



# Minutes

---

## Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee

### Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 13, 2016

8:30am

Sands Inn & Suites

1930 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Chuck Davison

**PRESENT:** Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Amanda Diefenderfer, Christen Goldie, Gordon Jackson, Lori Keller, Heather Muran, Jennifer Porter, John Sorgenfrei, Jennifer Little (Board confirmation pending).

**ABSENT:** None.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chuck Davison, Michael Wambolt, Brendan Pringle, Helen Pratt

---

**Call to Order at 8:35 am.**

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

None.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**3. Approval of July 12, 2016 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes**

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment – None.

**ACTION:** Moved by Jackson/Banish to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**Motion carried: 11:0:1**

**Cano was absent for the vote.**

**Jennifer Little was not a confirmed member, so was not included in the vote.**

**CEO REPORT**

#### 4. CEO Report

Davison gave an update on travel trade and media representation in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Contract negotiations are underway with Black Diamond. VSLOC will provide further updates at the next Marketing Committee meeting.

VSLOC now participates in a co-op with Visit California for VisaVue Travel data. This includes quarterly travel reports that analyze both international and domestic travelers. These reports will be pushed out to members quarterly.

Davison gave an update on staffing. He announced that Helen Pratt has started as Executive Assistant to the President & CEO. The Communications Manager role is still open, and applications are still being accepted. Kylee Jepsen (Corliss) has agreed to assist as a part-time contractor. Searchwide is continuing to recruit for the VP of Marketing role.

Davison was a speaker at the MCCVB Annual Luncheon in August, in celebration of Congressman Farr's retirement. He was joined by other regional DMO CEOs and Visit California CEO Caroline Beteta.

The next Industry Educational Symposium will be held on October 5, 2016 at Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo, from 8:30am-12:30pm. Confirmed speakers include Paul Krause from AmericanTours International, SLOCOG/Wallace Group and PG&E. Davison asked that those who are interested in attending the symposium to RSVP to Brendan Pringle at [Brendan@VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com](mailto:Brendan@VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com).

Davison briefed the committee on Measure J, which is a proposed tax initiative to support infrastructure funding, and noted the question of whether VSLOC should advocate on its behalf will be addressed by the Board who will hear a presentation on Measure J at the next Board meeting and will determine if they will advocate for it.

Coraggio Operational Planning workshops will commence this week. There are three workshops scheduled to develop the operational plan for the strategic plan. The final trade-off meeting will occur October 21, 2016 and the Board will hear staff recommendations on priorities at the November Board meeting.

Davison announced he will be traveling to Seattle on September 19-20, 2016 for air development meetings.

Davison moved from Visit California's Research Committee to its Brand Content committee, as San Luis Obispo County had more than enough representation on the Research Committee. He will be traveling to Sacramento for an in-office Brand Content Committee meeting in October.

Davison highlighted some of the key takeaways from US Travel's ESTO conference in Florida, and encouraged all committee members to consider attending ESTO next year.

The FY2015-16 Annual Report is being finalized and will go to the Board for approval at next week's meeting. It will then be delivered to the County before the end of the month as required by the TMD's MDP contract. This year's annual report is visually engaging, and much more graphic-driven than last year's report. VSLOC is undergoing its annual audit, as required by VSLOC's contract with the County. The auditor conducted his visit on September 9, 2016. The audit will go to the Board in October for approval.

Committee Discussion – Porter and Little agreed that VSLOC's focus should be on the United Kingdom as this is an important market. Jackson said ESTO provided excellent networking opportunities for him.

Public Comment – None.

#### BUSINESS ITEMS

## **5. Update on Board Action**

At last month's Board meeting by recommendation of a Board member, the Board discussed changing the BOD meeting day and time, but it was determined that no change was needed.

VSLOC also released the year-end survey results to the Board. The survey went out to 939 members, and after sending it out 5 times, 35 responses were received. The Board agreed that next year's survey should be sent separately to the BOD to not influence the overall results, and agreed that individual Board members should champion outreach to their own communities in order to increase the response rate. It was suggested that the survey be sent out at a later date, after summer has ended, as people will likely be less busy and VSLOC may get a better response rate. VSLOC will explore additional options to increase response rate.

