



# MINUTES

---

## Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors

### Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

8:30am

Video Conference – URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84484147373>

Meeting ID: 844 8414 7373

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Clint Pearce

**PRESENT (VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE):** Alma Ayon, Jed Bickel, Kathy Bonelli, John Conner, Mark Eads, Aaron Graves, Jay Jamison, Jim Hamilton, Toni LeGras, Sam Miller, Amit Patel, Nipool Patel, Clint Pearce, Victor Popp, Amar Sohi

**ABSENT:** Hemant Patel

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chuck Davison, Cathy Tull, Annie Frew, Brendan Pringle, Kyla Boast

**Call to Order at 8:37am.**

---

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

None.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Davison wished a happy birthday to Annie Frew, Visit SLO CAL's Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy and congratulated Brendan Pringle, Director of Operations on six years of service to Visit SLO CAL.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**3. Approval of January 20, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

**4. Approval of January 2021 Visit SLO CAL Financials**

**5. Approval of February 2021 Visit SLO CAL Financials**

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

**ACTION:** Moved by N. Patel/Eads to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**Motion carried: 13:0**

**LeGras and Hamilton joined the meeting after the Consent Agenda item.**

**CEO REPORT**

**6. CEO Report**

On February 18-19, 2021, the Visit SLO CAL team attended Visit California's virtual Outlook Forum, and a link to the pre-recorded sessions and key takeaways were sent in This Week in SLO CAL (TWISC). Davison outlined some of the key takeaways. Caltrans began emergency repair work on Highway 1 at the Rat Creek slide on March 1, 2021, and under their current timeline, the road is expected to open early summer. Visit SLO CAL is in continuous communication with Caltrans and North Coast lodging investors and is amplifying efforts for the North Coast in its campaigns. Davison provided an update on the Cal Poly Economic Impact Report, noting that the project scope has been finalized, in collaboration with Cal Poly and the City of SLO, and that once an MOU between Cal Poly, City of SLO and Visit SLO CAL is finalized, Visit SLO CAL will begin soliciting proposals from agencies. Davison provided an update on the Oceano Dunes Economic Impact Report, noting that the project scope has been finalized, and that Visit SLO CAL and the South County Chambers of Commerce are working together to gain buy-in from the Cities of Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach, as well as the County, and will subsequently begin outreach to potential agencies to obtain proposals. On February 24, 2021, the Tribune Editorial Board printed an article concluding that more analysis was needed to understand the full impact of the Oceano Dunes to our community. In advance of the March 18, 2021 Coastal Commission hearing, Visit SLO CAL submitted a letter, co-authored by South County Chambers and REACH, to the California Coastal Commission (CCC), asking for a stay on the decision until a reliable economic impact assessment is available and a Commissioner from the South Central Coast district has been appointed. This letter will be presented during public comment at the CCC hearing. Moreover, copies of this letter were sent to the Governor's office, Go Biz, Senator Laird and Assemblymember Cunningham, and were circulated to DMO partners, allowing them to sign on. Highway 1 Discovery Route and Oceano/Nipomo both signed on in partnership. Visit SLO CAL also provided a template advocacy letter for partners to fill out to submit to the CCC, which it shared with industry partners through TWISC and a targeted email campaign to South County partners. Visit SLO CAL worked with TURNER PR on crisis communications plan to clarify misinformation circulating in local media outlets, and sent a personalized letter to industry outlining the issues with the staff report and its impacts to our industry. This letter also encouraged the industry to share their comments with the CCC before the March 18, 2021 hearing, and it was submitted to the Tribune. Davison reported out on Visit SLO CAL's outreach with newly elected local officials (Supervisor Ortiz-Legg, Councilmember Laurel Barton, Councilmember Mark Dariz, Councilmember Jan Marx and Councilmember Scott Newton), and noted that a meeting is scheduled with Senator John Laird (D-17), which will focus on the Highway 1 reopening, Oceano Dunes and upcoming state legislation impacting the tourism industry, including SB 285. Davison provided an update on the Bob Jones Bike Trail and VSC's efforts to support California Transportation Commission (CTC) grant funding of a project that would connect the City of San Luis Obispo via Ontario Road to the Avila Beach entrance, in line with the Experience SLO CAL 2050 recommendation for a Countywide Trails System. With the CTC grant and approval from the Board of Supervisors, the Bob Jones Bike Trail project can move forward. Davison provided a staffing update, noting that the CMO role has been transitioned into a contractor/consultant position for the balance of the fiscal year. Davison noted that Cathy Tull, former CMO for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, signed an agreement to serve as Visit SLO CAL's Chief Marketing Consultant from March 1-June 30, 2021. He introduced Cathy to the Board, outlined her schedule and noted she will continue to work in-market two weeks each month, including this week, which includes introduction meetings with many of Visit SLO CAL's Board members.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

