



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors

Visit SLO CAL Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

8:30am

Video Conference – URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82060680124> Meeting ID: 820 6068 0124

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, Jim Hamilton, Jay Jamison, Toni LeGras, Clint Pearce, Amit Patel, Hemant Patel, Nipoool Patel, Victor Popp, Amar Sohi

ABSENT: Aaron Graves, Sam Miller

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Lisa Verbeck, Annie Frew, Brendan Pringle, Kyla Boast

Call to Order at 8:32 am.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Davison congratulated Aaron Graves and his wife Katelyn on their recent nuptials.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of September 16, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of September Visit SLO CAL Financials
5. Approval of October Visit SLO CAL Financials
6. Approval of Kathleen Naughton's Marketing Committee Application

Davison noted that the market continued to overperform Visit SLO CAL's forecast (from Tourism Economics), which means that revenue is pacing ahead of what was budgeted. He also noted that Kathleen Naughton is the new Executive Director of SLO Coast Wine Collective, and would take the seat formerly held by Anne Steinhauer, their former Executive Director.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

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

Motion carried: 12:0
Conner and Hamilton joined after this motion.

CEO REPORT

7. CEO Report

Visit SLO CAL and the South County Chambers are working with communities in the Five Cities on an effort to commission an economic impact report on the Oceano Dunes SVR. The report would identify key economic impacts should Oceano Dunes State Park remain shut down or portions of the park are closed, and provide the necessary data to inform the cities, the County and economic development agencies in our region. It would also provide guidance for future areas of economic opportunity. Visit SLO CAL's role would be a supportive one, providing oversight in the process, and funding if approved by the Board in the mid-year re-forecast. Likewise, Visit SLO CAL has been in conversations with the City of San Luis Obispo and Cal Poly about the development of an economic impact report that would identify how the full or partial closure of Cal Poly impacts the region's tourism industry. Discussions for this report are still in the planning phases, and Visit SLO CAL would co-lead this work with Cal Poly, with assistance and contribution from the City of San Luis Obispo. Visit SLO CAL's role would be a supportive one, providing oversight and funding, if approved by the Board in the re-forecast. Davison provided an update on current advocacy efforts. With the November 3, 2020 election, eight new elected officials will be taking their seats across the county in 2021, one of whom has previously served (Council Member-Elect Jan Marx). He noted that he and Annie Frew, Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy, will be scheduling meetings with each of these officials over the next few weeks to familiarize them with Visit SLO CAL's efforts, and asked Board members in each applicable community to consider participating in these meetings. He noted that staff will be reaching out individually as those meetings are scheduled. On November 5, 2020, Visit SLO CAL submitted a letter of support to the Board of Supervisors requesting their approval of Stadium 805's Commercial Outdoor Entertainment License request. The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the application (with modifications) on November 10, 2020. Davison provided an update on TOT through September 2020. He also provided a staffing update, noting that Kyla Boast will be on maternity leave from December 7 - March 1, 2020, and that during her absence, Charles Crellin, former GM at the Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort, will be serving as a sales contractor at around 10 hours per week. The South County Chambers of Commerce is actively working on the redesign of the California Welcome Center, and is currently interviewing for a Welcome Center Manager. Their intent is to re-open the center before Black Friday and they are working with the local DMOs on representation buildout for their communities. Davison reviewed the Board Business Intelligence Report.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

BUSINESS ITEMS

8. Marketing Agency RFP Update

Verbeck outlined the timeline and process for Visit SLO CAL's marketing agency RFP. She noted that out of the seven responses, four agencies were invited to provide an oral presentation, and of those invited, three agencies - MMGY, Miles Partnership and Mering - presented to the evaluation committee, which consisted of three Marketing Committee members (Molly Cano, John Sorgenfrei and Ashlee Akers). She reviewed how the agencies were judged. She noted that Mering provided the strongest responses to the two oral presentation prompt questions, and demonstrated the strongest performance in creativity and media planning. She also noted that Mering's familiarity with SLO CAL as Visit California's agency was demonstrated in their presentation. On November 10, 2020, the evaluation committee presented their feedback and recommendation to the Marketing Committee, and the Marketing Committee recommended that the Board approve a contract with Mering as Visit SLO CAL's Agency-of-Record. On November 12, 2020, the Executive Committee also made this recommendation. Dave Mering, CEO and Principal of Mering, reviewed Mering's structure and tourism industry credentials, shared Mering's highlight reel and presented their ideas on how they would address mid-week business. Davison asked the Board if there were questions for Mering. Davison shared Mering's proposed work schedule. He reminded the Board that Miles Partnership is already contracted to buy Visit SLO CAL's media through June, and that the first few months of the new agency's contract (January-June) would be focused on the brand evolution and website refresh in addition to FY2021/22 planning. Davison commented that Visit SLO CAL owes a debt of gratitude to Keith Ireland of

