



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 16, 2020
8:30am

Video Conference – URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87121938572> Meeting ID: 871 2193 8572
Call-In Phone Number: (669) 900-6833

1. CALL TO ORDER: Clint Pearce

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

ABSENT: Sam Miller

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Lisa Verbeck, Derek Kirk, Brendan Pringle

Call to Order at 8:31 am.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of July 15, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of June/Year-End Visit SLO CAL Financials
5. Approval of July Visit SLO CAL Financials
6. Approval of August Visit SLO CAL Financials
7. Approval of FY 2019/20 Annual Report

Davison noted that once approved, the Annual Report will be finalized and sent to the County to meet our contract and MDP obligation.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

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

Motion carried: 13:0
H. Patel arrived after the vote.

CEO REPORT

8. CEO Report

Visit SLO CAL is pursuing a service mark for “The California Less Traveled,” but based on legal counsel, will start by using the “SM” mark on the brand for the next two years to stake its claim and understand any objections prior to applying for a service mark. Davison reported out on Visit SLO CAL’s local communication plan efforts and highlighted two local KCBX stories in the previous two weeks that featured Visit SLO CAL. He added that the Pacific Coast Business Times will also be running a story that features Visit SLO CAL this week. Derek Kirk, former Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy, met with a small group of vacation rental investors on September 14, 2020 to help them brainstorm advocacy strategies and best practices prior to his departure. On October 8, 2020, Kevin Bumen, the County Director of Airports will be resigning from his role, accepting an offer as the first Chief Commercial Officer for San Francisco International Airport (SFO). Davison noted that he has asked to be involved in the hiring process for the Director of Airports role, since Visit SLO CAL’s partnership with the new hire will be integral to the organization’s air service development efforts moving forward. All paid social and some SEM was paused due to the fire situation and resulting smoke in our communities. Visit SLO CAL will continue to monitor California’s fire situation and stay aligned in its messaging with Visit California. Davison reported out on TOT numbers by community for July 2020. Davison shared Visit SLO CAL’s Board Dashboard (Business Intelligence Report) and highlighted key insights. He noted that while cross-visitation has improved since quarantine, it’s not at pre-COVID levels. He provided a staffing update on recently filled and currently vacant roles at Visit SLO CAL. He also provided an update on the California Welcome Center, noting that South County Chambers of Commerce is actively working on an RFP for the redesign of the California Welcome Center, with the intention of re-opening that center before the holidays. On September 8, 2020, after a series of five planning meetings, Davison participated in a presentation to the City Council on proposed changes to the TBID structure (spinning back out of the city and establishing a new non-profit under the ‘94 Act, similar to Visit SLO CAL’s structure). During the meeting, the City Council publicly recognized the successes of Visit SLO CAL’s model, and voted unanimously to approve the recommendation. The start date of the proposed district, once approved, would be July 1, 2021, and prior to that, the TBID would pursue a national search for an Executive Director. Visit SLO CAL will be holding an Advisory Committee Meeting on October 1, 2020 from 3:00pm-4:30pm via videoconference, and all Board members are encouraged to participate. Davison noted that Visit SLO CAL is still waiting for feedback on the city managers desire to create a subset of the Advisory Committee to meet with the Executive Committee two to four times per year. He outlined some of the key agenda items for the meeting. The proposed date for the SPARTAN Race in SLO CAL is April 10, 2021, which would place the event during their National Series (one of five spots in their series, which begins in Jacksonville, FL and ends in Seattle, WA). Visit SLO CAL’s Board previously committed \$50k in sponsorship, and the date shifted due to COVID-19. SPARTAN is offering a potential upgrade to the existing program at a discounted rate of \$75k (\$25k additional). Visit SLO CAL presented the opportunity to the Marketing Committee to gauge their interest in a potential co-op to fund the additional \$25k. Some Committee members expressed concern at such a commitment with so much uncertainty for upcoming events and festivals, and some DMOs have stripped their events budget. Visit SLO CAL has a call scheduled with interested partners on September 22, 2020, and a decision is due prior to October 1, 2020. Davison reported out on key local and remote meetings and interviews.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

