



# MINUTES – JOINT MEETING

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## Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Core Group & Executive Committee

### Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Core Group & Executive Committee Agenda

Thursday, April 15, 2021

4:00pm

The Kinney SLO, 1800 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Video Conference Option - URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82350395905>

Meeting ID: 823 5039 5905

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

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER: Clint Pearce

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE CORE GROUP PRESENT:** Scott Collins, Derek Johnson (via videoconference), Jim Lewis

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE CORE GROUP ABSENT:** Rachelle Rickard

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mark Eads, Aaron Graves, Hemant Patel, Clint Pearce, Amar Sohi

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chuck Davison, Brendan Pringle

**Call to Order at 4:07pm.**

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

None.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Davison reviewed the purpose of the meeting and the business items on the agenda.

#### BUSINESS ITEMS

#### 3. COVID-19 Impact & Response

Davison provided an update on Visit SLO CAL's FY2020/21 Media Campaign. He noted that based on the Board's approval in the January budget re-forecast, Visit SLO CAL worked with Miles Partnership (its media agency) on the reallocation of \$600k in surplus funds to its remaining FY2020/21 Media Plan, increasing total media spend for the fiscal year to \$1.7M. He provided an update on air service development efforts, noting that San Diego daily service on Alaska will re-launch on June 17, 2021, and that Portland daily service on Alaska will launch on June 17, 2021. Davison noted that for the balance of this fiscal year, Visit SLO CAL's media efforts will remain fully focused on drive markets, and that it will activate an earned media initiative (PR) to support the Portland flight launch. As requested by Visit SLO CAL's Marketing Committee, the organization will re-engage in flight market advertising next fiscal year. Davison highlighted Visit SLO CAL's success in advocating for lodging employees-only vaccines from the County. On April 8, 2021, the County agreed to offer 1200 vaccine slots the weeks of April 12 and April 19. After limited sign-ups, appointment offerings were extended to wineries, breweries, distilleries and attractions, and Visit SLO CAL has been conducting outreach to lodging investors and hospitality partners to get the word out about this opportunity. He also noted that Visit SLO CAL received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding in its account and is tracking usage of the funds, and that it applied for the targeted Economic Injury Disaster Loan

(EIDL) advance of \$10k on March 23, 2021, and is awaiting next steps on the advance. Visit SLO CAL has heard from several lodging investors that the most critical issue facing their businesses right now is an employee shortage and an inability to recruit front-line employees, and that at this time, applications are not even coming through. Davison noted that this could pose a major challenge during the summer, when guests are paying peak rates, but not receiving that level of service. Staff is working on a landing page for industry jobs, and has discussed promoting this page through paid geo-fenced social media targeting. Davison requested feedback from the Executive Committee on putting dollars behind this initiative, but the Committee recommended against investing dollars in-market to drive traffic to a local Jobs page, arguing that this would only create competition for the same workers among local properties.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Lewis expressed his appreciation to Visit SLO CAL for holding this meeting. With regards to the tourism employment issue, he noted that the biggest concern he sees is the potential inability of lodging to offer full service with reduced headcounts. Collins noted that hotel owners in Morro Bay are doing more work than ever. Lewis asked if it was a public transportation or workforce housing issue, or an issue of people not wanting to work. Graves and Eads expressed that it was more of the latter. Eads added that wages have increased, margins have shrunk, and hotels have had to be resourceful during the pandemic. He noted that it's not easy to run a hotel with half the staff. He also added that it would be helpful to get youth who are not interested in college aligned with opportunities to start their careers in the hospitality industry. Pearce noted that he wasn't sure if it was a permanent or temporary problem, and that he is hoping that by summer or fall, when federal dollars run out, the industry's workforce issues will normalize. Lewis noted that if workforce transportation is an issue, the federal government can match 80 percent of city funding toward serving underserved populations with public transportation routes. Johnson noted that the City of San Luis Obispo is also working on a marketing campaign to try to get commuters more comfortable with public transportation again. Johnson also added that the City of San Luis Obispo is ramping up its response to the homelessness issue, and alluded to an all-day summit on the issue happening on April 16, 2021. Johnson applauded Visit SLO CAL's leadership during the pandemic, and in driving recovery. Lewis referenced the issue of affordable housing, and asked how communities can get workers connected through People's Self Help Housing by directing tourism industry workers to this pipeline as new housing units come on. Johnson asked Davison about the hospitality industry education efforts, and Davison pointed to the Customer Service training course that Visit SLO CAL is partnering with Cal Poly on as part of Experience SLO CAL 2050, as well as the organization's efforts to partner with organizations dealing with workforce recruitment to share our assets and resources and leverage the work they are doing. Davison also highlighted some of the efforts that Visit SLO CAL has made to put SLO CAL in a very unique position compared to its competitive set, including hiring Cathy Tull (formerly CMO at the Las Vegas Conventions and Visitors Authority) as Chief Marketing Consultant, and hiring Mering (the agency that represents Visit California) as Visit SLO CAL's agency of record. Pearce asked if Caltrans was involved in the homelessness issue. Johnson noted that they are, but that the governor told Caltrans not to clean up the homeless camps; he added that the cities have expressed their grave concern about how the state is handling the issue, but that they have not received a response. Collins noted that city employees had to go in and clear out one of the homeless camps because it had become so problematic. Collins also thanked Davison for making early sacrifices and hard financial decisions as an early part of its COVID-19 response.

