



Minutes

Visit Morro Bay Board of Directors Special Board Meeting

Visit Morro Bay Board of Directors Special Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 28, 2022

8:00 am – 9:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84666367666?pwd=Zy9ZRUXyMzhSZ2V2dmFrTHZKQU10dz09>

Meeting ID: 846 6636 7666 Passcode: 996707

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

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - Board President Amish Patel called the meeting to order at 8:06 am.

PRESENT (VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE) Amish Patel, Robert Elzer, Christopher Kostecka, Scott Collins, and Steven Allen

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Michael Wambolt, Elizabeth Gilson

PUBLIC PRESENT: Dane Jacobs, Amit Patel

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

CONSENT AGENDA - None	M. Wambolt
ANNOUNCEMENTS - None	M. Wambolt
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - None	M. Wambolt
BUSINESS ITEMS & DISCUSSIONS	M. Wambolt

3. **Visit Morro Bay Board of Directors Seats Fiscal Years 2022-23 and 2023-24 – (60 min)**

Visit Morro Bay has three board seats open for FYs 2022-23 and 2023-24. Open boards seats consist of two lodging seats and one business member seat.

Board of Directors will hear from two applicants for the open lodging seats and one applicant for the business member seat. Upon completion of the interviews the board will make a recommendation of next steps.

Applicants will have five minutes to introduce themselves and the board will have 10 minutes for questions and answer.

Board President Amish Patel commented on the process for attaining applicants for the three open board seats. He Stated that an advertisement was placed in the Estero Bay news. On the morrobay.org website and in the newsletter sent to lodging partners. He then stated that three applications were received from suitable applicants. For the two lodging seats, Chris Kostecka owner of Estero Inn and Anderson Inn and Amish Patel owner of Harbor House Inn. For the business seat, Dane Jacobs of Lost Isle Adventures. He then stated that applicants had 10 minutes to introduce themselves and asked Dane Jacobs to start off.

Dane Jacobs stated that he is the owner operator of Lost Isle Adventures and commented on his background. He stated that he grew up in the area, received his education at Cal Poly in tourism, started a sailboat charter business on the Embarcadero, a Hard Cider co. and then purchased Lost Isle adventures. He stated that he wants to be the fresh perspective voice for the tourist serving businesses.

Board member Scott Collins asked what do you see is the missing link between tourist serving businesses and lodging partners? What do you think you could do to close that gap?

Dane Jacobs stated that he knows most of the owners down on the Embarcadero and would have no problem calling another business that might better serve a visitor if he is not able to provide the service that they may need. He does not know lodging partners other than Chris Kostecka of Estero Inn and Anderson Inn and Anna Patel of Beach Bungalow Inn and Suites but would like to see a more inclusive overview where we all know each other and provide a better experience for visitors.

Board President Amish Patel asked when you think of Morro Bay as a destination what changes would you like to see in the next couple of years?

Dane Jacobs stated that there is a big opportunity to for growth in targeting younger people that have a good amount of funds as he experienced with a group of young Google executives that came on his boat and they are not concerned with spending it.

Board member Steven Allen stated that hoteliers are always looking for more activities that speak to the younger demographic. He then asked if Dane had any other ideas on activities for that age range of mid-twenties to mid-forties and stimulate more tourism?

Dane Jacobs stated stay and play packages where businesses and hotels partner up to give visitors more added value. He stated that he was sad to see the RV camping stop on the Embarcadero and even though it does take business away from hoteliers it does add to visitor experience and possibly bring them back to stay in a hotel and help businesses as return customers are important.

Board President Amish Patel stated that he noticed on Dane's application that he majored in sustainable tourism at Cal poly and was that correct? Also, being a business owner how have you implemented that?

Dane Jacobs stated yes that is correct. He makes a point every 2 years to upgrade the boat engines with the most eco-friendly, but he is not able to go electric as the technology is not available yet. He also got rid of plastic straws and all cups are biodegradable. And implemented a new program of take away souvenir cups which are a higher cost to the customer, but they like having the souvenir and not creating waste.

Board President Amish Patel asked if there were any more questions from board members? Seeing none moved on to the next applicant Amit Patel

Amit Patel stated that he had been on the TBID Board in the past. Along with the Harbor House Inn has, two properties in Pismo Beach, and two properties in Seaside in Monterey. He would like to be back on the board to be aware of what is going on here in Morro Bay. He is also on the Visit SLO CAL board and the Pismo Beach Association all hoteliers get together every other month to discuss what they can do to improve the city and educate residents and how to help hoteliers with the biggest problem which is acquiring employees to staff the hotels and how to improve events.

Board President Amish Patel stated that he sees that Amit is on the Visit SLO CAL board and that he is a veteran of the Morro Bay Tourism board. He then asked if Amit had any story of how a successful implementation of a decision, he made helped benefit the community while on the Visit SLO CAL Board?

Amit stated that moving forward with educating and training employees has been the one that is being implemented now and that the benefit will be seen in the future county wide.

Board member Scott Collins asked If the Visit SLO CAL board has come to any conclusions about labor issues and solutions?

Amit Patel stated that a survey is being done in Pismo beach to all business and hotels who are having employee trouble and working on the problem of transporting workers from Santa Maria to Pismo Beach.

Board member Steven Allen asked that since Amit owns hotels in Monterey County and Pismo along with Morro Bay does he have time for meeting like this granted that it is a bit easier doing Zoom meetings?

