



Minutes

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee

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Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 13, 2015

8:30am

Courtyard by Marriott, San Luis Obispo
1605 Calle Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chuck Davison

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Terrie Banish, Judith Bean, Cheryl Cuming, Amanda Diefenderfer, Christen Goldie, Brent Haugen, Gordon Jackson, Lori Keller, Heather Muran, Jennifer Porter

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Brendan Pringle, Kylee Jepsen, Jordan Carson, Michael Wambolt

Call to Order at 8:34am.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)**

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3. **Visit California TV Ad**

Visit California recently featured San Luis Obispo County in their newest “Average Joes” advertisement, which will reach an international audience, giving the county great exposure. The ad shows a “bubblesmith” with Morro Rock in the background. This image has become the screenshot for the video. C. Davison played the YouTube video of the ad, and noted that this component of the ad has received a great deal of buzz, according to Visit California.

Committee Discussion – Porter announced that the California Department of Agriculture awarded the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance a \$312,000 grant to spend over the next two years in order to reach the Texas wine market.

Public Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA

4. **Approval of September 8, 2015 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes**

Davison requested a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

ACTION: Moved by Haugen/Porter to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. Crisis Communication Plan Draft Review

Visit San Luis Obispo County has been working with Stacie Jacob of Solterra Strategies on a Crisis Communication Plan as a framework for direction during a crisis. This is an evolving and fluid document. Jacob described the objectives of the plan and distinguished the two types of crises that may dictate a response (incidental and major disaster/emergencies), as well as the next steps to ensure the effectiveness of the plan.

Davison noted that the plan looks at multiple communication paths: first, local governments, then constituents, then media, which leads to communication with visitors and those who want to come here. Fire Services is excited to come to the table to help provide direction with this plan. Davison also mentioned that there may be times when VSLOC will have to decide if it needs to even get involved, and what role they will play.

Committee Discussion. Haugen and Jackson noted that their communities (Morro Bay and Pismo Beach, respectively) are drafting a tourism component to their crisis communication plans. Porter asked about training opportunities and said that Paso Robles does not have a crisis communication plan. Davison responded that VSLOC may open up media training to DMOs. Jackson mentioned that one potential crisis is flooding due to beaches shifting.

Public Comment—None.

Item 7 on the agenda was reversed with Item 6.

PRESENTATION

7. PACE Communications—SLO County Visitors Guide Digital Marketing Kit

Jepsen introduced Heather Buchman of Pace Communications to discuss the direction of the 2016 San Luis Obispo County Visitor Guide. Buchman noted that last year, VSLOC made the decision to reformat the magazine to include custom content as the tide has been turning in this direction. This year, it will be entirely custom content. The goal is to have paid space blend seamlessly with the rest of the native content (font choices, colors, etc). Pace will be working with VSLOC and Catalyst Marketing this year to create a design that incorporates elements that will appear in other VSLOC branding initiatives. Pace has hired a photographer whose style is consistent with the visitor guide, and has pre-negotiated a low rate. For \$200, they will come out to your business to take photos, and the business will be able to retain ownership of four of those images. This year, the distribution of the magazine will be 55,000 (increased from last year), and the prices will remain the same.

Committee Discussion. Haugen asked how the new format has been received by customers. Davison responded that it has been overwhelmingly positive. He also noted that all listings will be removed from the visitors guide going forward, as VSLOC would need to list 1,300 listings if it included all lodging constituents. Haugen mentioned that in Minneapolis, listings were provided by the DMOs, who were allotted “x” number of listings. Banish asked about data on online downloads, and Davison noted that these figures are available on the VSLOC monthly and annual reports. Muran asked where the visitor guide will be distributed this year. Jepsen responded that the locations are listed in the media kit handed out at today’s meeting, but that this will be increased the coming year. Davison also noted that specific content on vacation rentals, B&Bs and RV parks will be included to make sure the unique lodging mix is represented.

Public Comment—None.

6. Catalyst Marketing

6a. Countywide Icon

Davison noted that the goal of the countywide icon is to create a geo-locator of SLO County. VSLOC is trying to find a way to show where SLO County is on the map. Mark Astone and Paul Rippens of Catalyst Marketing presented different iterations based on stakeholder interviews and built around solid themes. These themes were “Authentic CA” and “The Casual Coast.”

