTrax as the date this year is busy with attendees checking into rentals and hotels.

BOARD & MEMBER UPDATES

Beach said that disabled vets with a 501c3 have an event planned at the dive park. Scuba is good for mental health and helpful for these individuals. She is looking for donations from other businesses which can include overnight stays, lunches, and more.

Bombard announced a new parking structure is under construction at the Dana Point Catalina Express terminal. The goal is to finish in March adding 984 parking spots. There will be a reevaluation of that ferry schedule. For now, Dana Point passengers are being instructed to arrive 90 minutes prior as a recommendation to allow enough time to find parking and catch the boat.

Villalobos mentioned the annual Maverick Helicopters Toy Drive is in the works with dates coming. He said their aerial shoot will be shared with CITA giving rights to use those images and videos. Maverick has installed a business-to-business portal that awards 20% commission on tours and travel to the booking business.

Cassidy said Monday evening the War Hero event will include a 3pm boat line up and an aerial show by the Navy. 300-400 people will be on the pier for dinner with 100% of the food donated by Caleb Lins.

Maistros reported on the construction impact of the five-corners project. COA is negotiating with a contractor to start work this winter. It will be difficult but the intersection cannot be closed. Along Pebbly Beach Road, COA

will place rock and repave. At the Cabrillo Mole the parking area will be trenched for utilities. In October, demo of an older structure will allow for building of an approved hotel. This will impact the intersection of Metropole and Beacon. The intersection will remain open but delays should be expected.

Fearheller of Bleu World mentioned that any hotels can donate and any business can join the Kind Traveler program and that soon Bleu will be the first ever activity partner beneficiary.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Stevenson adjourned the Board meeting at 2:23pm.