



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee

Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 1, 2020

3:00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86525263459> Meeting ID: 865 2526 3459

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

1. CALL TO ORDER: Clint Pearce

PRESENT (VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE): Matthew Bronson, Scott Collins, Red Davis, Tom Frutchey, Lan George, Erik Howell, Derek Johnson, Desi Lance, Jim Lewis, Steve Martin, Whitney McDonald, Heather Newsom, Guy Savage

ABSENT: Lynn Compton, Heidi Harmon, Rachelle Rickard

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Lisa Verbeck, Brendan Pringle, Kyla Boast, Taylor Grantham, Ashley Mastako, Eric Parker, Vanessa Rodriguez

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Jed Bickel, Kathy Bonelli, John Conner, Mark Eads, Aaron Graves, Toni LeGras, Amit Patel, Clint Pearce

MARKETING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Stacie Jacob

Call to Order by Pearce at 3:04 pm.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Davison noted that Visit SLO CAL has partnered with Tourism Economics to offer a first-of-its-kind Business Intelligence Report available to all lodging investors, partners and local government officials, and that the document is shared on the 27th of each month. He described the data provided on the reports.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of February 14, 2020 Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Johnson/Frutchey to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS

4. COVID-19 Response

Davison recapped Visit SLO CAL's COVID-19 response efforts, including proactive efforts, resources provided by the organization and advocacy efforts. Visit SLO CAL asked the following questions from the committee:

What feedback have you heard in your communities about Visit SLO CAL's COVID-19 response efforts?

In your specific communities, what continued or new response efforts would provide the greatest impact moving forward?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. George noted that the Business Intelligence Report has been very helpful and thanked Visit SLO CAL for providing these monthly reports. Johnson thanked Visit SLO CAL for its leadership. He noted that the advocacy early on for the industry was huge, and that the weekly DMO calls and email updates were very helpful. He said that these efforts kept the region united. Savage echoed Johnson's comments and noted that even though the START plan didn't come into fruition, Visit SLO CAL's leadership in these planning efforts were beneficial to the community. Newsom complimented Visit SLO CAL's leadership and recognized its efforts to distribute information at the start of the pandemic when there was some confusion. Frutchet highlighted Chili's as an example of a restaurant in Paso Robles that completely restructured itself in multiple business units to handle the new reality of a COVID-19 world, and asked if the communities should start thinking about how the tourism industry can restructure. He suggested that Visit SLO CAL should lead that thought process. Davison responded that this has been a conversation in Visit SLO CAL's DMO calls, and is part of Visit SLO CAL's Strategic Direction 2023 (SD 2023) imperative to "Lead the county in a collaborative resilience planning effort." He added that Visit SLO CAL is having some conversation with local tourism leaders about this topic. Howell said that Visit SLO CAL is a reassuring voice for tourism in the county and that its efforts have been helpful. As the County goes into the subsequent waves of COVID-19 outbreaks, he noted that Visit SLO CAL is uniquely positioned to make sure the industry stays safe and that residents are supportive. Davison noted that no outbreaks have been tied to the lodging community. He pointed out that many of SLO CAL's lodging properties are independently owned and operated, which means that the owners are your neighbors and want their resident employees and visitors to be safe. Davison applauded the efforts of SLO CAL's lodging community, and noted that Visit SLO CAL realizes that first and foremost SLO CAL needs to be considered a safe destination. Johnson noted that access to the data, particularly the Arrivalist data, will help support tracking of COVID-19 recovery progress. He also noted that leading the marketing efforts for the countywide region and getting back into launching media will help San Luis Obispo. He recognized the importance of the new SD 2023 initiative of executing a "house of brands" strategy will be important to San Luis Obispo as well, in helping remind people of the unique qualities of each of SLO CAL's communities. Davison provided further detail on the "house of brands" strategy, and noted that Visit SLO CAL is shifting its advertising to highlight destinations in ways that were not as obvious before.

