



Minutes

Visit Morro Bay Board of Directors

Visit Morro Bay Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 25, 2024

9:00 am – 11:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84843611155?pwd=bzdTa1BYaTJMdVY3ck9zUFV2bFI0dz09>

Meeting ID: 848 4361 1155 Passcode: 972262

Call-In Phone Number: 1(669)900-6833

1. CALL TO ORDER – Board Chair Amish Patel called the meeting to order at 9:01 am

PRESENT: (VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE) Board members - Amish Patel, Dane Jacobs, Steven Allen, Amit Patel, Chris Kostecka, Robert Elzer,

ABSENT: Yvonne Kimball

STAFF PRESENT: Michael Wambolt, Elizabeth Gilson, Marianna Garcia

PUBLIC PRESENT: ABBI Agency - Hayley Walters, Amanda Barham, Henry Merchel, & Kambrya Blake. Epsilon – Chelsea Edwards. Morro Bay in Bloom – Walter Heath. Morro Bay Kite Festival – Shaun Farmer

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items) - None

ANNOUNCEMENTS - None	M. Wambolt
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT	M. Wambolt
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3. Executive Director Report (20 min)

Staff will provide an update on current projects, reporting and areas of focus for the months ahead.

Branding

Michael gave an update on the progress of the renovation of the VW Van. Michael stated that Morro Bay High School wrestling mats are done.

Events

WSL - Michael stated that the WSL was a huge success. It was the most watched events that they had.

Winter Bird Festival – Michael stated that it was huge. They had a little bit of rain but still had the largest participation ever.

City Wide Yard Sale – Michael stated that it is off to a great start and we are already promoting it.

Michael mentioned that we have the **Kite Festival** coming at the end of April. **The Car Show** at the beginning of May and **Ironman** the middle of May and outreach for volunteers has already started.

Finances

Michael stated that our current operating account is three hundred and forty-five thousand dollars. Reserve funds have about one point one million dollars. He stated that he had penciled out the second half of the year and closed out the first half and it looks like if all goes as planned there should be an excess of one hundred and twenty thousand to one hundred and seventy thousand dollars remaining. He stated that we will look at how to use those funds at a future

board meeting and he feels they should not be rolled over to the next year.

Reports

Michael stated that the weekly STR is running bit higher than last year. He stated the monthly STR algorithms has changed to be more inclusive of the destination. He explained how this is changing the numbers and it is showing numbers are a little flat. Michael stated that if you look at our occupancy compared to the destinations around us we still don't have a great occupancy number. Growth is looking ok but the overall health needs work to gain occupancy and overall rate.

Board member Steve Allen asked if there had been any work on having a meeting with hotels to pitching STR reports and feels there are not enough hotels participating.

Michael stated that he has talked with Amish and Amit at length. The more hotels we have the better data we will get. He stated that he had talked to a number of the hotel owners already multiple times/ about participating and that the connection at STR is willing to do a Zoom meeting He will get that scheduled soon and get the education piece out to the owners as well.

Board member Steve Allen asked if there was a way to utilize TOT numbers from the cities as that would be the real numbers.

Michael stated that we do have some access but not percentage access.

Marketing

Michael stated that the first round of the Expedia campaign has been launched. Michael went over preliminary data that he received. He stated that the second round would start in February and run for the next three months. Coming out of seeing what this data looks like, that the extra funds we will have at the end of the year should be used to run another round with Expedia.

Michael stated that the Booking. Com launched last week and we should get some data in a week or two. Ther will be a longer running time of five months with this compared to the three months with Expedia.

Sales

Michael stated that Mariana has been working hard reaching out to tour and travel. We have reengaged the IPW and Go West leads from last year and sent out a spread sheet to all the hotels and Mariana is currently working a list from NTA that is a hundred and fifty tour operators that come to California. Michael sated that on the SMERF side of things Mariana is reaching out to mountain bike groups and road cycling groups and that we had our first site visit from the MG club of San Diego.

SLO CAL

Michael stated that on our SLO CAL side of things our SOJUORN digital co-op that was approved will be going live next month. We have ongoing stakeholder engagement where we are talking about STR and trying to understand the marketplace and how everyone is doing through these winter months and what the need from us.

Visitor Guide

Michale stated that we had a meeting yesterday to keep it moving. We will have a finalized version for the subcommittee to approve next week and then we will be off to print.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

M. Wambolt

4. Approval of November 16, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes

ACTION: Board member Steve Allen made a motion to approve the November 16, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes. Board Chair Amish Patel seconded the motion.

