



# MINUTES

## Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Meeting

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**Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, December 7, 2023**  
**3:30 pm – 5:00 pm**  
**Embassy Suites, 333 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo, CA**

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

**PRESENT:** Stacy Inman, Jorge Garcia, Dawn Ortiz-Legg, Derek Johnson, Erica A. Stewart, Zach Zimmerman, Yvonne Kimball, Mark Dariz, Jen Ford, Jim Lewis

**ABSENT:** Ty Lewis, Lan George, Steve Gregory, Bill Robeson, Matthew Bronson, Rebecca Campbell

**STAFF PRESENT:** Cathy Cartier, Chuck Davison, Emily Rudge, Annie Braunschweig, Trevor Lynch, Theresa Nagai, Lauren Miller, Matt Halvorson, Alyssa Manno, Rachelle Ramirez, Kristen Carlson, Mayla Lohnes, Brooke Weisbecker, Aleigh Hogan, Megan Leininger, Rose Seybold, Lisa Belsanti, Michael Coyne

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Aaron Graves, Jed Bickel, Toni LeGras-Price, Hemant Patel, Clint Pearce, Bryan Bonelli, Jim Hamilton, Pragna Patel- Mueller, Amit Patel

**MARKETING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Gordon Jackson, Molly Cano, Jim Allen, Kathleen Naughton, Linda Parker Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, Terrie Banish

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Call to order by Aaron Graves at 3:33pm

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

None.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

<b>CONSENT AGENDA</b>
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### 3. Approval of June 1, 2023 Advisory Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee – None.

**ACTION:** Moved by **Ortiz-Legg/Stewart** to approve the Consent Agenda.

**Motion carried: 5:0:4 (Inman, Zimmerman, Kimball, J. Lewis abstained, Ford arrived after motion item)**

## Business Items

### 4. Visit SLO CAL Update

Cartier provided a recap of the Brand Awareness Study, the SLO CAL Summit, and shared the My SLO CAL video along with the approach to feature it in local media. Cartier shared recent and upcoming marketing co-op programs, recent metrics from the November 3 & 4 Spartan Race, and shared a reminder of the SLO CAL Open taking place in Morro Bay this week. Cartier announced the exciting news of the upcoming launch of Monopoly "SLO CAL Edition" along with a timeline for its creation. Cartier shared several pieces of new social media content and the video of Hearst Castle as part of the SLO CAL Crafted Experiences initiative. Cartier provided a recap of the recent shoot titled "Unpacking- SLO CAL." Davison provided a Sales Department update, announcing the development of a countywide sales strategy with Guzo, noting that with approximately 700 rooms being added to SLO CAL as a region, there'll be a need to strategically fill them. Davison provided detailed analysis of the STR report, comparing October 2022 vs 2023, October ME 2023 vs October 2019, October YTD vs 2019, and October YTD Supply/Demand vs 2019. Davison noted that overall, the market is performing well although some markets are struggling due to the Highway 1 closure and the wet spring weather, and pointed out that when reviewing October 2023 vs October 2019, occupancy is off by 6.6%, although many lodging partners are continuing to compare to 2022 which was the best year recorded in SLO CAL history, and the numbers prove that we've experienced steady 4% increases every year. Davison provided several items illustrating the prediction for another wet winter in early 2024, which could have negative impacts on tourism again as it did in early 2023.

What feedback do you have on Visit SLO CAL's plan for the balance of FY 2024?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Johnson asked if we know where the visitors go, if they're unable to come here due to rain, do they go skiing? Davison responded that while they do tend to, we don't have that exact data, but that interestingly, Sonoma County just did a visitor study on people who aren't coming there. Stewart asked Cartier if we are making sure to consider Cal Poly Parents Week and Homecoming Week when planning for events. Cartier replied yes, we are. Davison noted that we do keep in mind all event dates just as we did with the Spartan Race and the SLO CAL Open, which is aligned with our Events & Festivals Strategy.

### 5. Experience SLO CAL 2050 Conversation

Cartier shared the messaging strategy for Sustainably SLO CAL, shared two videos, and provided context for how the plan has evolved in FY 2023 and FY 2024. Cartier shared the newest video created for Surf Gems, which was released this week in conjunction with the SLO CAL Open. Davison provided several air service updates: Alaska Airlines recently bought Hawaiian Airlines for \$1.9 billion, the FAA is short 3,000 air traffic controllers, several changes to flight routes made by Alaska Airlines, United Airlines and American Airlines, along with issues related to the pilot shortage. Davison noted that in 2024 the focus for SBP air service development will be continued attendance at key air service conferences, changing the structure of the presentation decks to highlight the market, and looking to host FAMs for key airline route planners to introduce them to the market. Davison shared an update on the SLO CAL Welcome program, highlighting that there are now 853 SLO CAL Welcome Experts and 1162 total registered users.

What overall feedback do you have on the direction of this work?