BUSINESS ITEMS

9. FY 2019/20 Audit

For the fifth year in a row, Visit SLO CAL received a clean audit from Burkart & Stevens with no material weaknesses. Management Advisory Comments were consistent with past years and were expected. The auditor recommended that another individual open the checks received via mail and make a listing prior to processing (which was in place prior to COVID-19 cutbacks, when an Office Coordinator was on staff), and he noted that checking accounts exceeded \$250k FDIC insurance limits. Davison noted that upon approval, documents will be signed and Visit SLO CAL’s tax return will be filed.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion. Hamilton noted that the Audit report was a stellar report card, and spoke to how well the organization is run.

ACTION: Moved by Hamilton/Jamison to approve the FY 2019/20 Audit as presented, and as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Motion carried: 14:0

10. COVID-19 Impact & Response Update

Based on the Governor's guidelines, San Luis Obispo County remains in the most restrictive purple tier. Visit SLO CAL is still following Visit California's lead on media flights, which has been impacted by the wildfires. Davison provided an update on national trends. Davison reported out on current air service, and noted that Labor Day Weekend, which reported under 1M air travelers across the US (33 percent of normal capacity) is expected to be the high point for air travel leading up to the holiday season. He also reported out on the latest STR report for the week ending September 12, 2020, and noted that Visit SLO CAL is working with STR to update reporting as 28 properties are currently missing from the countywide inventory. Davison outlined Visit SLO CAL's latest cash flow projection through June 2021, and noted that updates include current occupancy results from August.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion. LeGras noted that she would like to see TOT data broken down by lodging type so that vacation rental TOT income could be tracked separately. Davison responded that Visit SLO CAL has requested this previously and that he would add this to the Advisory Committee agenda. Visit SLO CAL will also encourage the destination partners on the Marketing Committee to work with their own communities to share that information.

11. FY2019/20 Year-End Satisfaction Survey

Davison reported out on the response rate and results from the FY 2019/20 Year-End Satisfaction Survey compared to FY 2018/19 response rate and results. He noted that some of the results need to be viewed from the lens of COVID-19's impact, as many taking the survey were noticeably influenced by their personal frustrations with the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

12. Experience SLO CAL 2050 - Customer Service Update

As part of the Customer Service Recommendation in Experience SLO CAL 2050 (ESC 2050), which was prioritized by the Board for FY 2020/21 at their March 2020 meeting, and funded with the June Board approval of the FY 2020/21 budget, Visit SLO CAL staff has been working with Cal Poly, including Extended Education, Office of Research & Economic Development, SBDC and the Experience Industry Management Department to develop a program that could support the Travel & Tourism workforce through customer service and COVID-19 safety training. Cal Poly has been working with the Economic Development Administration regional team on the grant funding of an established Comprehensive Business Support Network (CBSN) of organizations to provide targeted support to the industry, including customer service training for the local workforce (Extended Ed), finance and operations support (SBDC), marketing and brand support (Visit SLO CAL), and local advocacy (Chambers of Commerce/economic development organization staff). The CBSN would bring together business support organizations in a coordinated response, leveraging their specific expertise. Travel & Tourism businesses

