



Minutes

Visit San Luis Obispo County Advisory Committee

Visit San Luis Obispo County Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 3, 2015

3:30pm

Embassy Suites

333 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

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

PRESENT: Emily Jackson, Rachelle Rickard, Tom O'Malley, Steve Martin, Bob Perrault, Mariam Shah, Lynn Compton, Jim Lewis, Dianne Thompson, Jim Guthrie, Jan Marx

ABSENT: Dave Buckingham, Jim App, Erik Howell, Katie Lichtig, Dan Buckshi

INTERIM REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Jim Throop

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Brendan Pringle, Kylee Jepsen

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jay Jamison, Noreen Martin, JP Patel

Call to Order at 3:38pm.

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

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

Committee Discussion—None.

Public Comment—None.

BUSINESS

3. **Overview to Date**

Davison offered an overview of VSLOC accomplishments over the last five months and the goals of the Tourism Marketing District. Davison discussed the staff structure of VSLOC, and listed the Board and Marketing Committee members.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

4. Funding and Allocation

For the FY2015-16, VSLOC has budgeted \$2.9 million in projected funding and 3.0 million in expected expenses. VSLOC secured a line of credit funding the organization beginning in July for the three month period of time before TMD Assessment funds were remitted. Davison reminded the Committee that every time VSLOC has to draw funds out of the line of credit because of delays in receiving payments from the communities, they lose money in interest. VSLOC is asking city managers for their assistance in collecting and remitting funds on time so that VSLOC can avoid paying unnecessary interest.

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment – None.

5. Crisis Communication Plan

Davison discussed the objectives of the Crisis Communication Plan. The plan identifies two types of crises that dictate response (Incidental and Major Disasters/Emergencies). Next steps include media training, for which VSLOC will be providing more details in the future. VSLOC has reached out to CalFire, San Luis Obispo County agencies, and to other public officials at the city level for further direction as the document continues to evolve.

Committee Discussion – Lewis asked if VSLOC had reached out to the local communities while drafting the plan. Davison responded that the plan was both vetted by the County Office of Emergency Services staff and reviewed by the Marketing Committee. He also noted that the plan is a fluid document, and that VSLOC continues to look for ways to improve it.

Public Comment – None.

6. Visit California Partnership

San Luis Obispo County was recently featured in a Visit California TV advertisement that received vast domestic and international exposure. The concept was born during a Visit California Board meeting, when Davison inquired about how SLO County could be included in future TV spots. The advertisement features a “bubblesmith” blowing an enormous bubble in front of Morro Rock. In addition, VSLOC is participating in Visit California travel missions in Mexico (January 18-21, 2016) and China (April 10-15, 2016), as well as their New York Media Reception (March 21-22), and Vancouver Media Luncheon (May 3, 2016).

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

7. Shoulder Season Campaign

VSLOC launched an \$800,000 media campaign on November 16th. The campaign will extend through April of 2016. The primary target markets are Bay Area, Southern California, and the Central Valley. Secondary Markets include Phoenix and Las Vegas (based on the direct flights available from these markets to the area). Additionally, VSLOC has \$100,000 committed for launch advertising in Seattle if Alaska Airlines approves a direct flight from Seattle to San Luis Obispo. The shoulder season campaign includes \$150,000 in co-op print advertising (in magazines like Sunset, AARP, and VIA, as well as newspapers like the OC Register, the SF Chronicle and others). The campaign also includes \$450,000 in digital marketing (target and retarget) in national news sites, local news sites, travel sites, food and wine publications, as well as vacation rental, B&B and RV Park sites. Davison noted that due to El Niño, a large portion of marketing campaign funds were shifted to digital so that they can be turned off and on. The Committee viewed VSLOC’s new landing page (VisitSLOCounty.com), where all marketing-driven traffic will land. Davison explained that the page helps to better

highlight the individual communities. Additionally, the campaign includes \$210,000 in radio marketing. The Committee heard one of VSLOC's radio ads, which showcases the numerous activities in the County.

The Committee viewed the new Countywide icon. Davison noted that the goals of the icon were to be a geographical locator, and to connect the dots for the consumer on what San Luis Obispo County includes. VSLOC is asking all the community DMOs to insert the icon in their advertising as well.

