

*Draft Until Approved*  
**Avila Beach Tourism Alliance**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**

January 12, 2022 – Video Conference due to COVID-19 Pandemic

**Board Members Present:**

Dean Hutton, Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort & Spa  
Golda Escalante, Avila Lighthouse Suites

**Board Members Absent:** Ken Kelly, Coastal Vacation  
Rentals

**Others Present:**

John Sorgenfrei, TJA Advertising  
Claudia Torkelson, TJA Advertising  
Rick Turton, TJA Advertising  
Stephanie Rowe, ABTA administrator  
Kathleen Naughton, SLO Coast Wine Collective

**CBID:** Cheryl Cuming

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1. **Call to Order:** by Chair Dean Hutton at 10:04 am.
2. **Roll Call:** by Stephanie Rowe
3. **Public Comment:** None
4. **Consent Items:** A motion was made by Golda Escalante and seconded by Dean Hutton to approve the November 10, 2021 minutes. With no further discussion, the minutes were approved by a voice vote of the local Advisory Board.
5. **CBID and Financials Update:** Cheryl Cuming gave an update for the past month.
  - a. Website traffic up: users 58,000/+107% Y/Y; sessions 69,000/+106% Y/Y; over 110,000 page views; stopped paid advertising in mid-December and still did well in part due to continued PR and SEO efforts growing organic traffic.
  - b. LFA Imperative Co-op working well for SEM program and social media ads.
  - c. TOT/Assessment growth comparing Avila November 2019/2020/2021 collections: 2019-\$94,454; 2020-\$184,841; 2021-\$211,839.
  - d. Next All Agency/LFA meeting on Friday, January 14 with more information about Google Local Guide account. Have reached level 8 which is very good in getting Highway 1 and the local communities more exposure. Our photos have generated over 40M views for local businesses.
  - e. Have launched Season of Coastal Discovery and Wildlife Viewing map. The lead gen maps have been very successful starting with the Coastal Hiking map which gained over 20k email addresses, the 2<sup>nd</sup> was the Hidden Secrets map with over 17k email addresses, and the Wildlife Viewing Map has started off strong. Toolkit also available on member page.
  - f. Have gained a lot of traction around butterflies so have created a more robust page about butterflies. Also working with the Western Monarch Butterfly Trail to hopefully get six to seven interpretive signs, similar to the Whale Trail project, placed along their migration path.
  - g. Avila Beach's assessment collections were 20.07% of overall total contributions. When we started, we were consistently around 17%.
6. **Budget Update:** Stephanie Rowe confirmed that collections in November totaled \$23,539. Available funds (including the 2020-2021 carry-forward) total \$342,786. Funds after approved applications and anticipated expenses removed total \$141,388.

## 7. Committee Reports:

- a. **TJA Activity Report/Website Analytics Update – John Sorgenfrei, Claudia Torkelson and Rick Turton:**  
John Sorgenfrei reported that the Avila Facebook and Instagram account was hacked but Claudia worked diligently to get it back and has since fortified it against future hacks. She is still in the process of getting our Facebook ad account back up and is confident she will do so in the next couple of days so she can start running ads again.

Claudia Torkelson reported on social media activity in the last month. She is thankful that they were able to quickly resolve the hacking problem and were able to have a relatively normal month of posting without ads. Facebook fans decreased slightly by 94 fans to 78,677. Total Impressions down to 128,200/-88% and engagements down to 7,715/-10%. Video views (not to completion) at 631/-65% and video views (100%) at 499/-63%. She noted the top posts. Instagram gained 91 new followers for a total of 33,510, with impressions down to 150,000/-43% and engagements up to 9,462/+6.6%. She noted the top posts for Instagram. YouTube increased last month to 459,700 lifetime video views, down to 76 monthly video views and 0.7 average monthly hours watched. She listed the top 5 videos. The quarterly newsletter was sent in December to our 23,213 subscribers about holiday events with an open rate of 25%. She took the content and repurposed it into a blog. Showed a recap of the Travel CA Stories she has embedded into our website. She also noted that Avila's CrowdRiff gallery is the highest performing gallery on Highway1DiscoveryRoute.com.

Rick Turton reported on the website stats for the month and the end of the calendar year. The website numbers were really good. The total unique visitors for the year were 242,000 vs 154,300 last year for a 57% increase year-over-year. Paid search was 28% which was our second biggest traffic producer for the month. We had almost 11,000 views from Facebook. We saw the most mobile views of 65,190 for hotels and the second highest at 42,600 for Bob Jones Trail, as usual. We had 72% visitors on mobile devices which is very good because our revamped website leans heavily into mobile design. And once again, the top two spots coming in are hotels with 39,200 and Bob Jones Trail with 31,300 visitors. We had a big jump in December to 2,300 paid search visits but looked at less pages for 3.50 paid search pages/visit. We had 103,600 visitors come in via Google search with Yahoo and Bing totaling 110,183 for a 32% increase year over year. The LA Times was a big referral source in October for almost 4,000 sessions. CrowdRiff has become very important with 127,000 views of our albums for the year, so Rick is going to expand the report to add more detail, especially now that Claudia has noted it is performing so well. The top download links were the Loop Map which has been downloaded 2,745 times and the Hiking Trail Map 510 times for the year. Lodging referrals were up over 33% with 50,700 in 2021 vs 38,00 in 2020 which is our main goal.

## 8. Action/Discussion Items:

- a. **Review of SF Gate Winter Campaign from TJA Advertising – John Sorgenfrei** gave an overview of the SF Gate campaign. SF Gate is the web component of the San Francisco Chronicle. This campaign has already been approved as part of the current TJA budget but John wanted to go over the plan. He noted that we have successfully partnered with SF Gate for the last several years. The goal of the campaign is to put people in our hotels and vacation rentals and to promote our brand. The focus will be on our open spaces and no crowds. The components of the campaign will include: 1 Native Story, 1 Interactive Element, 750,000 Guaranteed Impressions, 3,500 Guaranteed Engagements, 2 Social Media posts (1 contest and 1 story post) for an investment of \$25,500. They will be launching the campaign on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
- b. **Update on SLO Coast Wine VIP Promotion from Kathleen Naughton – Kathleen Naughton** gave a quick update on the promotion that will run January 7-28. She noted that they started their paid advertising campaign on December 15 and will run it through January 26. It is going well so far. There are 16 member wineries who are participating but two needed to shut down for the week due to Covid. Most of them are utilizing the communications toolkit. She thanked TJA for their help with the toolkit and design of the postcards which were distributed to Avila lodging properties. So far there

have been 25 clicks through the QR code and 30 registered through Eventbrite. The wineries have noted increased traffic so she has asked them to keep track of referrals in case people did not register through Eventbrite. She is getting great feedback from the wineries. Cheryl Cuming asked that since we have some good momentum if the promotion could run through February 10th. Kathleen will ask the participating wineries and get back to us.

**9. Future Agenda Items/New Business:**

- a. Review of Follow-up Report from SLO Coast Wine VIP Promotion (by April meeting)

**10. Closing Comments:**

- a. Cheryl Cuming reported that the new Flying Flags cottages at Port San Luis are not set on permanent foundations and per the County Code 3.08, taxes are only imposed on fixed or permanent locations. Therefore, the County will not be collecting TOT/assessments on these units. Stephanie Rowe noted that the units are very similar to Avila Hot Springs who collect TOT/assessments. Cheryl asked whether this should be looked into and reconsidered by the County.

**11. Next ABTA Local Fund Advisory Board Meeting:**

Date: **February 9, 2022**  
Time: **10:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
Location: **Zoom meeting**

**12. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:52 am.