



Thursday, September 18, 2025

MINUTES: Meeting of the Board of Directors

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:01pm 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, Beach, Bergman, Bombard, Bradley, Flathers, Garcia, Latorre, Leyva, Maistros, Say, Upton

DIRECTORS ABSENT (5)

Stevenson, Allen, Hohenstein, Skelton, Welham

STAFF PRESENT (4)

Luttjohann, Miller, Warner, Johnson

GUESTS (9)

Ben Villalobos, Heather Milburn, Rixie Serpas, Don Beaumont, Michael Upton, Michelle Upton, Xiumara Ferretti, Ron Truppa, Julie Glass

PRESENTATION

Luttjohann presented awards and certificates. Wet Spot Rentals received a Care for Catalina certificate from Supervisor Hahn and Senator Gonzalez. Villalobos received certificates honoring his time served on the Board of Directors and for his service as treasurer. Milburn was recognized by Supervisor Hahn because Catalina Adventure Tours received the President's Award at the Annual Installation Dinner. Others were not in attendance to collect their certificates or awards.

BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

Cassidy requested that moving forward the Board of Directors act with professionalism, respect, and no negativity. She reminded the Board their purpose is to serve and support the success of CITA. She acknowledged the Nominating Committee has been an issue recently and said this topic will be on the agenda in October. At that time, it will possibly be decided to eliminate this committee and its purpose. The proposal will include recommendations for no slate, a candidate form to complete, each Board Member to vote individually on new Board seats, and candidates to leave the room during the voting process. The Governance Committee representation would change allowing self-nominations with a form submitted for each candidate. This change is for transparency and to avoid conflicts.

Cassidy said the Governance Committee quarterly review of the CEO shows Luttjohann is well on track with the KPIs in place. In October, the committee will begin the process of the year-end review as it should be completed prior to the last pay period of the calendar year.

Cassidy is implementing member updates each meeting to communicate purpose, services offered, etc. of the business represented. This should strengthen Board ties and contacts. This meeting Bergman, Flathers and Bradley will provide information on their businesses.

Bergman began by stating the Catalina Museum for Art & History is the only island group with a collection of 40K historical objects. The museum has been in existence for 72 years and moved to its current location in 2016. She is hopeful that within the next five years, attendance numbers will grow. There is a new strategic plan and this weekend is their annual fundraiser. She passed out flyers for the event mentioning the live auction and music as part of the program saying funds will go toward educational programs.

Flathers represents two of Erin Eubank's businesses, Catalina Tours and Catalina Food Tours. She loves working with happy customers that have tasted food and beverages on a tour. Catalina Tours is an on-line travel agency. They sell all available activities on the island and work to customize visits. Janet began working for the Catalina Island Co (CICo) in 1997 selling tickets on the mainland and on the boats, and became a resident 11 years ago.

Bradley owns Ciao Baci and Brown's Bikes. She apologized in advance for any upcoming noise disturbance. The wall behind her residence and businesses requires stabilization and the process is expected to be noisy. Brown's Bikes has been a business in Avalon since 1986 and prior to that Bill's Bikes was in the same location. The business offers all types of bicycles for rent and sale, along with stroller and wheelchair rentals. Locals are offered ½ price on any rental, except eBikes. Ciao Baci opened 18 years ago and the shop specializes in Mediterranean-themed items.

Cassidy hopes this type of sharing will inform those in attendance of the particular services and goods a business offers. The knowledge allows each business to provide visitors a proper reference when questions arise.

Cassidy appreciates those that responded to the June meeting evaluation.

Guests introduced themselves as this was skipped earlier.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

Luttjohann explained the five consent items on the agenda. Hearing no discussion a request was made to approve the June Board Minutes, Policy 3.0 general management, policy 3.7 emergency management, policy 3.8 board awareness, and policy 3.9 adoption of new cruise conference provisions.

Motion for approval Fornasiere, second Upton; passed with abstentions of Latorre and Leyva