5. Equity & Inclusion

Davison noted that the Board formally adopted Visit SLO CAL's Equity & Inclusion (E&I) Statement, which was included in the agenda packet. Visit SLO CAL staff shared the Statement with its local destination partners, and have begun working with those who have formed their own committees on this effort. Staff has also built out a matrix, also included in the Agenda Packet, to track a variety of data points from organizational representation to media hosting and social posts. Davison added that the end goal behind the matrix is to be mindful of where the gaps are in equity and inclusion, and understand how Visit SLO CAL can tell a broader story. He clarified that the desire is not to be punitive, but rather to be "additive" in order to be more inclusive by expanding Visit SLO CAL's efforts and reach. Pearce noted that the Board of Directors is very proud of the work that the organization has done and he recognized the Board members who stepped up to help develop the Equity & Inclusion Statement and tracking matrix.

Visit SLO CAL asked the following questions from the committee:

What feedback do you have on Visit SLO CAL's Equity & Inclusion work?

How can we partner with you on this important work and what does success look like?

Are there unintended consequences to this work that we need to be aware of?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Frutchev asked about the thought process behind the development of the Equity & Inclusion (E&I) Statement, and why the Statement highlights values and actions, but not the outcomes that the organization wishes to achieve. Davison first recognized Visit SLO CAL's former Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy, Derek Kirk, and Board Members Jed Bickel and Amar Sohi, for their work in the development of Visit SLO CAL's E&I Statement. He noted that once Visit SLO CAL has a baseline established, it will be developing the outcome goals it wants to achieve. Since Visit SLO CAL had not previously been tracking these metrics, it does not yet have a baseline. Davison added that once the organization has those goals, it needs to dig in to figure out: 1) Is Visit SLO CAL not intentionally target diverse demographics? and/or 2) Is there a reason diverse individuals didn't want to come here? Bickel noted that he asked the same question about outcomes initially, and noted that it will be important to understand the composition of SLO CAL's visitors in the coming years. He added that he's seen more diversity in-market in the last 3-4 months than ever before. Pearce echoed this observation.

Frutchev noted that he is happy to be involved, and that he appreciates that the journey started with Visit SLO CAL. Johnson noted that he appreciates Visit SLO CAL's efforts, and asked that the organization continue to train each of the communities. He noted that perhaps an outcome that can be measured is the impressions left with SLO CAL's visitors in-market 1) Do they feel welcome? and 2) Do they feel they fit in here? Davison spoke to some of the research efforts planned in the coming year after the new Agency-of-Record is onboarded. Bronson noted some of the parallels between the E&I Statement and Grover Beach's Declaration of Human Rights, and noted that he would like to take the E&I Statement back to the Grover Beach City Council and advance a similar effort in Grover Beach. Newsom said that she would love to see an E&I presentation to the Atascadero City Council and better understand what their visitors are looking for (in this space). Lewis highlighted some of the E&I efforts in Pismo Beach (changing their assets, etc. to be more welcoming), and noted that Visit SLO CAL could assist in educating the local community in Equity and Inclusion. Howell, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, noted that it's important to find ways to communicate authentically with diverse demographic groups. Davison recognized the importance of leaning into people from diverse communities who can help us communicate properly, and noted that this goes back to Visit SLO CAL's SD 2023 value of "Authenticity." George noted that one important strategy to increase diversity is to attract authentic diverse businesses, like authentic ethnic restaurants and that the communities should educate the local population as well. Davison tied this effort back to the product development noted in Experience SLO CAL 2050.

6. Experience SLO CAL 2050 Conversations

Davison noted that after Visit SLO CAL's Board of Directors approved Experience SLO CAL 2050 (SLO CAL's Destination Management Strategy), they prioritized and budgeted recommendations for FY 2020-21. Davison outlined the items in Visit SLO CAL's existing scope, items Visit SLO CAL will advocate for and/or partner on, and the items Visit SLO CAL will fund. Davison clarified that these recommendations are set to be started in FY2020-21, but that this doesn't mean they will be completed this year. Davison provided an overview of the Comprehensive Business Support Network, a program that will seek to jumpstart the Customer Service Training Program recommendation, but he noted that because this program does not deliver on the need for mass industry customer service training, additional programming will still need to be developed to solve for completion of the recommendation. He recognized Visit SLO CAL Board Member Mark Eads for his efforts in this space. He also noted that on the Events & Festivals Strategy, the strategy would be for each of the communities, and thus would need buy-in and support from each of the Destination Partners. Once a consultant is selected, Visit SLO CAL would ask each of the Destination Partners to be part of the program of work and to sign a letter of intent committing to actively engaging on the development of the strategy and adopting its components upon completion. He added that one of the

concerns that the Board has is that this is a significant investment and they want to make sure the strategy has full buy-in from, and adoption by, all of the communities. Visit SLO CAL asked the following questions from the committee:

What overall feedback do you have on the direction of the Experience SLO CAL 2050 work?

