

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

April 13, 2022 – Video Conference hybrid meeting due to COVID-19 Pandemic. Public meeting location at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort Boardroom.

**Board Members Present:**

Dean Hutton, Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort & Spa  
Golda Escalante, Avila Lighthouse Suites  
Ken Kelly, Coastal Vacation Rentals

**Others Present:**

John Sorgenfrei, TJA Advertising  
Claudia Torkelson, TJA Advertising  
Rick Turton, TJA Advertising  
Stephanie Rowe, ABTA administrator  
Melissa Murray, Visit SLO CAL

**Board Members Absent:** None

**CBID:** Cheryl Cuming

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1. **Call to Order:** by Chair Dean Hutton at 10:01 am.
2. **Roll Call:** by Stephanie Rowe
3. **Public Comment:** None
4. **Consent Items:** A motion was made by Ken Kelly and seconded by Dean Hutton to approve the March 9, 2022 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. Hearst Castle is opening in May and there have been nine different pieces of publications promoting it.
  - b. Website traffic doing well. Users up 20% Y/Y to almost 75,000; sessions up 25% Y/Y to almost 88,000.
  - c. LFA imperative co-op program doing well. Hoping LFA's feel the same.
  - d. Continuing to work on better utilizing YouTube videos.
  - e. TOT/Assessment collections up comparing July 2020-Jan 2021 to July 2021-Jan 2022: Avila collections = \$1,094,587 last Fiscal Year vs \$1,340,138; CBID collections = \$5,393,656 vs \$6,956,457.
  - f. Next CBID Board meeting on April 27 at Cambria Pines Lodge; can offer hybrid meeting
  - g. Showed data for visitor points of origin coming into SLO County: top three = Los Angeles, Fresno/Visalia, Bay Area
  - h. TOT by Business Type: Hotel/Motel was the highest at 77%; vacation rentals went down from 21% to 20% from last year.
  - i. Avila Beach's assessment collections were 19.44% of overall total contributions.
6. **Budget Update:** Stephanie Rowe confirmed that collections in February totaled \$13,667. Available funds (including the 2020-2021 carry-forward) total \$353,367. Funds after approved applications and anticipated expenses removed total \$190,712.
7. **Committee Reports:**

- a. **TJA Activity Report/Website Analytics Update – John Sorgenfrei, Claudia Torkelson and Rick Turton:** John Sorgenfrei reviewed the additional marketing campaign proposals for the current TJA budget. The first one is a digital campaign in LA Times targeting predominantly southern California visitors but also Bay Area visitors. Will target specific demographics who are interested in the beach, wine, food, health and wellness and outdoor adventure. It would also include Apple News, Social Media and Admail components. The campaign would run for three weeks and start at end of April through mid-May. Cost of the campaign is \$17,250. The other proposal is an influencer and content campaign in partnership with Glocally. They would be looking for influencers from LA and the Bay Area who could provide photo and video assets that we can use after they leave. John reviewed the list of content pieces that would be included in the campaign. The cost of the campaign is \$18,250. The Board would like to get the information about the influencers who are chosen to come to Avila before they come. **The Board agreed to have TJA move forward with the additional marketing campaigns as proposed, to be taken out of the current TJA budget.**

Claudia Torkelson reported on social media activity in the last month. She noted that we had a good month due to the boosted posts. Facebook fans decreased slightly by 8 fans to 78,610 which is normal. Total Impressions up to 564,600/+88% and engagements up to 14,931/+22%. Videos watched (not to completion) down at 331/-37% and videos watched (100%) at 288/-26% because she hasn't posted any new videos. She noted the top posts. Instagram gained 498 new followers for a total of 35,036, with impressions up to 949,509/+114% and engagements down to 10,427/-1.1%. She noted the top posts for Instagram. She used the ad budget to boost two posts on Instagram for Avila Farmers' Market is Back! and Visit Avila Beach Carousel that did very well. Carousels doing really well so she will continue to use them. YouTube increased slightly last month to 459,992 lifetime video views, down to 81 monthly video views and 0.8 average monthly hour watched. She listed the top five videos. The quarterly e-newsletter about Avila Farmers' Market is Back! was sent out to our 22,975 subscribers with an open rate of 25%. The blog was about the new wine AVA in SLO County.