Committee Discussion – Porter suggested robo-calling to increase the response rate, but said that, in her own experience, surveys in general are not successful. Jackson asked why VSLOC received such a low response rate, to which Davison suggested that it is a lower priority for lodging partners who already have much to do.

Public Comment – None.

## **6. Crisis Communication**

The Chimney Fire was the first instance of the crisis communications plan being used. This fire occurred while Kylee Corliss was on vacation, so VSLOC contracted Solterra Strategies to help with communications. The decision was made to push the updates out to constituents only, not consumers.

Committee Discussion – Diefenderfer stated that some constituents were pushing for communications to be sent to consumers, but VSLOC decided against that. She complimented VSLOC for not oversensationalizing the fire, and that it was very helpful to be able to say everyone should just follow the crisis communication plan. Sorgenfrei added that he thought it was a good idea to not draw too much attention to the fire so that it was not blown out of proportion. Jackson asked who the fire updates were sent to, and Davison responded that it went to all constituents. When national news described the entire West Coast as being on fire, they specifically called out the Chimney Fire. Davison then called Visit California, who ran the exposure numbers and determined it was not impactful and relevant enough for VSLOC to deviate from their current strategy. Porter stated that the Facebook postings were helpful, as it was easy to share the updates with others. Cuming shared a website (CACentralCoastAlert.com) which is an alert system created to feed information. Allen thanked VSLOC for the clear, consistent messaging about the fire. He shared that the tours at Hearst Castle were filled up the day they reopened, and that this was the longest the castle has been closed since it first opened. He said the results of the fire are not visible from the Castle. Cano stated she has received questions from consumers who think the entire county is burnt, and she has been reinforcing that the fire had minimal impact on the county.

Public Comment – None.

## **7. SAVOR on the Road Update**

There has been a shift in branding for SAVOR. It is now being branded as SAVOR - A San Luis Obispo County Experience. BCF, VSLOC's marketing agency, developed the new brand. VSLOC is building a destination experience for the San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival. There are many participating partners, including wineries, breweries, distilleries, and restaurants, and VSLOC is continuing to recruit more partners. VSLOC secured the centerfold in the program for the San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival.

Committee Discussion – Little suggested looking at other types of partners, perhaps including a coffee experience. Davison acknowledged that adding other types of partners could be beneficial, but there is not enough room in the

booth this year. Akers seconded Little's comments, suggesting local honey be included in the future. Porter announced that PRWCA will be going back to Texas this year as part of its marketing plan, and offered to include VSLOC if it was interested.

Public Comment – None.

## **8. Seattle Flight Launch Update**

Davison will be in Seattle on September 19-20, 2016 for in-market meetings with Alaska Airlines, Visit Seattle, Seattle Food and Wine Experience, and Expedia to discuss co-op opportunities. Porter will join Davison in discussions around wine tasting including Visit Seattle's Taste Washington event. Both events may be doable depending on timing. They will also meet with Expedia to discuss wine tasting at their headquarters. The goal is to do multiple tastings during the same trip as the festivals. BCF is currently sourcing media in Seattle. Media won't begin until 30-45 days before flight launch.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei asked whether VSLOC has thought about offering the same co-op opportunities to other DMOs. Davison responded that it is different with each market, and that some DMOs do not have the ability to travel to Seattle, but that VSLOC was open to opportunities to make the booth space larger with co-ops from local DMOs. Sorgenfrei also suggested VSLOC co-op with Alaska Airlines to put the new direct flight in their magazine. Keller asked how many seats will be available on each flight to Seattle from San Luis Obispo. Davison responded there will be 77. VSLOC is working on a strategic media plan for advertising our destination in Seattle. The media plan is expected to be done in October or November, after which it will be presented to the Board for approval. Porter stated she is making an effort to meet with the head of wine at Costco.

Public Comment – None.

## **9. Leads Management Discussion**

Davison reviewed a flow chart for how travel trade and PR leads are managed between VSLOC and DMOs. He stated VSLOC is open to feedback on this process, and acknowledged that there is need for improvement in communication at the end of the process on how the lead performed, what the result was and if there is a plan to keep farming the lead on an ongoing basis.