MOTION: Carried 6:0

5. Approval of Visit Morro Bay Financials

ACTION: Steve Allen made a motion to approve the Visit Morro Bay Financials as presented. Board member Dane Jacobs seconded the motion.

MOTION: Carried 6:0

BUSINESS ITEMS & DISCUSSIONS

M. Wambolt

6. Visit Morro Bay Marketing Update - Abbi Agency (20 min)

The Abbi Agency will provide an update to the board on current marketing efforts and focus on the months ahead.

Hayley Walters and her team gave an update on November and December analytics and reporting.

7. Visit Morro Bay Reserve Fund Discussion (20min) *motion required*

Staff to provide update to the VMB's reserve funds. Board to discuss options and approve next steps.

Michael stated that he met with the accountant and found that the FDIC insurance covers up to two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and having over a million dollars in the reserve fund puts us a liability if something was to happen to the state of Chase Bank and the accountant suggested that we move some of the funds to multiple banks to limit our liability. But it is up to the Board's discretion and that he would work with the board Treasurer Amit Patel on these pieces. The Accountant recommended moving two hundred and fifty thousand dollars because we are not getting a good return on our percentage we get back. The Accountant recommended Pacific Premier here in town and possibly SESLOC as it is local. Michael then opened the discussion to Board members.

The Board discussed. The Board decided that more information on the potential banks the funds would be moved to and what type of return they would get on the funds.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Board Chair Amish Patel made a motion to have Michael research bank options and come back to the Board with the information at a future date. Board member Steve Allen seconded the motion

MOTION: Carried 5:0

Board member Chris Kostecka did not respond to the call for his vote.

8. VMB Executive Director Retirement Account Approval (10min) *motion required*

Executive Director Michael Wambolt to present comp any sponsored 401K plan. Board to discuss and potentially approve.

Michael stated that based on his contract signing two and a half years ago he was offered a retirement account. He stated that the Accountant recommended a standard four percent matching expense. So that would be four percent of Michael's salary and four percent of Visit Morro Bay funds. There is a five-hundred-dollar discount for nonprofits on The establishment fee would be a one-time fee of ninety-five dollars. Each year there would be a fee of seven hundred and ninety dollars. The matching funds based on Michaels current salary would be four thousand five hundred and twenty-two dollars and the annual total would be five thousand three hundred and ten dollars. Michael stated that he is looking for the Board to discuss and approve.

The Board discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Board member Steve Allen made a motion to approve the Executive Director Retirement Account. Board Member Chris Kostecka seconded the motion.

MOTION: Carried 6:0

Board Chair Amish Patel asked to Michael to clarify that the retirement fund is for all eligible employees.

Michael stated yes.

9. **Placemaking Discussion – “I Love Morro Bay Event” Grant Approval - \$7,000 (10min) *motion required***
Staff will provide insights into placemaking and present a beautification project grant request from Morro Bay in Bloom. Board to discuss VMB’s role in placemaking and potentially approve grant to Morro Bay in Bloom.

Michael stated that he had been approached by Walter Heath from Morro Bay in Bloom a local nonprofit for sponsorship for his group’s event “I Love Morro Bay” He asked Walter to introduce himself.

Walter introduced himself and described what his organization does and what his event is about. He stated that they are a volunteer group that does gardening in public places to support and beautify the City. He went on to explain how their efforts help to keep the City attractive for visitors. Walter stated that their event would be on Saturday April 27 from 8:30 am – 11:00 am. They expect to complete at least six landscaping projects. Each project will have a children’s art activity to make the event more family friendly. He then explained what the funds requested would be used for. He then asked if there were any questions from the Board.

The Board gave Walter positive feedback for the work that his group is doing in Morro Bay and asked Walter to come back at another meeting and give the board a presentation for annual funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Board member Chris Kostecka made a motion to approve the grant for the “ I Love morro Bay” event for seven thousand dollars. Board member Steve Allen seconded the motion.

MOTION: Carried 6:0

10. **Kite Festival Sponsorship – \$10,000 April 2024 (10 mins) *motion required***
Staff to provide the board with a sponsorship opportunity of \$10,000 for the Kite Festival. Board to discuss and approve funds.

Michael stated that the Kite Festival is one of our Markee events much like the Lighted Boat Parade and City-Wide Yard Sale which brings thousands into Morro Bay. Shaun Farmer from the Kite shop runs that for us each year. This is the third year of our sponsorship for this. This year it will move to a 3-day event. Michael then introduced Shaun Farmer.