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Policy 1.0 Broadest Ends/Mission—Luttjohann explained this is the time to discuss any changes, concerns, etc. with this policy. The first quarter of each year some businesses close on weekdays or for a length of time. Bombard stated that Catalina Express (CatEx) received some complaints about closed restaurants and stores, but feels marketing the island should continue at that time of the year. Garcia recommended a target audience of hikers, kayakers, and active people as they enjoy quieter times. Cassidy would like to contact restaurants earlier for their anticipated closures. Luttjohann said it has been done before but it won't hurt to try again. Beaumont recently spent two days with a Carnival excursion executive who didn't know about the zipline or other island activities. The executive also shared that 40% of their passengers book shore excursions in Mexico but only 10% book excursions on Catalina Island. Luttjohann expressed that a call for more offerings has been requested several times from businesses. Upton mentioned the 62Above video ads, saying possibly those videos can bring awareness to passengers on the ships even if some included businesses do not offer shore excursions onboard. Villalobos said Maverick Helicopters prefers photo shoots when the island is busy, however, quiet times do appeal to some and different marketing like promoting a private-island feel, could be beneficial. Miller urged members to search the photo library on LoveCatalina.com. Photos feature older people, green island, diverse models and include videos. These images can be utilized as a free member benefit. Bombard encouraged others to share their images which can be added to the library. Bergman has been reviewing an Arts & Cultural Destination proposal and hopes to designate Catalina Island and the City of Avalon (COA). Truppa suggested offering a winter discount for film packages saying the streets look like a Paramount lot and could be utilized for filming. Beaumont misses the ambassador at the Mole to answer questions. He also feels a sales person would be helpful to bring more film shoots to the island. Luttjohann said that as a member of FLICS he regularly participates in meetings and they work with Bombard for CatEx on-board filming. Ferretti asked if the CatEx magazine is distributed anywhere but onboard their boats. Bombard answered it is distributed in several locations, at trade shows and is also offered digitally. Cassidy will see that suggestions are considered but the meeting must move on.

Year-end Survey responses—Luttjohann spoke of the year-end survey saying that 57 responses were received. The results are in the Board Packet and he feels the survey was shared with non-members based upon some responses. He explained he has detailed notes to share individually if requested. Cassidy said the chair, chair-elect, mayor, and mayor pro-tem will meet to work on a partnership to communicate on mutual concerns.

Events Report—Luttjohann reported on the success of the Annual Installation Dinner and provided a sales update on the New Year's Eve gala. He said over 70 will attend tonight's Mixer and reminded that it moved from Café Metropole to Catalina Charlie's due to the possibility of rain. A Fixer is planned to train users of CITA's member portal: for those already engaged, a zoom session; and a new position is possible to meet members, explain benefits and offer one-on-

one portal training. The Event Committee interviewed two candidates for the Event Director position with two more interviews scheduled. Out of 19 applicants, five were invited to interview. The position is still open and posted on CITA, CalTravel and OneWest, but the LinkedIn paid post expired. Truppa was surprised he and Art Good were not invited to be part of the process and does not know Mike Bone who is on the committee. Cassidy explained Bone's experience with events on the island runs and many mainland events for over 20 years. She is comfortable with the panel as it stands but asks the Board to please address the issue if there are concerns. Luttjohann gave available updates on the November Marketing Conference saying one venue option could be exciting. He explained a \$10K request for Otillo sponsorship that was approved but not funded due to Covid. The end date of the agreement lapsed but was not the fault of the event. He asked if CITA should honor the sponsorship for their April 26, 2025 event or let it go. The Otillo intends to return and become an annual event. Maistros asked about the success of the event. Luttjohann said there were several hundred attendees, Catalina Classic Cruises (CCC) was used, crew and athletes stayed in Avalon. Say said the overnight-stay numbers are unknown. Bombard asked if COA could look at TOT numbers and Garcia inquired about Sales Tax tracking. Maistros said those are monthly calculations, not daily. Say believes hotels can provide the numbers if asked, adding her establishment asks guests the reason for their stay. Cassidy asked to bring the sponsorship back to a future meeting for a decision on the \$10K payment.

Marketing & PR Report—Miller provided an update on the August Love Catalina photo shoot with Ryan Longnecker. She said this was the first time a summer shoot was done and a family with six kids were models. Lynn Stevenson gained additional content for social media during the shoot. Miller is going through the images, editing, and adding to the Digital Asset Management System (DAM). The Annual Report was handed out at the July Installation Dinner and is available for those needing a copy. She explained staff are analyzing the website for AI search optimization and in the process of adding an intuitive real-time inquiry tool to improve visitor engagement, if a chat bot is added, it would not be in real time. She reminded everyone to keep their member portal updated as robust content draws better. Alkibay left at 2:01. Miller is working on the upcoming Marketing Conference which is scheduled for November 12 or 13 with the exact date to be announced soon. Promotion is generally dark in the summer but some influencer hosting was done this year. Travel & Leisure's Acadia Gabriel and Samantha Dunn of SoCal News Group were here in June with a NATJA Fam group visiting in coordination with Pride Celebration. Alkibay reentered the room at 2:02. San Pellegrino extended the Catalina Island promotion through September and two influencers visiting next week are part of that campaign. Launched July 1 was the finalized paid media and marketing campaign but then paid media was paused for July. The Cast Away campaign began in August. September and October the Second Summer promotion will run on Meta and Connected TV with foot traffic reports in October with the 90-day window look backs. Miller reported that Lynn Stevenson manages website updates, daily social posts, SEO, and even searches to add content that enhances member information on the CITA site. Miller thanked Warner for her execution of summer events and extra work with the absence of a staff member. She stated Warner is also busy working on the 2026 Visitor Guide, to be printed in December. The upcoming Mermaid Festival is being pitched along with the Buffalo Milk Trail guide. Flathers wondered if further promotion on Michael Connelly's book Nightshade will happen. Miller said a Book Fair event possibly in February will tie in with Nightshade. Say asked about sales for the Visitor Guide ads and Warner replied they are down from last year, but not finalized. Ferretti stated her attendance today is to focus on how to work together and asked interested parties to get involved. She would like a meeting that works on supporting all events, helps with continuation, and avoids cancellation. Cassidy reminded the new event position will be a bridge for this, saying the purpose is to reach out to all; legacy events, annual events, one-and-done events, and new events. She believes logistics sometimes are to blame if a new event becomes a one-and-done. Ferretti stated, businesses benefit from events and Truppa feels CITA has a fiduciary duty to all events due to COA funds received. Cassidy asked to progress the meeting forward and moved to the next agenda item.