could “enter” this network through any of the partners and would be guided through the support of all partners. The EDA Grant could provide this initiative with \$500K in year one, of which Visit SLO CAL could receive financial support to fund the marketing and brand support efforts. Davison outlined what components each “spoke” of the CBSN would be managing as part of this partnership. As part of the partnership, Cal Poly Extended Education would be offering a three-course program, and the first course would be free of charge to participants. He noted that the CBSN expands beyond the initial Customer Service recommendation in ESC 2050 to provide additional support to the industry during the current pandemic and could provide incredible benefit to the industry. As the program is developed and the grant potentially funded, Visit SLO CAL would maintain a prominent seat at the table to cater this effort to what the industry needs. Since this does not accomplish the need for mass industry customer service training, additional programming would still be developed to solve for completion of the recommendation in ESC 2050. Davison noted that if the grant is not approved, Visit SLO CAL has no exposure on the program. On August 24, 2020, the Executive Committee approved allowing the President & CEO to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Cal Poly and REACH and supporting Cal Poly submitting a grant application to fund the CBSN.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion. Pearce and Popp commended the CBSN partnership as important and one that will really help the industry. LeGras noted that she was excited about the program.

13. Public Policy Platform Review

Visit SLO CAL’s Advocacy Plan and Public Policy Platform, adopted by the Board of Directors in September 2019, commits to an annual review of the document to ensure the platform remained consistent with the organization’s values and priorities. Davison outlined the Core Pillars of the Public Policy Platform and the instances in which the Platform was activated over the last 12 months. Staff is recommending the following additional Core Pillar to the Public Policy Platform: “Support Public Policy Initiatives that Promote California’s Position as an Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Destination” with the note that “Visit SLO CAL is committed to equity and inclusion in all aspects of the industry and business and will support and advocate for policies that help SLO CAL and California become a more inclusive and welcoming destination for travelers.” Davison noted that the addition is not driven toward broad-scale equity and inclusion efforts, but rather toward ensuring that the destination is welcoming to travelers. The updated document (with edits highlighted) was included in the agenda packet.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Conner/Graves to adopt the updated Public Policy Platform, as presented and as recommended by the Executive Committee.

Motion carried: 14:0

14. Equity & Inclusion Measurement

In June 2020, the Visit SLO CAL Board directed staff to draft a formal Equity & Inclusion Statement. The Board formally adopted VSC’s Equity & Inclusion (E&I) Statement in July, which outlined a set of core values and action items to be taken. Since the adoption of the E&I Statement, staff has been working to implement the action items associated with it. Davison noted how the statement was shared with Destination Partners, and how staff has met with the National Blacks in Travel & Tourism Collaborative to understand the opportunities they have created to support DMOs in ensuring their marketing materials are inclusive and representative. Additionally, Visit SLO CAL’s marketing agency RFP, sent out on September 11, 2020, includes questions and understanding around diverse representation for participating agencies. As noted in the E&I Statement, staff has built out a draft matrix to track a variety of data points from organizational representation to media hosting and social posts. Davison noted that the end goal behind the matrix is to be mindful of where the gaps are in equity and inclusion, and understand how we can tell a broader story. The desire is not to be punitive, but rather to be “additive” in order to be more inclusive by expanding our efforts and reach. The matrix is a living document and will be updated with

additional segments and information as we move forward and learn more. He outlined the different metrics that Visit SLO CAL is currently tracking, and noted that as the organization onboards a new agency, staff will build out tracking for additional content and information about its agencies. He provided screenshots of the current matrix, a work in progress, and outlined next steps. Davison noted that staff will use the matrix to track representation of diverse populations and begin to benchmark itself year over year, providing updates to the Board throughout the year, and requesting feedback on these efforts.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion. Sohi asked if any of the destination partners or cities were going to document their own efforts in a similar way. Davison noted that Visit SLO CAL is an “info sharer” and has provided the statement and matrix as a resource for local destination partners as well as CalTravel at the state level to use as a template.

15. Travel Trade & Marketing Update

Davison reported out on recent and upcoming travel trade efforts. Verbeck reported out on earned, owned and paid media efforts, including an update on the timing of both Visit SLO CAL’s brand campaign and co-op campaign with Visit California. Verbeck also outlined the marketing agency RFP process timeline. The Board viewed Visit SLO CAL’s updated 90-second brand video.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

Davison reviewed the agenda items for the next Board Meeting, scheduled for November 18, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 10:30am.