Board member Amit Patel asked Shaun if the Kite Flyers that do the Friday night kite flying would do it on Saturday Night.

Shaun stated that if there is wind that they would most likely do it as that is what they are there for.

Michael stated that he had been talking to Shaun about expanding the Friday night event to possibly include music. They are working on bringing in more vendors for the event as well. But for this year keep Friday night it the same as last year. See how it turns out and look to expand it in the years to come.

The Board discussed.

Shaun stated that the Central Coast Fund for children will be giving away five hundred kites. He also stated that he know that the Kite Festival is a no alcohol event but that on the Friday night with musical entertainment they could possibly sell wine and beer and food vendors. to make some extra money and for people to have a little more fun.

Board member Steve Allen brought up the issue with getting an ABC license and paying for liquor liability insurance that would be needed.

Board member Amit Patel stated that it was still something to look into.

The board discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Board member Chris Kostecka made a motion to approve the ten-thousand-dollar sponsorship of the Kite Festival. Board member Steve Allen seconded the motion.

MOTION: Carried 6:0

11. Maritime Event and Avocado & Margarita Festival Discussion (20min)

Staff to provide update to Maritime Event and Margarita Festival. Board to give staff next steps.

Michael stated that these are two events that he would like the board to direct him on how to proceed. The Maritime event happens every October and is a one-day event put on by the Maritime Museum. We are looking for something to replace the Harbor Festival which had a long history of celebrating the maritime history of the Harbor. Michael stated that he has been in conversations with them to see how we can build this into a three-day event celebrating Morro Bay's maritime history. There is a lot of planning that needs to go on with this, and Michael is looking for the board's opinion on this and where they see our position on this event. Michael's thought is that for the next 2 years we help them build this event out. Michael stated that he is meeting with the Museum next week to discuss options for the future and with the reserve funds we have look to bring in high impact things that are stable and will bring awareness to Morro Bay and ultimately overnight stays. Michael is looking to get approval from the board to use reserve funds for the next two years to help build this event. Michael is looking for fifty thousand dollars which they would build out a budget and what that would look like. Michael asked for insights from the Board.

Board member Steve Allen asked Michael if he was asking for fifty thousand dollars each year for the next two years or fifty thousand total for both years.

Michael stated he didn't know how much it would cost but from his research he found that fifty thousand dollars seems to be the amount needed to start something like this up. He wants to be able to say to the Museum folks that this is how much we have so let's try hard to make this a marquee event for us. Get this to a three-night stay event and then make it better each year.

The Board discussed.

The Board stated that the Avocado Margarita Festival was the event that we should be helping to bring back and reinvent itself.

Michael spoke on where the Avocado Margarita Festival is right now. The Chamber of Commerce owns it but doesn't want to do it anymore. Michael has spoken to Kyle Beal Womack who had run the event before COVID and the Morro Bay Avocado Association. Michael's vision is grassroots. We celebrate the farmers & agriculture, Avocados upfront Margaritas second. Ultimately the event show cases the Avocado. Michael stated that from what he is hearing the Board would like him to pursue bringing the Avocado Margarita Festival back.

12. Epsilon Campaign Two Update(10min)

Staff and Epsilon will present the almost final report from round two campaign.

Michael introduced Chelsea from Epsilon to give a report on round two of the Epsilon campaign, and Hayley from The ABBI Agency. Michael stated that the Board did approve another two thousand dollars of spend from the carryover funds for Epsilon marketing within this fiscal year and we are looking to launch this in late February

Chelsea presented the slide show on the data collected in the report. She stated that they are missing the December numbers and will share them with the Board at the next meeting.

Michael stated that have the next round of the campaign always on it will give us a better understanding of the data.

The Board discussed.

Board Chair Amish Patel asked the board if anyone had any recommendations for future agenda items.

There were none.

13. Next Board of Directors meeting – March 28, 2024 – 9:00am – 11:00am – Via Zoom

ADJOURN. Board Chair Amish Patel adjourned the meeting at 11:09 am

Brown Act Notice: Each speaker is limited to two minutes of public comment for items not on the agenda. Public comment for each agenda item will be called for separately and is also limited to 2 minutes per speaker. State law does not allow the

Board of Directors to discuss or take action on issues not on the agenda, except that members of the Board may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by the person giving public comment. Staff may be directed by the Board to follow-up on such items and/or place them on the next Board agenda. The order of agenda items is listed for reference and items may be taken in any order deemed appropriate by the Board.

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