Audit & Financial Oversight Committee Update—Luttjohann announced that on September 29 the annual audit will begin. He reminded all in attendance that a one-year extension was granted by the Board to retain the current audit team. Later this fall RFPs will be sent out and results brought to the Board following the completion of the 2024-25 audit.

Visitor and Member Services Report—Luttjohann presented new membership applications for Gaia Studio, Original Jack's Restaurant Inc., Avalon Smokehouse Inc., and reinstatement of Reach AirMedCare included in the Board packet.

Motion to accept four new members by Garcia, second Bergman; passed unanimously
Warner read the drops by member request and pending list. Those businesses requesting to cancel membership: Airport in the Sky Restaurant, Arroyo Insurance Services, Avalon Community Church, Catalina Creation, Kids on the Move, Market Share PR, MVI Vacation Rentals, Taylored Catalina Charters, The Pancake Cottage. Warner continued with the pending drop list: Avalon Anglers, Buena Vista Hotel, Catalina Broadband, Catalina Caddie Services, Catalina Falconry, Catalina Holiday-Hamilton Cove, Catalina Humane Society, Certified Folder Display, El Terado Terrace Hotel, Kelly Nelson Brown Real Estate, Samantha Marie Photography, Sir Speedy Printing, Sunset Bar & Grill, The Catalina Islander, Two's Company. Luttjohann said these members will be dropped but reinstated if paid.

Policy 3.3 Authorize CEO to negotiate renewal of Pier Lease Agreement for a period of 5 years—Luttjohann stated the renewal is subject to COA agreement and Board approval is needed to move forward with negotiations of a new lease.

Motion to approve Luttjohann negotiate renewal of Pier Lease by Say, second Fornasiere; passed with abstention of Maistros

GUEST & MEMBER UPDATES

Garcia announced Catalina Island Mermaids is offering a mermaid transformation with make-up, hair, and photo shoot. She is excited to now be approved to film with a 360-camera and the possibility of her footage being added to the Immersed film.

Flathers said Catalina Tours went to a student and youth travel group event. She plans to attend a trends for business improvement seminar in Washington DC.

Upton reported Wet Spot Rentals now offers kayak and snorkeling tours, some are partnered with Bleu World.

Bombard is happy the new vessel for Catalina Express will have a cover on the third deck to allow passengers more comfort in winter. This level may possibly feature a floating bar. Cassidy said the free Wi-Fi currently available means her phone rings mid-channel. Bombard said they are working with Fare Harbor partners so those using the Wi-Fi see a landing page with booking opportunities for Catalina Island activities.

Maistros said the Mole project will possibly include a new name as the term mole is unknown to many visitors. Bombard suggested Avalon Landing with Cassidy agreeing but believes adding smaller letters underneath, Cabrillo Mole, to match maps. Beaumont thought the new name was done but Maistros said it is not official. Luttjohann and Bombard feel that Avalon Landing is more user friendly.

Fornasiere reminded Catalina Island Health is promoting a mobile mammogram unit next weekend, 9am-5pm. Reservations are available but walk-ups will be accepted. She encouraged people to wear pink on Sunday and join the Komen walk at noon to the Casino. There is an opportunity to raise money through a link but recognized it might be a bit late to get a team together. Luttjohann added this celebrates survivors and those fighting. Say explained it was hard to lock in a date this year. Fornasiere thanked Avalon Freight Services for donating the transport of the mammogram unit.

Truppa spoke of the Catalina Island Film Festival next weekend. This event brings 60 international people and film makers to the island. It will feature 170 films and a roller-skating night in the Casino Ballroom. Friday and Saturday are bigger days and they are working on programs. Ferretti added some film makers will shoot short videos at local businesses for social media posts. The documentary, 32 Miles, will be screened at Avalon City Hall on Sunday, 2pm. At the Metropole Conference Room residents can get discount passes for \$10 per day. Truppa said these passes are available for each day including the red-carpet event.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Cassidy adjourned the Board meeting at 2:37pm.