Sunshine & Bourbon, formerly BCF, for his development of the SLO CAL brand and that Keith would be pleased to see Mering take the brand to the next level. Davison commented on how far the destination has come in the last five years that the gold standard in California tourism advertising (Mering) wanted to pitch our account. He remarked on his longstanding relationship with Dave Mering, and the extremely positive references that Visit California, Mammoth Lakes and San Diego Tourism Authority provided. He also noted how Mering's relationship with Visit California will be hugely beneficial to Visit SLO CAL. Davison noted that Visit SLO CAL would be Mering's fifth largest account. Mering noted that having Visit California as a client has enabled them to bring on new talent that serves all of their other accounts. Mering disconnected from the call while the Board provided additional discussion.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Eads/N. Patel to allow the CEO enter into contract negotiations with Mering as Visit SLO CAL's marketing agency-of-record, as recommended by the Marketing Committee and Executive Committee.

Motion carried: 13:0
Conner was not present for this vote.

9. COVID-19 Impact & Response Update

As part of the Strategic Direction 2023 imperative to "Lead the county tourism industry in a collaborative resilience planning effort, Davison shared the latest draft of a three-page COVID-19 Recovery Tracker that will be sent with the Board Business Intelligence Report and Community Business Intelligence Report in the future. Davison noted SLO CAL continues to outpace its competitive set by double digits. Davison noted that on November 16, Governor Newsom announced that San Luis Obispo County would move back to the State's Purple Tier (Tier 1-Widespread), which means that several business sectors have to resume outdoor-only operations or reduce capacity for indoor operations. According to the State, businesses no longer have a three-day grace period to implement protocols and safety enhancements. However, the County said that it understands that it may take a matter of two to three days for universal compliance. As the rate of positive cases continues to rise throughout the state, additional restrictions or changes from the state can be anticipated as numbers continue to rise over the coming weeks. On November 13, 2020, Governor Newsom, along with Washington Governor Jay Inslee and Oregon Governor Kate Brown, issued a travel advisory; Davison clarified that the advisory is not a mandate. As such, Visit SLO CAL's drive market advertising will continue, but the messaging may change. Visit SLO CAL continues to share its "Open and Safe Toolkit" with partners to help them communicate with guests the health and safety precautions being taken to keep everyone safe and healthy. He also provided a national update on US Travel's COVID RELIEF NOW Coalition efforts, focused on increasing the possibility for a recovery package during the Congressional lame duck session. He shared national research on consumer sentiment around travel and current travel spending levels, as well as a forecast from US Travel on travel growth over the coming years. According to the forecast, travel will not fully return to pre-COVID-19 levels until 2022. He outlined current air service effective December 2020, and outlined consolidated STR data for March through September, which shows that Visit SLO CAL is faring well against its competitive set during the pandemic. Davison reviewed updated cash flow projections for November 2020 to June 2021. He requested feedback from the Board on Visit SLO CAL's COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion. Bonelli noted that vacation rental cancellations have started to come in, especially around Thanksgiving. She requested a list of what is open and places where tourists can recreate and enjoy SLO CAL. Davison noted that this content has already been created, and that staff would follow-up with an aggregation of this content that could be shared with current and potential visitors to assuage their concerns.

10. Operational Plan Update

On November 3, 2020, the Visit SLO CAL Leadership Team held a quarterly check-in with Coraggio to discuss its progress on the Strategic Direction 2023 (SD2023) Operational Plan. During this check-in, the team provided updates on the current challenges impeding progress on Operational Plan items, planned responses to those challenges and the items they are tackling in the current and upcoming quarters. Davison outlined the key progress made on SD2023 initiatives.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

11. FY2020-21 Budget Re-Forecast Update

Davison provided an update on the budget re-forecast timeline. He also outlined the key programming and staff updates, and requested Board feedback on items that Visit SLO CAL should or should not include in the re-forecast.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

12. Travel Trade & Marketing Update

Boast reported out on recent and upcoming travel trade efforts. Verbeck reported out on paid and owned media highlights for October. She also provided an update on partnerships and events, noting that five communities have approved a \$5000 sponsorship co-op, which will provide the additional funding necessary to host a National Series race in SLO CAL. She noted that all partners now have an Enhanced Listing (more robust than the standard listing) on the SLOCAL.com website, and that all Enhanced Listings were upgraded to Featured Listings. She also noted that Restaurant Month will be happening in January, and Visit SLO CAL has begun reaching out to restaurants for specials, including take-out options.

Public Comment – None.

Board Discussion.

Davison reviewed the agenda items for the next Board Meeting, scheduled for January 20, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 10:20am.