MINUTES
Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, January 21, 2026
8:30am – 10:30am
Visit SLO CAL Office, 81 Higuera St, Ste 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER
PRESENT: Kathy Kelly, Sean Dasmann, Jed Bickel, Clint Pearce, Hemant Patel, Kimberly Walker, Vic Popp, Pragna Patel-Mueller, Clint Pearce, Mark Eads (arrived after consent agenda).

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

ABSENT: Hamish Marshall, Nipool Patel, Aaron Graves, Toni LeGras-Price, Amar Sohi, Jim Hamilton

Call to order at 8:34am

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2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cartier thanked the Board for attending the December Advisory Committee meeting, shared reminders of the March Board Meeting date and the Annual Bash, invited the Board to attend the Cal Poly EIM Auction, announced Caroline Beteta's retirement, and announced that new visitor magazines are available.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of November 19, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of October 2025 Visit SLO CAL Financials
5. Approval of November 2025 Visit SLO CAL Financials
6. Approval of December 2025 Visit SLO CAL Financials

Board Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by to **H. Patel/Patel-Mueller** approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion carried: 9:0

CEO REPORT

7. Visit SLO CAL CEO Report

Cartier shared the December STR report, which reflects slightly more stabilized numbers, and she commented that hopefully January will show even stronger numbers due to the opening of HWY 1. Cartier shared the HWY 1 reopening messaging which was implemented last week and shared a joint announcement with the See Monterey team. Cartier shared a recap of the HWY 1 Road Trip Steering Committee meeting, which was implemented to move from an 89 district to a 94 district. Cartier shared that SBP reported record breaking metrics for 2025, and their solar system is up and running with much of the operations being powered by solar power. Cartier shared an update on the new touchless ID check for the TSA precheck system which is currently implemented at 15 major airports. Cartier noted that the Visit California referendum passed with the highest approval rating ever received. Cartier shared that there were record breaking numbers on the initial registration for LA28 Olympics tickets and registrations. Cartier highlighted a new Cal Poly EIM Scholarship program, which was created by Britt Shuford and Common Thread Hotels, and shared that the EIM program continues to rapidly grow. Cartier shared her upcoming travel schedule.

Board Discussion- Patel-Mueller requested marketing materials regarding the reopening of HWY 1 that hoteliers could easily distribute.

Business Items

8. FY 2025/26 Mid-Year Budget Reforecast

Braunschweig presented the mid-year budget reforecast which featured less drastic changes from last year's mid-year reforecast. Braunschweig reviewed the revenue, operating expenses, expenditures, key initiatives and reserves funding. Braunschweig shared the TMD annual revenue projection, which is just below $9 million mark, and detailed several additions and reductions in budgeted operating expenses.

Board Discussion- None.

ACTION: Moved by **Bickel/ Dasmann** to approve Visit SLO CAL's 2025/26 Mid- Year Budget Reforecast.

Motion carried: 10:0

9. Tourism Economics Lodging Forecast Results Recap

Braunschweig shared a review of the Tourism Economics Lodging Forecast, which includes a two-year rolling projection of key performance indicators for hotels and short-term vacation rentals in the region (versus last year's forecast which included hotels only). Braunschweig shared some national highlights: recession fears have lessened but consumer sentiment is low, with consumer spending bifurcated by segment. International travel continues to decline due to negative sentiment, hopefully mitigated by large events such as the Olympics and the World Cup. Consumers are prioritizing experiences over material items, which could be a win for the travel industry. Braunschweig shared inflation-adjusted domestic and international spending snapshots and a graphic showing bifurcation in travel demand by segment. Braunschweig noted that locally, supply is expected to outpace demand through 2027 which will keep occupancy, RevPar and ADR relatively flat. The forecast estimates that SLO CAL will see a 2.5% and 3.4% increase in Total Room Revenue in 2026 and 2027, respectively. Short-term rentals are out-performing hotels in year-over-year growth in occupancy, ADR, RevPar and total room revenue.

Board Discussion- None.

10. Strategic Direction 2029

Cartier highlighted the completion of the draft of Strategic Direction 2029, noting that the process took slightly less time than expected (January instead of March). Cartier shared the process of how the plan was formed, noting that there is a slight change to the mission, with no changes to the vision, values and position. Cartier shared the four objectives and their respective strategies and key results.

Board Discussion- Popp complimented Cartier on the change to objective one which shifted from enhancing organizational effectiveness to now being future-proof the organization, which is a positive shift now that staff turnover has been lessened.

ACTION: Moved by **Kelly/Walker** to approve the three-year plan, Strategic Direction 2029.

Motion carried: 10:0

11. Marketing, Travel Trade & ESC 2050 Updates

Cano shared a recap of the new Turns Well Taken launch plan and shared three 30 second videos from the new campaign. Cano highlighted upcoming World Cup co-op opportunities across paid, owned, earned and sales efforts. Cano shared an update on the Tapped into SLO CAL initiative in partnership with Firestone Walker, highlighting the process of developing the SLO CAL beer and how local vintners will incorporate a role into the product, with the beer being unveiled at the Firestone Invitational Beer Fest in May 2026. Cano shared a recap of Spartan Race results which saw a 12% increase in participants since 2024. Cartier noted that the new increase to the County Fee Schedule regarding outdoor event permits in the unincorporated county area which could impact the future of Spartan Race. Cano shared several sales team updates including the UK sales incentive program and both recent and upcoming sales initiatives. Belsanti shared earned media updates for November and December including the New York Times article. Belsanti highlighted coverage regarding the reopening of HWY 1 at Regent's Slide. Belsanti shared updates on owned media surrounding social media posts. Belsanti shared advocacy and ESC 2050 updates noting that the L.A. minimum wage increase is now to be put on hold indefinitely. Belsanti noted that Diablo Canyon's permit has been approved through 2030. Belsanti shared an update on the Oceano Dunes lawsuit regarding the snowy plover's habitat. Belsanti shared that VSC has established an AllTrails public lands portal account in order to make sure trails are accurately updated and continue progress on the Countywide Trails initiative.

Board Discussion- Cartier thanked Cano, Halvorson, Miller and the team for their efforts on the brand campaign shoot and the audit of the old photo assets which have talent rights expiring and need to be removed from the website and various locations. Pearce commented that Atascadero did see an increase in hotel occupancy during the weekend of Spartan race. Patel-Mueller asked what the backup plan is in the event that Spartan Race is unable to return next year. Cartier replied that VSC will work to find a creative solution to help offset the increased permit fee. Bickel asked if there are other locations that Spartan Race could consider instead of Santa Margarita Ranch. Cartier replied that yes that is being considered as well. Eads asked if Spartan tracks if participants are tracked whether they are first-time participants or return participants. Cartier replied that yes Spartan could likely provide that information.

Cartier provided a reminder for the upcoming events and meetings.

ADJOURN 10:09am