Committee Discussion – Cano stated that the outlined process is great, and that the committee members know the process, but that the flowchart would be useful for others to understand the process. She asked how the lead is sourced and how the lead owner is determined. Davison responded that VSLOC checks fair share reports to see who is due for a lead. If a lead is looking for a specific city, VSLOC looks at partners who can support the group, then calls the partner to discuss how to work together. VSLOC wants to work through DMOs for direction and itineraries, looking at the big picture and helping to eliminate duplication and crossover between communities. VSLOC's focus is awareness and demand, where the important component is customer experience. VSLOC can't control the booking path of lodging as it doesn't own brick and mortar and can't force properties to take rooms. Cano recommended that once the lead owner sends the lead contact info to the DMO, it should then say that the DMO and VSLOC work together to develop a plan. Muran asked if leads would only be sent to members. Davison responded that VSLOC leads will only be sent to members and it is a benefit of the District and membership. Cuming requested a list of members in her community so that she could target those not on the list to become members. Porter seconded this request. Sorgenfrei stated that ultimately, it is what the journalist wants. Cuming asked why VSLOC pushes leads out to the DMOs versus taking care of the leads in-house. Cano responded that it is due to the DMOs wanting to be involved, as they are experts in their own areas. Cuming asked what the process is for her unincorporated area, as there are ten communities within that area. Davison responded that unincorporated communities are not set up with their own BIDs, so VSLOC doesn't send leads down to the individual communities because a fast response time is not guaranteed. VSLOC instead sends those leads to Wine Coast Country to distribute as they are the expert of their area. VSLOC calls the experts when it does not have what it

needs to facilitate or if the request is for a general area. Davison agreed that the process might need to be looked at for unincorporated areas.

Public Comment – None.

## **10. Brand USA Multi-Channel Program Recap**

Davison went over the campaign highlights, including that it generated 89,966 room nights and \$18,101,698. BCF is continuing to source other opportunities. VSLOC is not doing the California Visitor's Guide this year because the new brand is not yet finalized.

Committee Discussion – Cano stated that CCTC purchased the insert in the magazine and many partners are involved. Gordon asked if the campaign results should be evaluated on the measurement of spend per room sold or spend per revenue. Davison responded that both would work, and that VSLOC cannot base the whole dollar spend on the the direct return of rooms, as some people may have seen the ad but cannot book during the promoted time. Gordon asked what the metrics will be used for in VSLOC's marketing plan. Davison responded that those were still in development as the marketing plan and media plan come together, but that VSLOC's metrics are not only based on the booking engine on its website. VSLOC's responsibility is to generate awareness of the county and the demand, not to control the outcome of bookings. Cano put forth that international markets are things that DMOs cannot target themselves and that is why VSLOC is essential.

Public Comment – None.

## **11. Event Sponsorship**

The AMGEN event produced one minute of total coverage for SLO County, which was not what VSLOC was promised during partnership discussions. Davison has had 3 follow-up calls with AEG regarding the limited exposure. AEG responded with how many room nights that AMGEN put in SLOC, but for VSLOC the purpose of the sponsorship was more long-term through national and international exposure.

Davison asked the committee to consider the criteria VSLOC want to impose for sponsoring events. The Committee recommended an annual or bi-annual sponsorship application process, participating in bringing one to two large opportunities to market (that include more than one community), shifting sponsorship to SAVOR on the Road out-of-market events and providing in-kind partnerships to local events. Davison will propose to the Board that VSLOC only seek out large opportunities that DMOs can't get on their own. By example maybe \$50K be set aside for AMGEN, and the rest be put into a bucket to sponsor events like SAVOR - A San Luis Obispo County Experience.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei stated that because Pismo was a stop in the race, they received a bit more of the exposure. He asked what it was that AEG promised and did not provide. Davison responded that VSLOC communicated that it would only sponsor the race if multiple communities were covered. Tour Tracker was turned on just 1 mile before the county line with the cyclists entering Monterey meaning the county was not covered at all including the start in Morro Bay. Davison will pose to the Board whether it is worth trying this relationship again. Little noted that people were disappointed with their accommodations last year, in that they were booked in SLO but the riders were in a different city. She suggested VSLOC make it clearer next year. Davison reminded the committee that rooms negotiations are left to the cities and not something VSLOC gets involved in. Davison informed the committee that AEG has been reaching out to communities directly to coordinate the event for next year. Davison will update the committee after regrouping with the Board.