Committee Discussion. Porter asked how familiar Californians are with where Los Angeles and San Francisco are on the map. Davison responded that the people who are going to see this are located in those regions so they know where they are on the map. Porter noted that she preferred “The Casual Coast.” Akers noted that she liked the emblem with the Google Map style locator icon since it is universally known. Diefenderfer asked if the “Coast” component was something that should be emphasized as SLO County is more than just Coast. Akers asked if it was possible to change the word “Coast” to “CA.” Diefenderfer noted that 50% of stakeholders will be happy and 50% will be unhappy if the word “Coast” is used. Porter mentioned that there would be no wine country if there was no coast. Davison asked the Marketing Committee if they would include in their advertising. Haugen said that the word “Casual” seems too laid back for the people looking for an adrenaline rush. Haugen and Akers both pointed out that the challenge will be fitting the icon on digital ads.

After a majority vote, the Marketing Committee decided to have Catalyst create other iterations of the map.

Public Comment – None.

6c. Co-op Advertising Plan

The Catalyst team distributed the co-op media plans to the Marketing Committee. Astone noted that this would be distributed to all members via email in the afternoon. Rippens noted that Catalyst is making it easy for DMOs and constituents to advertise by offering to build ads for them as long as they provide photos. Davison pointed out that co-op ads will happen based on how much interest there is, and VSLOC can shift funds to another publication or a digital alternative in future months if necessary if co-op interest is soft. Davison also noted that some communities had previously expressed that they knew co-op opportunities would become available and set funds aside for this purpose.

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment – None.

6b. Fall Creative Campaign.

Davison noted that the photos on print and digital ads will all be iconic photos that are recognizable as SLO County, and that VSLOC is working with Pace to produce a shot list. Astone and Rippens presented some sample creative. Astone noted that the print ads would have large imagery with short copy that drives visitors to the website. The ads attempt to show how Visit San Luis Obispo County is a place where one can be as extreme or relaxed as they want to be. Rippens said that the overall effect of the ad could be more subdued in a publication like *Westways*, but more extreme in *Sunset*. Davison noted that the goal was to differentiate SLO County from other counties. He also explained that examples of creative will not come back to the committee for a second look due to deadlines, but will instead go to the board next week for approval.

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment—None.

CEO REPORT

8. CEO Report

VSLOC is hoping to launch the PRIZM research study next week, and is finalizing the RFP for the two research campaigns that are set to launch in the spring.

VSLOC's first Industry Educational Symposium is happening on Wednesday, November 4, 2015 from 8-11:30am. TripAdvisor will be among the presenters. The two goals of the Symposium will be: 1. perfecting operational effectiveness; and 2) increasing revenue. VSLOC is also looking to do a segment on the drought to help educate some of the mid-level properties on efforts they can make to limit water use during the drought, as well as a segment on the illegal vacation rental issue, and info relating to crisis communication. The event will be recorded and viewable on our website after the event. The point of the Symposium is to leave attendees with information they can apply.

Collection of TMD Assessment funds has been more challenging than anticipated. VSLOC may call on DMOs to ask for assistance in getting these funds disbursed in a timely manner if challenges continue. When funds aren't received on time, VSLOC has to withdraw money from its line of credit, which means it is spending constituent money on interest when that should not be the case.

Brown Act Training is happening Wednesday, December 9, 2015 at 8:00am. All VSLOC Marketing Committee members and Board members must have training.

Davison asked the committee for items to be included on future agendas.

Committee Discussion. Keller asked about progress on the VSLOC website. Davison responded that the VSLOC team met with Simpleview on October 12, 2015. The issue is that Kraftwerk will only permit their own creative on the VSLOC site. The cost of Simpleview to develop the site will probably be \$25,000 in Year One, and VSLOC is looking at the option of having a new site by April or May. This issue will go before the Board in the coming months.

Marc Gendron from Catalyst Marketing gave an update on PR to the Marketing Committee and told members that he wanted to identify ways to partner earlier and asked them to send content as soon as possible.

Porter mentioned that there has been a group in the Adelaida district of Paso Robles that is trying to stop olive oil and wine producers from expanding. She also noted that the County is looking to bring coastal policy inland on vacation rentals, which could be detrimental to tourism.

Public Comment – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:39am.