



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Meeting

Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 1, 2023
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Embassy Suites, 333 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Rachelle Rickard, John Nilon, Jen Ford, Whitney McDonald, Jorge Garcia, Dawn Ortiz-Legg, Erica A. Stewart, Greg Carpenter, Mark Dariz, Kristin Erickson, Robert Robert (arrived after call to order, at 3:41pm)

ABSENT: Ty Lewis, Lan George, Stacy Inman, Steve Martin

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Chuck Davison, Emily Rudge, Annie Braunschweig, Cynthia Gonzalez, Trevor Lynch, Jessie Borchin, Melissa Murray, Theresa Nagai, Lauren Miller, Matt Halvorson, Alyssa Manno, Camille Silvera, Rachelle Ramirez, Kristen Buhring, Mayla Lohnes, Brooke Weisbecker

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Aaron Graves, Mark Eads, Amar Sohi, Clint Pearce, Jed Bickel, Toni LeGras-Price, Amit Patel, Vic Popp, Jim Hamilton, Pragna Patel- Mueller, Bryan Bonelli

MARKETING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Gordon Jackson, Molly Cano, Michael Wambolt

Call to order by Aaron Graves at 3:34pm

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of November 3, 2022 Advisory Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee – None.

ACTION: Moved by **Sohi/Bickel** to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion carried: 4:0:7 (Nilon, Garcia, Ortiz- Legg, Carpenter, Dariz, Erickson, Robert abstained)

Business Items

4. Visit SLO CAL Update

Davison highlighted the recently approved Strategic Direction 2026 which was formed via the outreach in the communities and with the help of tourism leaders and strategic partners. Cartier shared assets from the recent Hero Brand shoot and highlighted the results from the Brand Awareness Research Study and she noted the brand positioning which focused on people, place and pace. Cartier shared the World Travel Tourism Council content partnership which highlights Sustainability in SLO CAL and shared the video created for the landing page. Cartier outlined the recently approved FY 2024 Business and Marketing Plan and walked the Committee through each department's scope of work for the upcoming year.

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

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Nilon noted that everything Visit SLO CAL is working on is beautiful but asked how to participate and engage, and link up so we make sure we are all telling the same story? Davison replied that he loved that Nilon is asking that, commenting that we have a great starting point as Jim Hamilton sits on our Board. Davison shared that we'd love to partner more as we are all about storytelling and two local businesses have recently rebranded and use SLO CAL. Davison commented that we want to model the logic of Visit California "CODE" (create once, distribute everywhere). Johnson shared he appreciated the question and the reminder. He shared that regarding workforce housing, the City of SLO is suffering the same challenges and if there is an opportunity to align, they will. Davison replied that we want to make sure there is tool alignment and opportunities for tourism workers, city workers, and workforce strategy is a very complicated beast. Pearce replied that if we don't do the work, then no one will. Davison commented to Johnson that as we get into the workforce housing project, we will need help and partnership, and we want to come along on some things the City of SLO has already done. Johnson commented that Nilon and he have had a lot of talks regarding this topic. Nilon commented that he would confirm with Johnson what the County does and what the workforce board is intended to do. Stewart commented that the customer experience aspect is what Visit SLO CAL can lean into, and asked if we want everyone to call the region SLO CAL? Cartier replied that yes, we are trying to brand the region, but we realize that no one here currently says SLO CAL, so the goal is to have residents say they are from SLO CAL instead of the Central Coast. Garcia questioned why Visit SLO CAL says "EDI" instead of "DEI" as most people say? Davison replied that we don't have the perfect answer, but part of the reason is that we want to put equity first, and because Destinations International uses "EDI."

5. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Conversation

Davison highlighted the upcoming EDI training that is being led by Kisha Dixon taking place on August 29 and 30 with the full team, Board and Marketing Committee; he reminded the Committee that the Board committed to being leaders in EDI back in 2020 by adopting the Visit SLO CAL EDI Plan. Cartier highlighted the recently featured EDI content, noting that the goal is to continue to increase the library of content and show we have a steady flow of unique people in our area.

What feedback do you have on Visit SLO CAL's continued EDI work?

How can we continue to partner with you on your individual community work in this important role?