Public Comment – None.

## **12. Marketing Agency Update**

Membership kits are being distributed to non-lodging members of the community to promote VSLOC membership. Davison noted that VSLOC's membership fees start at \$300.

The annual report will be presented to the Board for approval at next week's BOD meeting. After approval, an electronic version will be available on the members-only page of the VSLOC website. This annual report features an abundance of infographics to increase engagement. It will be showcased at the Oct 5<sup>th</sup> educational symposium. Copies will be given out to all marketing committee members once approved.

The SAVOR layout concept was approved in August. VSLOC is working with BCF to finalize the creative and deliverables for the tent, in order to keep visitors interested and encourage them to stay longer in the booth.

The branding creative brief has been approved. The new brand will be presented to VSLOC staff on September 30, 2016. BCF will be in market on October 11, 2016 to present the new brand to the Marketing Committee. The new brand is set to be presented to the Board for approval on October 19, 2016.

The strategic brief is in the final stages of approval. The strategic partnerships and promotions will be presented to the staff along with the new brand on September 30, 2016. The marketing plan draft will be presented to the Marketing Committee at the October 11, 2016 meeting, and then delivered to the Board. The final version is scheduled to be delivered by October 31, 2016.

Committee Discussion – Porter suggested using sublimated died fabric instead of vinyl on the sides of the tents. Davison confirmed the sides will be fabric and breathable. Sorgenfrei noted that a lodging component is missing and suggested including a message about staying in SLOC. Little asked if VSLOC are going to try to get email addresses from the booth visitors. Davison responded that VSLOC will be hosting contests to facilitate email collection. Discussions have been circling around trip giveaways, and partnering with Amtrak to build small scale packages. Jackson asked how VSLOC is going to get the visitors' birthdates, to which Davison responded VSLOC is looking into that as part of the contest collection. Sorgenfrei asked if the marketing plan will include co-op opportunities, to which Davison responded "yes."

Public Comment – None.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **13. 2017 Visitor Magazine**

Nicole Bordges of Pace provided an update on the 2017 San Luis Obispo County Official Visitor Magazine. Davison pointed out that Access Publishing and the SLO Chamber have their own visitor's guide, which causes some confusion. Davison suggested that as DMOs communicate with local constituents, they should make it clear that VSLOC's Visitor Magazine is the official tourism guide and the one to promote, as it is the one that lodging partners are paying for through the assessment.

This Visitor Magazine will not contain advertisements. It will contain sponsored pages, but no branded ads. Pace is offering co-ops so that it should be financially feasible for all members. Bordges announced that October 6<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for partners to be included, and it is set to be published in January 2017. If a photographer is needed, Pace should be able to help facilitate that. The focus this year is on new and unique things to do in the county. Bordges instructed DMO partners to connect with her separately to see how to include individual members.

Committee Discussion – Jackson asked if the sections of the magazine were categorized based on location. Davison responded the magazine is categorized by theme, so that food is in one section and wine is in a separate section, for example. He stated that it is not divided by community because the goal is to promote the county as a whole. Sorgenfrei responded that the whole concept is great.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 10:52 am.

## **REMINDERS**

Marketing Committee members are encouraged to do WebDAM training in order to fully utilize their community accounts.

The deadline to submit holiday content (events, deals, specials and giveaway items) is Friday, October 14. Please upload website content to the Members Area of the website ([VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com/members](http://VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com/members)) and send non-website content to [Jordan@VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com](mailto:Jordan@VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com).

The next Marketing Committee meeting will be held on October 11, from 8:30-10:30am at the Sands Inn & Suites.

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be held on December 8, from 3:00-5:00pm (location TBD).