### **7. COVID-19 Impact & Response Update**

Davison provided an update on local COVID-19 response efforts. San Luis Obispo County is still in Phase 1b of distribution efforts, but has opened vaccine registration to four additional sectors: education, childcare, emergency services and food and agriculture, as well as those with underlying medical issues. Over 97,000 vaccines have been distributed locally. He provided a pacing report on how current county metrics lined up with the metrics required for the county to move from the red tier to the orange tier. On March 14, 2021, the State updated its guidance for wineries, breweries and distillers, allowing them to operate outdoors with modifications under the red tier. Davison provided an update on state COVID-19 response efforts, noting that the state announced last week that beginning April 1, theme parks and sporting events can open to limited attendance, which is expected to lead to expanded event and meeting options. As of March 16, 2021, over 12.6 million vaccines have been administered throughout the state. Governor Newsom announced a commitment to

allocate 40 percent of vaccine doses for the hardest-hit communities and establish a vaccine equity metric to assist with vaccinating more vulnerable populations and essential workers. Davison provided an update on the California Tourism Recovery Act (SB 285), which would provide \$45M to Visit California for a strategic media and jobs recovery campaign. The bill is currently before the Senate Appropriations Committee, and received unanimous support from the Labor Committee, with all of the Labor Committee members signing on as co-authors. It could be passed as early as end of March or early April. At a national level, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Davison outlined how the bill will provide federal assistance and support to aid the travel and tourism industry's recovery. He also noted that while it is a step forward, U.S. Travel is still calling on Congress to extend the March 31, 2021 application deadline for the PPP and provide a third draw loan for the hardest hit industries, as well as pass the Hospitality and Commerce Job Recovery Act. Visit SLO CAL will be participating in U.S. Travel's Destination Capitol Hill today, and is scheduled to meet with Rep. Salud Carbajal and the region's two Senators to advocate on behalf of the local tourism industry and partners. He outlined the items Visit SLO CAL would be focusing its advocacy efforts on. Davison noted U.S. Travel's findings on American travelers' optimism, readiness to travel and perception of safety, in light of the COVID-19 vaccine. He also showcased some of the insights available on U.S. Travel's Travel Recovery Insights Dashboard, noting that Visit SLO CAL is working with Tourism Economics to have a direct link to this report through its Tableau dashboard portal. Davison provided an update on air service, noting that Seattle will increase to two flights daily beginning March 18, 2021. Direct service from San Diego is scheduled to relaunch June 17, 2021 (one daily flight), and service from Portland is scheduled to launch the same day (one daily flight). Visit SLO CAL continues to focus its media plan efforts on drive markets this fiscal year, and the SLO County Regional Airport will cover airport advertising in new markets through June. However, Visit SLO CAL will work to develop a Portland activation to support the flight, and hold paid media for the market until FY 22, likely starting September or later. He also provided an update on Visit SLO CAL's COVID-19 relief options, noting that Visit SLO CAL should receive its forgivable PPP loan in the next two weeks. Davison reviewed the updated cash flow projections for March through December 2021, and noted that the cash balance at the end of June will roll into FY 2021/22.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

## **8. Travel Trade & Marketing Update**

Boast provided an update on recent and upcoming travel trade efforts. Davison provided an update on the on-boarding of Mering, Visit SLO CAL's Agency-of-Record. On March 8, 2021, Visit SLO CAL met with Mering's core team at their Sacramento office as part of an immersion. They also discussed current initiatives and kicked off the planning of the FY 22 Business & Marketing Plan. Davison noted that it was refreshing to hear that the agency was looking toward the advancement of the SLO CAL brand and not planning for major changes. The Marketing Committee Planning Retreat has been scheduled for Monday, April 12, 2021 – Wednesday, April 14, 2021 with the full day retreat in-person on Tuesday, April 13, 2021. He noted that the Retreat will inform the development of the FY 22 plan which will include strategy, brand evolution and media, and will be before the Board for approval at a special Board meeting in June. He provided an update on Mering's research efforts, and thanked the Board members participating in the stakeholder research that Mering is conducting. Davison reviewed the paid, owned, and earned media highlights, from February 2021. He also reviewed recent and upcoming partnership efforts.

Public Comment – None

Board Discussion.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLOSED SESSION ITEM**

### **9. Employee Dismissal**

#### **CLOSED SESSION REPORT**

No action was taken by the Board during Closed Session.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

### **10. CEO Annual Review**

Davison reviewed the criteria set forth for the President & CEO's bonus compensation: 12.5 percent bonus is tied to Visit SLO CAL's operation and 12.5 percent bonus is tied to the delivery of Strategic Direction 2020 (March 2020 – June 2020) and Strategic Direction 2023 (July 2020 – February 2021) imperatives. He added that a detailed documentation of results was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. Davison exited the room while the Board discussed the Annual Review. Pearce noted that at their March 11, 2021 meeting, the Executive Committee recommended Board approval of the CEO's Annual Bonus at 100%.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion. In their review, the Board recognized how Davison elevated Visit SLO CAL's organizational brand and influence in the community through his leadership in COVID-19 response efforts, as well as his willingness to stand up for lodging partners and the local industry.

**ACTION:** Moved by **N. Patel/Jamison** to recommend that the Board approve the CEO Annual Bonus at 100%.

**Motion carried: 13:0**

**A. Patel and Sohi departed the meeting prior to the vote.**

Davison noted upcoming agenda items.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 10:06am.