



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors Annual Meeting

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

8:30am – 11:00am

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Vic Popp, Amar Sohi, Mark Eads, Pragna Patel- Mueller, Sean Dasmann, Aaron Graves, Hemant Patel, Clint Pearce, Jed Bickel, Britt Shuford, Hamish Marshall (arrived after Consent Agenda),

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Annie Braunschweig, Emily Rudge, Lisa Belsanti

ABSENT: Bryan Bonelli, Nipool Patel, Jim Hamilton, Toni LeGras-Price, Kimberly Walker, Molly Cano

Call to order at 8:33am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cartier thanked the Board for their attendance at the annual Bash; Cartier thanked Eads for his service as Chair; Cartier shared the SLO CAL Summit save-the-date; Cartier provided a reminder to complete the partner satisfaction survey and attend the upcoming Advisory Committee meeting on June 12. She also shared the dates of Board Meetings for the new fiscal year.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of March 19, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of March 2025 Visit SLO CAL Financials
5. Approval of April 2025 Visit SLO CAL Financials
6. Ratification of FY 26 Marketing Committee Seats

Board Discussion – None.

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

Motion carried: 10:0 (Marshall not present for vote)

CEO REPORT

7. Visit SLO CAL CEO Report

Cartier shared the monthly STR report for April, noting that most communities were strong except Atascadero which VSC is still investigating but suspected the Best Western reopening could be related to the dip. Cartier highlighted the May 3 Hospitality Roundtable with Senator Laird which was very well attended and shared a

recap of the Visit California DMO CEO Council meeting held in San Diego. Cartier shared an update on the Cal Poly EIM program and scholarship, noted the new dates for the Avila Drive Roundabout construction and road closure, shared several air service updates, announced that Cal Poly will move to a semester system for the 2026-2027 school year, and shared her upcoming travel schedule.

Board Discussion- None.

Business Items

8. FY 26 Business and Marketing Plan

Cartier noted that the draft of the FY 26 Business and Marketing Plan was included in the digital agenda packet for review in concept. Cartier provided a detailed review of the objectives, strategies, and key results which all ladder up to Strategic Direction 2026. Cartier highlighted the new brand campaign concept, areas of focus for integrated marketing, paid media, owned media, earned media, partnerships and events, sales, Film SLO CAL, Experience SLO CAL 2050, and advocacy.

Board Discussion- None.

ACTION: Moved by **H. Patel/Popp** to approve the FY 26 Business and Marketing Plan in concept as presented.

Motion carried: 11:0

9. FY 26 Operating Budget

Braunschweig presented the proposed FY 26 budget, highlighting TMD revenue, non TMD revenue, investment and interest income, total operating expenses, and key budget initiatives. Braunschweig provided a review of items of focus for each department: general & administrative, industry research and resources, sales, PR & comms, marketing, sponsorships and events, and community engagement and advocacy.

Board Discussion- Popp thanked the team for keeping payroll below the 30% cap, noting that it's good to keep it stable since revenue is down.

ACTION: Moved by **Patel-Mueller/Marshall** to approve the FY 26 budget.

Motion carried: 11:0

10. Executive Committee Seats

Cartier presented the proposed slate of new Executive Committee seats, as discussed at the May Executive Committee meeting.

Board Discussion- None.

ACTION: Moved by **Popp/Shuford** to approve the proposed slate of FY 26 Executive Committee Seats:

Chair- Amar Sohi

Vice Chair- Clint Pearce

Secretary- Aaron Graves

Treasurer- Toni LeGras-Price

Past Chair- Mark Eads

Motion carried: 11:0

11. Board Member Selection Process

Cartier reviewed the requirements for Board applicants, shared details of the application process, as well as applications received and positions available. Cartier highlighted that 7 new applications were received, 2 requests for reappointment (County unincorporated seat and Atascadero TBID seat), 4 current at-large board members reapplied (Eads, Marshall, Shuford, N. Patel). Cartier commented that the caliber and volume of

applicants for both the Board of Directors and Marketing Committee was excellent. Cartier noted a reminder that Bryan Bonelli did not wish to renew his position, leaving the elected designated vacation rental seat vacant. The new applications included: Charles Amian, Pismo Coast Village RV Resort; Maggie Guy, Beachside Rentals; Kathy Kelly, Digs Vacation Rentals; Matt Kleefisch, Ava Hotel; Diane Ramey, Ragged Point Inn; Rich Verruni, Allegretto; Matt Wright, Hotel Cerro.