Where and how would you like to partner with Visit SLO CAL in the coming year?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Garcia asked if the twice daily Alaska Airlines SAN-SBP flight will be truly twice a day. Davison replied that yes, it will, and the more that we can move to mainline flights instead of regional, we will have less issues with true daily service. Stewart asked if there was an update on the survey conducted at the airport about where people want flights to. Davison responded that the airport receives the data, but it is more based on what the market can support through demand than where people want to go. Inman asked about the plan to make the pathways more viable for commercial planes. Davison responded that that is more of a question for Ortiz-Legg, but that the airport is in the final stages of completing their new masterplan, they are working on funding, and they did complete the repaving in June of this year, and the airport is currently at capacity with not much space left on the aprons, which is a remarkable accomplishment in only six years of being open. Ortiz-Legg referenced the partnership with the city and their impact to help keep businesses going and continue to grow while taking residents considerations into account. J. Lewis stated that he'd like to give credit to Davison and the Visit SLO CAL team, noting that the SLO CAL Summit was excellent and the speakers were amazing, and the entire program seemed relevant to everyone. J. Lewis noted that in regard to the Monopoly game, a moderator will be needed and "boardwalk" will be a problem. Davison replied that Visit SLO CAL will try to put money aside and work with the Board of Directors to make sure it is a great representation of the entire community. J. Lewis mentioned that the Atascadero events have been performing very well and they've been seeing a significant increase in attendance. J. Lewis asked for an update on the transportation alternatives initiative, and asked what is needed from the city governments, noting that they are all working on serious issues but want to help however they can. Davison responded that we are not making good headway, but it is at the top of the list in 2024; we have to find a way forward on the worker side and the visitor side. Johnson stated that the City of SLO would love to participate in the air service FAMs and praised his team and the Visit SLO CAL team on the Denver Media Mission Activation. Davison replied that Belsanti and Cartier did an amazing job, and it shows how well we can all work together as Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance was already planning to be there and we partnered through them. Ortiz-Legg echoed the praise for the SLO CAL Summit, mentioning that it showed all that is happening and all that can be done. She stated that we often take hospitality for granted; it all goes back to experiences, and we need to partner on anything we can. Davison replied that due to the many changes in city managers and tourism managers in each municipality, the cadence of regular regional meetings has stopped, but regular meetings with Melissa James, Peter Rodgers, and Matt Bronson as the Chair of the City Managers group are still underway.

## **6. Advocacy Conversation**

Davison provided a recap of the meeting held on November 28 regarding the Highway 1 Closure, which included many key players from Visit California, See Monterey, Caltrans, along with local, state and federal government officials. Davison highlighted the objective for the meeting, which was to pursue a path for a more proactive, long-term solution rather than reactive repairs each year, and to collaborate with stakeholders to gain awareness of the severity of impacted parties. Davison shared an update on the workforce housing initiative and revisited slides from the Resident Sentiment Study illustrating that affordable housing is the top challenge in the community. Davison highlighted data from Beacon Economics which detailed the illegal short-term rental listings in each community, noting that the data is now four months old. Davison provided a recap of the Central Coast Economic Forecast which details changes in the housing structure in SLO CAL and the decrease in permitting for multi-family homes in the past twenty years, and that 9% of the homes in SLO CAL housing market are second homes.

What overall feedback do you have on these items?

How can Visit SLO CAL better partner with the community to successfully advance these initiatives in the coming year?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Johnson stated that we need a dedicated stream of funding on the housing side, and there are currently 700 affordable units waiting and we just need the funds; the state needs to step up and figure it out, it is taking too long. Davison commented that he is hearing from local developers that there is no incentive to build multi-family housing. Johnson replied that either as a state or at least at a regional level we need to sit down and look at land costs, height and density. J. Lewis stated that he agreed, and that we used to

have redevelopment agencies, but Governor Brown shut them down; we are currently rezoning in Atascadero. LeGras-Price asked what type of land they are rezoning? J. Lewis replied some single-family, unused retail areas, parks; it has to be put where there is access to water and sewer, you cannot use agricultural land because of the lack of sewer and water infrastructure. He commented that city managers are losing sleep over this issue and Visit SLO CAL needs to point out who in each corner holds responsibility including calling out the building trade and cities. Ortiz-Legg stated that they had a conversation on this topic at the Board of Supervisors meeting this week; what needs to be done is talk to the developers. She stated that downtown Nipomo is a perfect example, in the areas where there is no infrastructure where the workers are. She noted that if we all reassessed ourselves and took a few pennies from everywhere, we could solve the housing issue, nobody should carry the burden alone, but multiple industries and agencies can help, we are tired of having this conversation and want to see action; we do have the Dana Reserve project coming up again in April. Davison commented that we have felt like this is not a priority for some elected officials because they have a house, so it isn't their pain point, but we need to connect the dots and take action otherwise we'll face huge consequences in the next decade. Ortiz-Legg shared that perhaps we need to look at advocacy at the state, and the Coastal Commission won't let anyone do anything on the North Coast or the unincorporated area, perhaps Visit California can help us. Garcia commented that the Coastal Commission is killing Pismo Beach, and they are using a zoning code from 1983; perhaps we can leverage you all when we go to Coastal, because if we cannot build anything on the coast then we cannot have growth, tourism and housing. Davison thanked Garcia for his comment and said he will work with Melissa James at REACH and Pete Rodgers at SLOCOG on this matter. Ford commented that in Morro Bay there is a low-income housing project that's been built but put on hold due to connectivity with PG&E. She stated that she's heard that throughout the entire state many affordable housing projects are at risk of losing funding, and there are a lot of things that inhibit the growth of affordable housing. Ortiz-Legg stated that there is definitely a confluence of this due to supply chain, cost, permitting, etc.

Davison shared the next meeting date, June 6, 2024

**ADJOURN 5:02pm**