#### **4. FY2021/22 Budget Discussion**

Davison outlined FY2021/22 Draft Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), aligned with the organization's Strategic Direction 2023 Imperatives, and noted that each department's and team member's OKRs are laddering up to these overarching organizational OKRs. Davison requested Committee feedback on the FY2021/22 items of focus for each department.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion. Lewis noted he was really glad that Visit SLO CAL was moving forward on the prioritized Experience SLO CAL 2050 (ESC 2050) recommendations, and asked who was reminding each of the stakeholders about their ownership (or collaboration) on recommendations to keep them moving forward. Davison noted that Annie Frew, Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy, and Melissa Murray, Project Manager, Destination Management are the Visit SLO CAL team members driving these recommendations forward. With regards to the Resident Sentiment Study, Lewis noted that locals in Pismo Beach are exhausted with tourism. He added that \$3M in TOT dollars from Pismo Beach are going toward

residential initiatives and they are discussing how to use TOT dollars to employ the community's young people. Collins asked if the results of the study will be open to the public. Davison responded that the results would indeed be public. With regards to the House of Brands strategy development, Johnson noted that it seems like a prudent approach and that the City of San Luis Obispo would be really supportive of it, but that they would still want to maintain a lot of their own identity. He added that San Luis Obispo is aligned on working toward the Events and Festivals Strategy (an ESC 2050 recommendation). Lewis noted that he thought the workplan outlined is excellent and that he appreciated having a chance to see it and provide input.

## **5. Oceano Dunes SVRA Economic Impact Report**

In light of the recent California Coastal Commission decision, along with the upcoming closures of two of the largest economic drivers in our county, Diablo Canyon and Phillips 66 Refinery, Visit SLO CAL believes this study is more timely than ever before. Previous studies do not provide definitive or unbiased data analysis and conclusions about the real economic impacts of the Oceano Dunes District, which makes it challenging to plan for the future of the park. The study, spearheaded by Visit SLO CAL and the South County Chambers will be an impartial, third-party, robust and comprehensive assessment of the direct, indirect and induced economic benefits the Oceano Dunes District brings to the surrounding communities, SLO County and the State Parks system. Additionally, the study will provide subsequent mitigation measures to help prepare for the segmented closures of the Off Highway Vehicle area, camping and beach driving limitations; and will identify potential opportunities for repurposing of the State Park, as well as identify economic opportunities for communities tangential to the park. This study will ensure an impartial, accurate and comprehensive assessment to provide the necessary information for economic development and visitor serving efforts. He outlined the segmentation provided in the economic impact assessment scope of work. At this time, Visit SLO CAL has received support from the City of Grover Beach, and is in conversations with Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach. On April 20, 2021, the Board of Supervisors will vote to partner on the report through the Consent Agenda. Visit SLO CAL's Board has approved funding up to 50 percent of the study. The Board believes that in order for the study to be received by the community, it needs to include buy-in from the local municipalities and county who will be impacted by the outcome of the closure(s) and help lead the mitigation efforts.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion. Collins asked if the economic impact study focuses on future opportunities and Davison responded that it does. He also asked if there were any critics of the SVRA that Visit SLO CAL could get buy-in from on the study, to provide additional validity. Davison referenced the conversations staff has had with State Senator Laird and with Rep. Salud Carbajal on the issue. He added that the study is not about the SVRA closing; it's about the impact of restrictions and all of the areas for middle ground. Lewis noted that the Director of State Parks noted that OHV fees help fund environmental mitigation efforts, and is struggling to determine alternative revenue streams in the absence of this funding. He noted that this study will be very helpful.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 5:06pm.