



MINUTES

Visit SLO CAL Executive Committee

Visit SLO CAL Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 19, 2021

3:00pm

The Kinney SLO, 1800 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

1. CALL TO ORDER: Hemant Patel

PRESENT: Mark Eads, Hemant Patel, Clint Pearce, Amar Sohi

ABSENT: Aaron Graves

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Brendan Pringle

Call to Order at 3:04pm.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of June 10, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

4. Approval of June/Year-End Visit SLO CAL Financials

Davison noted that the June/Year-End Financials are draft stamped because they're still being audited.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Eads/Pearce to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion carried: 4:0

CEO REPORT

5. CEO Report

Davison recognized the passing of Morro Bay Councilmember Red Davis in July. He noted that Councilmember Davis was one of Visit SLO CAL's strongest advocates and longest-running city liaisons on the Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee. Davison attended the celebration of life on behalf of Visit SLO CAL. He also noted that Visit SLO CAL Board Member Kathy

Bonelli provided her official resignation letter on June 23, 2021, after serving six years. Her resignation will be effective following the September 29, 2021 Board Meeting. Davison recognized Kathy's time and service, and noted that Visit SLO CAL will be honoring her with a plaque at the September meeting. Designated vacation rental candidate applications will be reviewed as an agenda item in this meeting. Davison provided a follow up on Visit SLO CAL's advocacy efforts for increased state per diem rates following the discussion at the semi-annual owners meeting with Assemblymember Cunningham on June 9, 2021. Rates are part of the contract negotiation process between each state union bargaining unit and CalHR. Cunningham's office noted they do not get involved in union contract negotiations and suggested that we reach out to the County of SLO for contacts and details. Once we receive these contacts, we will work with CalTravel to lobby through the proper channels during the union contract negotiations cycle. Davison provided an update on the FY 2021 Audit process, which began on June 25, 2021. He noted that Glenn Burdette, Visit SLO CAL's auditor, is still reviewing documentation and financial narratives, and the audit report and tax return are expected to be delivered to staff the week of August 30, 2021. The Audit is due to the County no later than December 31, 2021. The FY 2021 Annual Report is in production, and is due to the County on October 31, 2021. The Executive Committee will review both the Audit and the Annual Report, and consider recommendations on September 9, 2021 for Board approval at the September 29, 2021 Board of Directors meeting. Davison provided an update on Experience SLO CAL 2050 initiatives. On the Customer Service Training initiative, a prospective agency has been identified, and final vetting and proposal review is set to be completed in early September. Staff will then identify investors and partners with customer service expertise for the Customer Service Training Work Group, which will help inform and drive the content development for the training program. Staff will prepare an agency recommendation for September's Executive Committee and Board Meetings. On the Events & Festivals Strategy (E&FS), after pushback from two communities on the MOU process, VSC will be pivoting to a two-phased approach. In Phase I, a third-party facilitator would lead a working group facilitation with an end goal of universal understanding on the importance, need and desire for a countywide E&FS, and why it is critical to SLO CAL's success as a destination. Davison noted that since initial buy-in and MOU sign off is a board directive, board members will need to advocate in their communities to garner buy-in and support from all local DMOs and cities. Phase II, the Scope of Work Development, would be defined from the Phase I facilitation results. He clarified that the cost of the E&FS is not changing; only the structure and steps are changing. He outlined next steps, and noted that the Executive Committee will review staff's recommendation of an agency for the E&FS facilitation at their September 9, 2021 meeting, and consider a recommendation for Board approval at their September 29, 2021 meeting. As part of Visit SLO CAL's contract and sponsorship agreement with the South County Chambers of Commerce, and the FY 2022 approved budget, Visit SLO CAL will require and fund a Mystery Shopper program to assess customer service and destination awareness of staff at the California Welcome Center through monthly phone and in-person shops. An agency has been selected and their contract is under review. Davison reviewed next steps, and noted that the program is set to begin October 1, 2021. He provided an update on the ESTO Conference, which he attended with Visit SLO CAL Director of Marketing Vanessa Rodriguez in Los Angeles on August 15-17, 2021. Davison outlined the State of California's new requirements on mega events, noting that effective September 20, 2021 and through November 1, 2021, vaccine verification or a negative testing requirement will be required in indoor mega events involving more than 1000 participants and self-attestation is no longer an acceptable form of verification. He provided statistics, at a national level, about travel spending and readiness to travel, noting that the COVID-19 delta variant is causing a number of changes and cancellations on travel. He reviewed the cash flow projection through December 2021, reviewed the STR for the month of July 2021, and shared key CEO meetings of significance.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

BUSINESS ITEMS

6. Board Member Selection

On June 23, 2021, Kathy Bonelli provided her letter of resignation from the Visit SLO CAL Board effective September 29, 2021, opening the vacation rental seat for applications. The application process opened on July 19, 2021, and closed on August 12, 2021. Three candidates applied, but one applicant did not actually contribute to the TMD assessment and was deemed ineligible. Davison reviewed the applications from Bryan Bonelli of Paso Robles Vacation Rentals, and Karen Tallent of The Groves on 41, noting their involvement with Visit SLO CAL and the industry, and outlining the regions they would represent. He added that both are engaged partners. Davison requested a recommendation from the Committee.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Pearce/Eads to recommend that the Board elect Bryan Bonelli to the designated vacation rental seat on the Visit SLO CAL Board.