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Johnson commented that there has been regional work done in the Central Coast that is led by the County of Santa Barbara and conversation about what is happening in Northern California counties as well, and shared strategies might be useful. Davison responded that he welcomed the useful insight and

requested Johnson to make the introduction. Stewart noted that she loved the county wide calendar and the EDI content spread out over different months, but asked why despite June being Pride month, that there is no Pride content listed? Cartier replied that pride is an interesting story and that there is an Acacia video dropping for June on LGBTQ people. Cartier noted Visit SLO CAL is working with media to tell people where to go and what to do regarding Pride events. Davison commented that this also crosses over in other areas in that the LGBTQ couple was also Black, and a recent campaign shoot in Arroyo Grande featured a gay black couple. Sohi commented that another challenge we have is we need to be more aligned with all of the communities, for example, the Templeton overpass issue and how can we work together and not send the wrong message. Nilon shared that the following Tuesday the County will pass an anti-hate measure at the Board of Supervisors meeting and that that might tie in. McDonald commented on the recent coverage in Arroyo Grande regarding the Pride flag. She noted that it has flown for 3 years and there is a real opportunity for SLO CAL and the goal is to make it known we are welcoming. Garcia commented that Visit SLO CAL should write opinion pieces in the Tribune and that that would get the SLO CAL nomenclature out there and send a positive message when there is a negative issue taking place.

6. Experience SLO CAL 2050 Conversation

Davison reviewed the Experience SLO CAL 2050 tracking matrix and reminded the Committee that it can be found on SLO CAL Connection under “Partner Bulletins.” Davison shared an update on SLO CAL Welcome and shared a testimonial video featuring employees of the Seacrest Hotel. Davison highlighted the finalization of the Events & Festivals strategy and noted the delivery of the Countywide calendar is set for FY 24. Davison shared an update on the Countywide Trail System initiative, highlighting that the comprehensive mapping system is slated for FY 25. Davison shared that as part of Strategic Direction 2026, Visit SLO CAL will begin efforts to create a regional tourism industry workforce strategy roadmap, and the ultimate strategy outcome will focus on engaging high school students to help them consider a career pathway in hospitality and tourism. Davison highlighted that as part of Strategic Direction 2026, Visit SLO CAL will partner with the Global Sustainability Tourism Council to develop a countywide sustainability assessment.

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. Carpenter asked if SLO CAL compares to places like Sedona and Zion in terms of hiking and biking? Davison replied that we don't know yet but will be determining soon. Davison thanked Stewart, Johnson and others that participated on the steering committee. Sohi asked what are the next steps to make connectivity on the trails? Davison responded that it is in the research phase right now. Cartier noted that in addition to mapping the trails, we have to determine who is responsible for making sure the trails are open and maintained. Johnson commented that while it is exciting and helps align where we are going, it is always helpful to remember we used to talk about over-tourism and frustrated locals. Ortiz-Legg shared that the e-bikes on the Bob Jones trail is a growing problem and she's thankful no one has gotten hurt yet; we have to take things one step at a time.

7. Advocacy Conversation

Davison shared the findings from the recently completed Resident Sentiment Study, completed by Destination Analysts. He reviewed the in-depth analysis of the resident profiles, community sentiment, tourism's economic impact, tourism's personal impact on residents, community impact, community highlights, and short-term rentals. Some of the key takeaways included: 2,520 people were polled from 21 communities, 84% were transplants and 15% were natives, 69% moved to SLO CAL after visiting; the top reasons for moving to SLO CAL were pace of life and climate; the top reason for continuing to live in SLO CAL was good quality of life, and 66%

felt that tourism is making their community a better place to live. Davison presented the findings of the Oceano Dunes Stewardship Study, which was conducted by Resonance Consultancy. The study consisted of three objectives: quantify the direct and indirect economic impact of the Oceano Dunes SVRA, identify a range of future use scenarios, and develop potential recommendations for tourism independent of the final outcome of off-road vehicular use. Some of the key takeaways included the following 2019 data: \$511 million total economic impact, \$336 million in direct visitor spending, \$31 million total state & local tax revenues, and 5,600 jobs created. The report included 20 stewardship recommendations for the community to review and consider advancing. Davison highlighted the soon-to-be completed Short-Term Rental Nexus Study, conducted by Beacon Economics. The purpose of the study is to determine if there is a nexus between short-term rentals and the lack of workforce housing and is slated for finalization in early July. Davison noted SB 584 which if passed, could add a 15% additional tax on all short-term rentals.

What overall feedback do you have on these items?

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

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion. Ortiz-Legg commented that Nilon mentioned that should SB 584 pass, it is likely that more short-term rentals will go into the underground again, resulting in lost TOT revenue. Davison replied in agreement with Ortiz-Legg. Johnson requested letter templates for use to help oppose SB 584. Davison replied to confirm a template is available and can be provided. Ortiz-Legg shared that she has read the Oceano Dunes study and that there is truly something in it for everyone; she has never been so excited about the Dunes as she is now, and that it is noteworthy that the recommendations come from an independent group. Davison replied that while there was some skepticism that Visit SLO CAL should not fund it nor get involved, it was interesting that even in the final workshop, the Friends of Oceano Dunes said they did not want to not do the study, they just didn't want any of the recommendations to happen.

Davison shared the next meeting date, December 7.

ADJOURN 5:13pm