



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

8:30am – 10:30am

Visit SLO CAL Office, 81 Higuera St, Ste 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Toni LeGras-Price, Hemant Patel, Amar Sohi, Mark Eads, Kimberly Walker, Jed Bickel, Vic Popp, Jim Hamilton, Nipool Patel, Pragna Patel-Mueller, Britt Shuford, Sean Dasmann

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Annie Braunschweig, Emily Rudge, Kristen Carlson

MEMBER OF PUBLIC: Molly Cano

ABSENT: Hamish Marshall, Bryan Bonelli, Clint Pearce, Aaron Graves

Call to order at 8:34am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Reminder to sign the Conflict of Interest Form and Board of Directors Guidelines; Virtual Brown Act Training on October 7, Central Coast Economic Forecast on Friday, November 1; SLO CAL Summit on September 25.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of June 27, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

4. Approval of June/ Year End 2024 Visit SLO CAL Financials

5. Approval of July 2024 Visit SLO CAL Financials

Braunschweig presented the Final FY24 financial statements, noting a final TMD revenue of \$8.83 million which was down 2.6% from the reforecast and down 2.5% over the prior year. Braunschweig presented the TMD revenue snapshot and reviewed the July 2024 financial statements, highlighting that operating expenses were down 5% from budget, a 255% investment gain increase, and a net income surplus increase of 13%.

Board Discussion – None.

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

Motion carried: 12:0

CEO REPORT

6. Visit SLO CAL CEO Report

Cartier reviewed the July and August STR reports, noting that in July occupancy was up everywhere except Paso Robles, and in August all communities were up in occupancy and ADR was slightly higher than last year; VSC will continue to monitor the reporting and our budget closely. Cartier highlighted Mayla Lohnes and Brooke Weisbecker, who were recipients of the CalTravel Summit 30 & Under Emerging Leaders Award. Cartier provided a recap of a call with the City of Paso Robles regarding their 5-year strategic Economic Development Plan, noting the possibility of a pilot project with Tourism Economics to better track visitation in Paso Robles. Cartier highlighted recent activities and events participated with Visit California. Cartier provided several advocacy updates including support letters written for the Cambria Christmas Market and the Bob Jones trail, and Highway 1 updates for Regent's Slide and Rocky Creek. Cartier shared a recap of a recent presentation at the Pismo Beach City Council meeting. Cartier provided an update on the Cal Poly EIM scholarship, noting that the endowed scholarship has been awarded and the secondary scholarship will be awarded in the Fall, and recapped the EIM lab tour with Dr. Kevin Lin. Cartier provided an update on SBP passenger activity and gave several SBP air service updates, Cartier also shared the new SBP wall wraps. Cartier noted that the November Board meeting date will need to change due to a travel conflict. Cartier highlighted her upcoming travel schedule.

Board Discussion- None.

Business Items

7. Annual Audit Review

Braunschweig provided a review of the FY 2024 Annual Audit, highlighting that Erin Nagle of Glenn Burdette presented at last week's Executive Committee Meeting; there were no findings or material weaknesses for the ninth consecutive year. Braunschweig reviewed three meaningful adjustments from the audit, a net income (deficit) of \$916,000 excluding contingency, and \$1.34 million in cumulative operating surplus carried forward to FY 2025.

Board Discussion- Hamilton applauded the VSC team for another clean audit and commented that it is a positive reflection on staff and leadership, with evidence of good stewardship.

ACTION: Moved by **Hamilton/Shuford** to approve the FY 2024 Visit SLO CAL Annual Audit Review, as conducted by Glenn Burdette, and recommended by the Executive Committee.

Motion carried: 12:0

8. FY 24 Annual Report

Cartier presented the FY 2024 Annual Report, reminding the Board that an electronic copy was sent in the agenda packet as well as a hard copy to be mailed as well. Cartier shared that next year's version will be slightly modified and reduced in size, focusing on what is required in the Management District Plan and only critical details.