Rick Turton reported on the website stats for the month. He noted that last March was the highest session counts we had for that year. The total unique visitors for this March were down to 24,600 vs 43,500 for a -43.55% decrease year-over-year. Rick checked to see why last March we had over so many sessions and noted that there was a promo ad about hiking that drove over 25,000 sessions to the website. Paid search was over 12% of all of our sessions. Top page views were Avila Beach Hotels with 2,900 views, Events with over 3,500 views, Lodging Specials with over 2,900 views and Farmers' Market with over 2,500 views. Social media, especially Facebook was driving traffic. We had 75% visitors on mobile devices. We saw top mobile views of 2,474 for Lodging Specials and 2,400 for Events. Looking at organic traffic, we still held our own and posted a 3.62% gain year-over-year. There were almost 3,000 visits from CBID paid search efforts for 3.22 paid search pages/visit vs. 3.20 site wide average pages/visit which is good. Lodging referrals were down -27.7% with 3,400 this year vs. 4,700 last year. Top non-lodging links were SLO CAL events, Avila loop map and hiking trail map.

## 8. Presentation

- a. **Travel & Tourism Training Curriculum and Events & Festivals Strategy –** Melissa Murray introduced herself as the project manager from Visit SLO CAL and noted she has been working on these county-wide initiatives for the past year. She gave an overview of the Events & Festivals Strategy first. The purpose is to provide every destination and lodging community in the County the information, tools, and collaborative platform to maximize positive economic impacts of tourism-related events & festivals and remain mindful of resident quality of life. She is hoping to kick off the strategy in May and then finalize in September or October. She also gave an overview of the Travel & Tourism Training that is available to all customer service staff in the travel and tourism industry. The self-paced modules will be in English and Spanish. The English version is on track to launch around May

31, 2022 with Spanish to follow. Visit SLO CAL is funding both efforts, and no additional investment is required from tourism partners.

**9. Action/Discussion Items:**

- a. **Discuss Format for Next Board Meetings and Confirm Protocol** – Cheryl Cuming noted that things may change, but as of now, there are three types of meetings that are allowed: 1) All in-person 2) Hybrid where someone is at a location that is open to the public and the board members post the agenda where they are calling into the meeting, or 3) All virtual where the board passes a resolution for their next meeting based on Covid health and safety concerns. The board agreed to have hybrid meetings going forward and then would revisit in a couple of months. Dean Hutton confirmed that the public location for May would be the Boardroom at Sycamore Mineral Springs and he would set up his laptop for any public attendees who wished to view the meeting with him there. All board members would also need to post the agenda at their locations.
- b. **Consideration of Administrative Services Contract Renewal** – Stephanie Rowe reviewed her renewal proposal and noted that she had last received a rate increase in 2016. She noted she also provides administrative services for the Oceano and Nipomo Tourism Board and her rate increased last year to \$31.50/hour. She proposed that her rate be increased to \$32.00/hour with the same monthly hours and cell phone allowance. Stephanie stepped aside during Board discussion, but the Board agreed as proposed. Stephanie thanked the Board for their support.

**A motion was made by Ken Kelly, and seconded by Dean Hutton, to approve the administrative services contract renewal for Stephanie Rowe at the rate of \$32.00 per hour for a maximum of 60 hours per month for an annual cost of \$23,040 and total 2-year investment of \$46,080 effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2024. With no further discussion, the renewal was approved by unanimous voice vote of the local Advisory Board.**

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

- a. Discuss Format for Next Board Meeting and Confirm Protocol (Standing item)
- b. Review of Harvest on the Coast Funding Application (May)
- c. Review of Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Projected Budget and Allocations (May)
- d. Update on TOT/Assessment Collections from Flying Flags Cottages (June)
- e. Discuss Ideas for Proposals to Directly Benefit Avila Beach Lodging Partners (Oct)

**11. Closing Comments:** Stephanie Rowe reported that the Port San Luis Harbor District fire rings on Olde Port Beach have been discontinued and bonfires are no longer allowed on the beach. Public safety, environmental and overall management concerns has led the Harbor District to discontinue this program.

John Sorgenfrei reported that Julie Andrews-Scott asked for marketing support to promote the Avila Farmers' Market starting on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The Board agreed that Claudia should promote the farmers' market using our current social media budget and if Julie wanted to, she could submit a fund application at a later date.

Cheryl Cuming noted that she had a meeting with SLO Coast Wine and they are looking to create more interest in bike tourism in wine country. She thought there could be some interesting possibilities with our sponsorship of Cycle Central Coast and creating bike routes through wine country.

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

Date: **May 11, 2022**  
Time: **10:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
Location: **Hybrid meeting, public meeting location at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort Boardroom**

**13. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 am.