VSLOC and the SLO County Airport met with Alaska Airlines in Seattle on November 20, 2015 to discuss a SLO-Seattle direct flight. The Airport's grant from the FAA expires at the end of December, so a decision is needed from Alaska Airlines quickly in order for the Airport to secure an extension on the grant.

Committee Discussion. O'Malley expressed concern about advertising in sites like AirB&B that list illegal rentals that don't pay TOT. Davison noted that VSLOC has been working with the County to find ways to identify illegal rentals and that AirB&B has been asked to speak at the next Industry Educational Symposium. Davison noted that Jim Hamilton (county staff member and appointed VSLOC Board member) believes there is a solution, and reported to the Board that there is a bill in front of the state legislature which would deal with this issue at a state level. Patel recommended not sending cease-and-desist letters to illegal vacation rentals, but rather sending forms out to them, asking them to register their vacation rental.

Jan Marx (Mayor, City of San Luis Obispo) noted that the issue the City of San Luis Obispo has faced is that they don't have the staffing allocated to identify all the illegal vacation rentals.

8. Sponsorship

VSLOC has been working with AEG (Amgen Tour of California) on a four-year sponsorship deal to keep the Tour of California running through San Luis Obispo County. AEG originally asked Paso Robles if they would be interested in hosting one of the stages of the Tour of California for 2016. The City of Paso Robles was not interested, so VSLOC connected AGE with Morro Bay, at AEG's request, and they accepted. The stage will start near Morro Rock on May 18, 2016, and will travel through Cayucos, Cambria and San Simeon before heading north out of the county. The event receives national and international exposure on NBC Sports. VSLOC has committed \$30,000 in overall sponsorship funds for 2016 to keep Amgen in the County. The primary purpose of VSLOC's sponsorship is long term as it provides SLO County national and international television exposure that it could not purchase for the \$30,000 sponsorship.

Committee Discussion. Jamison noted how fortunate it is that we get the Amgen Tour of California passing through SLO County.

Public Comment – None.

9. Research

VSLOC is going to launch two major research projects in 2016:

- 1) An In-Market Consumer Demographic Study focusing on where SLOC tourists are coming from along with a consumer share of wallet study; and
- 2) A Feeder Market Consumer Awareness Study (Bay Area, Southern California, Phoenix and Las Vegas) to determine the consumer's awareness of the county and its assets, and understand why they choose or don't choose SLO County as a destination.

These studies will provide community buy-in opportunities, should any community want to seek specifics about their market.

Committee Discussion. Perrault asked for more details about buy-in opportunities for individual communities. Davison explained that the research RFP was being released in December and as research begins, communities will have opportunities to “buy in” and ask additional questions relating to their communities. There will be more information to come as a research company is selected and contracted. Marx suggested reaching out to Cal Poly for assistance.

10. Reporting

VSLOC currently pays \$6500 annually for weekly and monthly STR reports for SLO County and its communities. Davison highlighted the challenges with this current reporting model. Morro Bay is currently leading in how it reports out on lodging statistics. It accounts for vacation rentals, B&Bs, and RV spaces, and it tracks stats by the day of the week. If VSLOC could get other communities to opt-in and provide the same level of reporting, it could eliminate this expense, and offer more data for VSLOC and the individual DMOs. VSLOC is asking for the Committee’s consideration in working with each community’s unique lodging mix to provide this valuable data.

Committee Discussion. Guthrie noted that the issue would be getting the unique lodging mix identified. O’Malley suggested getting the information in aggregated form. Emily Jackson asked how VSLOC was determining how marketing dollars were being spent per community. Davison noted that the goal was to promote and represent the County at large, and that it wasn’t a quid pro quo scenario.

Marx asked how various communities review content for their market to assure it is consistent with their messaging. Davison responded that VSLOC works with the Marketing Committee, which includes community DMOs, on content.

Public Comment – Jim Throop (Director of Administrative Services, City of Paso Robles) commented that he requested such information be provided in the past, and that he faced resistance.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:09pm.