Motion carried: 4:0

7. Staffing Update

Davison provided an update on recently filled positions. Vanessa Rodriguez, formerly Digital Marketing Manager, was promoted to Director of Marketing, and Eric Parker, formerly Digital & Marketing Specialist, was promoted to PR & Communications Manager. Additionally, Catherine Cropp will begin as Visit SLO CAL's new Brand Marketing Coordinator on August 23, 2021, Riley Grim will begin as Brand Marketing Manager (formerly Digital Marketing Manager) on September 7, 2021, and Camille Silvera will begin as Content Marketing Specialist (formerly Digital & Marketing Specialist) on September 7, 2021. He provided an update on open positions, noting that staff has been sourcing candidates and conducting interviews for the Finance & HR Manager and Marketing Coordinator roles, and that he is in the final stages of the interview process for the Executive Assistant to the President & CEO role. Davison noted that at the last Board meeting, he shared his frustration with the delay and lack of activation of Experience SLO CAL 2050 (ESC 2050) recommendations and FY 2021 budgeted funds. He noted that this delay has been compounded by a six month reduction of staffing due to the Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy's leave of absence (she is scheduled to return November 9, 2021). As requested by the Board at the June meeting, he outlined a staffing plan to achieve the FY 2022 Business & Marketing Plan initiatives approved in the FY 2022 budget. The proposed plan includes hiring a Vice President of Community Engagement & Advocacy. This higher level role would assist in advancing ESC 2050 at a faster pace, in-line with Board-approved OKRs, and advance VSC's advocacy efforts, including the Oceano Dunes Economic Impact Study which has been stalled since Board approval in January. He noted that pursuing an additional staff member now will assure efforts do not fall further behind, and that this role would be similar to the original role Visit SLO CAL established, previously in this department. He noted that the estimated salary has not been accounted for in the FY 2022 approved budget.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion. The Committee agreed with the direction of the proposed plan, noting that hiring a higher level position would add additional structure and strategy to the work and would help Visit SLO CAL avoid losing time on these key priorities.

ACTION: Moved by Sohi/Pearce to approve the FY 2022 addition of a non-budgeted Vice President role to support the advancement of ESC 2050 and advocacy initiatives.

Motion carried: 4:0

8. Air Service & Airport Update

Davison noted that the SLO County Regional Airport's \$13.5M runway rehabilitation project is underway and scheduled to be completed October 8, 2021. He described the upgrade, and noted that the project has limited the operating hours of the airport, which has temporarily reduced the number of flights they can support. Significant increases in air service are expected after October 8. As part of Visit SLO CAL's air service reactivation strategy, Davison attended the Voltaire Air Service Conference on August 11-13, 2021 in St. Augustine, FL, where he met with flight planners from United, Frontier, Flair (Canada), Sun Country, SkyWest and Contour. He provided an update on current and upcoming air service. Davison noted that in the effort to reduce duplication of efforts, Visit SLO CAL has been working with the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport on a partnership to centralize marketing efforts and messaging for both outbound and inbound flight marketing. SBP would leverage the buying power and marketing expertise of Visit SLO CAL, who would partner with Mering to develop a media plan, manage all ad placement, and implement all campaigns and messaging, to achieve greater

efficiency, synergy and impact with air service marketing efforts. Costs would be reimbursed via a pass-through with no additional cost or revenue to Visit SLO CAL. He noted that the agreement is scheduled to be heard by the Board of Supervisors at their August 24, 2021 meeting, and that staff is seeking approval of the partnership agreement in concept from the Executive Committee.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ACTION: Moved by Pearce/Eads to approve a marketing partnership agreement in concept between Visit SLO CAL and the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport.

Motion carried: 4:0

9. Travel Trade & Marketing Update

Davison provided an update on upcoming travel trade programs. He also provided an update on the Future Visitor Profile and EDI Audience & Asset Alignment Studies, noting that the final reports and SMARInsights presentations will be delivered in August and presented to the Board at the September meeting. He outlined the destination partners participating in the co-op for each study, and noted that on the EDI Study, video interviews that are currently being conducted are probing factors like notions of safety and how news stories influence destination decisions. He added that the study's focus groups include Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian and LGBTQ+ participants. Davison reported out on Visit SLO CAL's six-day House of Brands asset shoot (August 3-8, 2021). Footage was taken throughout the county, and rough cuts of new assets are due at the end of August, with the assets informing new creative that begins running September 20, 2021. He outlined the destination partners participating in the asset shoot co-op, and shared some snapshots of the film crew on location. Davison reported out on Visit SLO CAL's brand refresh, noting small updates to the logo and fonts, the addition of a locator phrase (The Center of California's Central Coast), and updates to the color palette to capture the natural essence of SLO CAL.

Public Comment – None

Committee Discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLOSED SESSION ITEM

10. Employee Dismissal

CLOSED SESSION REPORT

No action was taken by the Committee during Closed Session.

Davison noted upcoming agenda items. He noted that based on the agenda, Visit SLO CAL will ask to extend the September Board meeting to two-and-a-half hours.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 4:49pm.