Board Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by **H. Patel/Bickel** to approve the FY 2024 Annual Report, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Motion carried: 12:0

9. Investment Policy

Braunschweig shared a copy of the draft investment policy which will assist with preservation of capital, sustain sufficient liquidity to meet the needs of the organization, and maintain conservative investment growth. The policy creation resulted in the current size and value of the investment portfolio being large enough to be actively managed rather than self-directed and will result in less returns being left on the table due to the time constraints with self-directed accounts. Braunschweig noted that preservation of capital is the top-priority.

Board Discussion. Hamilton inquired for clarification on the selection and reporting process. Braunschweig responded that the investment selections would be chosen by Morgan Stanley and Sage Investments, followed by updates at the Executive Committee meetings, with quarterly updates to the Board of Directors. Cartier noted that we are happy to over communicate the investment updates in the beginning, and gradually reduce them as the process becomes more established. Popp inquired about the ability to use the earnings at VSC's discretion, Braunschweig replied that while we are permitted to use the earnings in any way we choose, we would bring it to the Board before doing so, and the funds would likely only be allocated for an emergency or large strategic initiative.

ACTION: Moved by **N. Patel/Popp** to approve Visit SLO CAL's draft Investment Policy Statement and associated investment guidelines and directions.

Motion carried: 12:0

10. Employee Updates

Cartier shared the announcement that Molly Cano has been hired for the VP of Marketing role and will join the team on November 4. Cartier highlighted the Employee Satisfaction Survey results, sharing that the most recent survey done in June 2024 received a score of 61, which is a drastic improvement compared to the last several years.

Board Discussion- Hamilton praised the results of the Employee NPS Survey, commenting on how important that piece is and as a board member that is really what they're looking for- to stop the turnover and retain staff.

11. Working Groups

Cartier provided updates on the upcoming working groups: Tourism Industry Workforce (beginning in October), Last Mile Transportation (beginning in November), Regional Sustainability (beginning January), and Countywide Trails (beginning February).

Board Discussion- None.

12. Travel Trade & Marketing Update

Cartier shared the topline results of the Ethnographic Research which was conducted during the 2024 summer season with various visitors throughout the county. The study reiterated that the current "Life's Too Beautiful to Rush" brand positioning is more relevant than ever, with the slower pace enhancing traveler experience, allowing visitors to do more during a trip. Cartier noted that the research will be conducted again in October, targeting non-summer travel experiences, with next steps being concepting the next brand campaign which will be workshopped at the Marketing Committee retreat in March, followed by filming next Fall. Cartier shared the announcement of the upcoming Visit California global campaign which will feature Ragged Point. Cartier shared the filming locations and dates for Unpacking episodes 2 & 3 and highlighted the upcoming Wine-O-One series which will feature four vineyards and focus on education, entertainment and travel inspiration.

Cartier noted the six upcoming co-op programs (Sojern, Unpacking, Spartan Race, Asset Renewal, San Diego Media Event, Wine-O-One). Cartier highlighted the official release of SLO CAL Monopoly, which was celebrated on September 4 with a launch event at the Fremont Theatre. Cartier provided an update on the Sustainably SLO CAL episodes and shared the latest episodes featuring Camatta Ranch and Niner Wine Estates. Carlson shared several Sales Updates: she provided a reminder of the upcoming Tourism Exchange workshops happening on October 2 and November 18, the recent success of the Hotel Beds co-op which included 110 hotels in SLO CAL with 11,000 room nights YTD. Carlson noted a new SLO CAL itinerary which was the result of a successful FAM trip led by the Sales team, and highlighted a recent Bonotel FAM, noting that there are new contracts underway. Carlson shared the new Sales video created by Pensara. Cartier shared the new Film SLO CAL microsite and highlighted several new social media reels and new content series.

Board Discussion- LeGras-Price and Sohi commented that there is a lot going on in marketing and everything looks great.

CLOSED SESSION

13. Legal update

Carlson and Cano exited the room.

No action was taken during the closed session.

RESUME PUBLIC MEETING

Cartier provided a reminder for the upcoming events and meetings.

ADJOURN 10:27am