Amit stated that his time is open as he has employees that manage his properties. He doesn't mind Zoom meetings but does like in person meetings.

Board member Robert Elzer asked What are your thought about improving tourism traffic especially midweek?

Amit Patel stated that possibly bringing in a jazz festival or events targeted to the demographic that travels midweek such as car clubs and other clubs and groups that travel together would improve traffic.

Amish Patel asked if there were any other questions from the board? Seeing none moved on to the next applicant Chris Kostecka.

Chris Kostecka thanked Amit and Dane for applying. He stated that he remembers when he first started on the board, he didn't know what he signed up for and tip toed around the idea until he has finally moved her full time and is now ready to get more fully involved as opportunities present themselves. That being said, Michael has a smooth operation here and the new direction of the board in becoming Visit Morro Bay and the alliance with Visit SLO CAL and Michael's past history put a little less pressure on the board, and we are more here to oversee and see what Michael is doing and coming up with and so far, I am very happy with that. The big goal coming out of COVID is to steer or guide tourism and provide opportunities mid-week and shoulder season since we now have a fresh slate and when the visitors arrive, we provide them with the best possible product as it is a competitive field out there. We work in alliance with Visit SLO CAL along with our community against the rest of the state, nation and ultimately the world. So, our goals should be to provide the best product. That will be my focus and how do we train our hotelier to provide that best product. When he talks to guests what they like is that Morro Bay hasn't changed much over the years. He will listen to ideas that Michael has and steer and direct and bring up concerns and am looking forward to it. Ultimately our goal is to fill rooms either vacation rentals or hotels and have the best product possible. Let's keep up the good work.

Board President Amish thanked Chris Kostecka and thanked him for wanting to continue to serve and asked if there were any questions from the board.

Steven Allen stated that he has served with Chris the whole time he has been here and he haas a lot of good energy and now has more time to put more skin in the game and he is a great candidate in the future for board president. Board President Amish Patel seconded that comment.

Scott Collins thanked Chris for his service under the City TBID as well as the new Visit Morro Bay office. Do you see a leveling off or decline in visitors for the upcoming fall and winter seasons and some ideas as an individual hotelier and board member how could we position ourselves or counteract for a possible decline?

Chris Kostecka stated that that is a crystal ball question. It has changed dramatically and that reports that he runs are showing that people are not booking as far in advance. Those that do, many are cancelling and then we get filled with last minute booking. In the past, booking has been ninety to a hundred and fifty days out. We were pretty solid, and it stayed that way. Regarding foreign travelers, in the fall we were running forty percent and now we have just made it to ten percent. So that is a number that is way down. His hope is that through COVID we have reintroduced ourselves to the local traveler, the valley, San Francisco Bay area, Santa Barbara. We wooed them and hopefully they fell in love with Morro Bay, and he hopes that they continue to come as he doesn't think that foreign travelers will come back in the same numbers at least not this year as it is not showing signs of that yet. He thinks that we have done a good job especially with the trash issue. He is hopeful that local travelers will continue to come back. As for forecasting, it is tough. This year for October we would usually be sixty five percent booked we are only thirty five percent booked. He would be alarmed but ultimately, they end up being sold out.

Board member Robert Elzer thanked Chris and said that he could echo the numbers that Chris stated. But is hopeful that we can keep local travelers that discovered the area coming back. He then asked outside the traditional marketing What actions could we do to promote tourism in the next couple of years?

Chris stated that he is an optimist but partially a contrarian. He keeps hearing the buzz words to go after the younger client but wonders if anybody outside of Florida and Phoenix is targeting the older clientele as we still have the older clientele, and he wonders if they are being abandoned or are they harder to reach? He doesn't want to forget these folks as they are the ones that can travel mid-week more easily. But since there has been a change in the work

environment there is more of an opportunity for a larger range to travel mid-week. That would be the challenge to see if anyone is investigating the retirement- close to retirement age demographic and target marketing them for SLO CAL and VISIT Morro Bay they are the easiest to get mid-week on the weekend the guests are younger so let's not forget those folks.

Board President Amish Patel asked if there were any more questions? Seeing none he thanked the applicants for coming. Then asked Michael Wambolt how he would like to proceed?

Michael Wambolt thanked the applicants and asked the applicants to remove themselves from the meeting. He stated that he would contact them after the meeting to give the results and that they would then join in at today's 9:00 am regular board meeting.

ACTION: Board President Amish Patel motioned to approve Dane Jacobs for the business member seat for the fiscal year's 2022-2023 & 2023-2024 Board member Robert Elzer seconded.

MOTION: Carried 4:0

ACTION: Board President Amish Patel motioned to approve Amit Patel for the lodging member seat for the fiscal year's 2022-2023 & 2023-2024 Board member Steven Allen seconded.

MOTION: Carried 4:0

ACTION: Board President Amish Patel motioned to approve Chris Kostecka for the lodging member seat for the fiscal year's 2022-2023 & 2023-2024 Board member Steven Allen seconded.

MOTION: Carried 4:0

4. Next Board of Directors meeting – July 28, 2022 – 9:00am – 11:00am – Via Zoom

ADJOURN. Board President Amish Patel adjourned meeting at 8:47 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 member 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.

ADA Notice: Meeting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. If you require special assistance to participate in the meeting, notify Liz Gilson at (805) 225-7411 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.