When we talk about key recommendations like the Events & Festivals strategy, does your community see this work as important and is it willing to invest in and adopt the strategy?

Public Comment. Jocelyn Brennan noted she believed the work is very important, and that it would be great to have some kind of master calendar. Davison agreed, and noted that the end goal would be to have an API based master calendar, available to all, which would create consistency and efficiency for visitors and residents.

Committee Discussion. Lewis noted that Pismo Beach has developed its own Events & Festivals Strategy, and that this is a good space for Visit SLO CAL to be leading. He noted that the strategy would need to be complementary to Pismo Beach's strategy because their strategy is working for them. Davison noted that Visit SLO CAL's goal would be to press into the work that has been done already in each community and focus its efforts on driving events to non-peak times to yield revenue for lodging investors, while making sure that residents are not frustrated by events and activities impacting the quality of life in their communities. Frutchev noted that the Events & Festivals Strategy is one of the trickier recommendations, and that communities will need to recognize their own advantages, buy in to the strategy and step up. Davison asked for feedback on how to build buy-in from each community. Johnson noted that San Luis Obispo is committed to working with Visit SLO CAL and connecting with event production groups. He also noted that San Luis Obispo has historically invested in events, but doesn't traditionally own them. As such, the City of San Luis Obispo hasn't dictated the dates. Davison noted that the strategy will require communities that provide funding to push back on event dates, similar to how Visit SLO CAL has pushed back on the date proposed for the upcoming SPARTAN Race, into a non-peak period. He noted that defining "pocket" periods of availability for events is going to also be important. Davison emphasized the importance of leveling the playing field and working with communities at a moment when its known they will be challenged for business.

7. TOT Reporting

Pringle noted that Visit SLO CAL currently receives aggregated TOT reports from each city and the County, and that the Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors has requested a more granular breakdown in TOT reporting that segments the TOT numbers out by lodging type. Visit SLO CAL is asking for the Committee's assistance in providing TOT reports that split the numbers out by lodging type, so that it can better target these specific sectors (hotels/motels, RV parks, and vacation rentals (including B&Bs) in each community when they need assistance. Visit SLO CAL would request the reports by the 15th of each month, in conjunction with the delivery of each community's basic TOT report. Visit SLO CAL is hoping to add this segmented breakdown in the Business Intelligence Report, and as such, excel format would be preferable, with numbers for past months updated every month (as applicable). Visit SLO CAL is requesting reports dating back to July 2017 if possible.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. LeGras noted that she was happy to hear this request for breaking out the data by lodging type because it's important to understand where properties are struggling in order to strategize and help. She added that B&Bs fall under different restrictions from vacation rentals and that it's really important to segment these out as a different lodging type. Davison noted that Pringle will follow up with each community on this request.

8. Travel Trade & Marketing Efforts

Boast outlined Visit SLO CAL's travel trade strategy for FY 2020/21. Verbeck outlined Visit SLO CAL's earned media (PR & Communications) and paid strategies, and noted some of the highlights thus far. She described the organization's "house of brands" approach and played the 90-second brand video, an example of this new approach, which is now on the website homepage at SLOCAL.com. She also described Visit SLO CAL's #SLOCALSafely efforts and thanked Travel Paso and SLO TBID for providing assets to supplement Visit SLO CAL's own assets of businesses showcasing safe business practices. Visit SLO CAL asked the following questions from the committee:

What feedback do you have on Visit SLO CAL's travel trade and marketing strategies for this fiscal year?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Pearce commented that the brand video was beautiful and that it was great to see such diversity. Johnson commented that the video was well done. He said that he loves the “house of brands” concept and noted that the diverse representation is always important.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:39 pm.