Board Discussion- Popp inquired as to why the number of applicants has increased. Cartier replied that VSC is incorporating radical collaboration into their daily work. Pearce commented that VSC now feels more inclusive and collaborative; Marshall commented that a contributing factor is more consistency with staff and stronger relationships with partners. Eads noted that it's great to see so much new interest in seats on the Board of Directors.

ACTION: Moved by **H. Patel/Dasmann** to approve the following Board Member selections:

Newly elected:

Charles Amian- RV Park Seat

Kathy Kelly- Vacation Rental Seat

Renewal of:

Britt Shuford (at-large)

Mark Eads (at-large)

Toni LeGras-Price (County unincorporated seat)

Hamish Marshall (at-large)

Nipool Patel (at-large).

Motion carried: 11:0

12. President & CEO Annual Review and Bonus

Eads shared a detailed recap of the April 10 Compensation Committee Meeting and the May 22 Executive Committee Meeting which reviewed Cartier's goals, objectives and key results in detail. Eads voiced his support for Cartier's efforts to stabilize the organization in a year of so much change and increase engagement; Graves and Sohi echoed Eads' support.

Board Discussion- None.

ACTION: Moved by **Popp/Bickel** to approve the President & CEO's annual review and bonus at 100%.

Motion carried: 10:0 (Marshall not present for vote)

13. TMD Renewal Discussion

Cartier provided an overview of the TMD renewal process and introduced Maya Kitt, Civitas Legal Analyst, who joined via Zoom, to provide further details on the proposed timeline and process. Kitt shared additional details as to why early renewal is a good opportunity, what other Civitas clients have done, and the various options for escalating increases throughout the ten-year district. Braunschweig highlighted the local TOT and assessment rates for each local community as well as other regions throughout California. Cartier shared a reminder that early renewal is to evolve the district in advance of the changes in lodging inventory in the next few years, the increased cost of advertising, and that the dollars would be used towards advertising and marketing, not increasing staff headcount.

Board Discussion- Patel-Mueller voiced the need for advertising dollars to be put towards the economy lodging segment; Popp noted that if each community attempts to market on their own, each budget is so small and VSC can market the whole region in a much more effective way; Bickel voiced the need for support from individual cities and board of supervisors; Shuford commented that he feels that most of the new inventory in Paso Robles will not come to fruition but the need for a TMD assessment increase is still present; Pearce commented that the cost to engage with Civitas is fairly small in comparison to the overall work needed to explore early renewal.

ACTION: Moved by **Graves/Pearce** to authorize Visit SLO CAL to explore early TMD Renewal with Civitas, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Motion carried: 10:0 (Marshall not present for vote)

14. Marketing, Trave Trade & ESC 2050 Updates

Cartier shared an update on the new brand campaign concept which pivoted from “Detourists Welcome” to “Turns Well Taken” due to focus group feedback and destination partner feedback. Cartier shared key takeaways from the focus group testing which led to the decision to adjust the campaign name. Cartier highlighted sales programs with Tourism Exchange and HotelBeds, and a recent Visit California FAM in SLO CAL with their New Zealand and Australian teams. Belsanti highlighted earned media wins, social media trends, and gave advocacy updates on AB 1008, CalTravel Advocacy Day, and Cartier highlighted a recent Film SLO CAL FAM tour.

Board Discussion- None.

Cartier provided a reminder for the upcoming events and meetings.

ADJOURN 10:59am