

Draft Until Approved
Avila Beach Tourism Alliance
Board Meeting Minutes

December 14, 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
Ken Kelly, Coastal Vacation Rentals

Others Present:

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

Board Members Absent:

Golda Escalante, Avila Lighthouse Suites (excused)

CBID: Cheryl Cuming

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 Dean Hutton and seconded by Ken Kelly to approve the November 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. Website sessions are still down because of the transition to Highway 1 Road Trip. They are still optimistic over time it will improve.
 - b. TOT/Assessment growth comparing Avila Beach collections for October the past three years was a little soft, but may be due to timing: 2020-\$189,380; 2021-\$204,549; 2022-\$182,640.
 - c. CBID Board had a combined November and December meeting on December 7th at Cambria Pines Lodge.
 - d. Kirstin Koszorus, new PR manager, was visiting and spent a lot of time immersed in our area. She's doing a great job bringing journalists here.
 - e. Will be doing Season of Coastal Discovery promotion in January and February. Toolkit to be rolled out in early January to all marketing folks.
 - f. Still have CBID matching funds left in the LFA Imperative program. Encouraging TJA to take a look at it to take advantage of the funds.
 - g. New photos available on Flickr library for LFAs to use. New content includes sunrises and sunsets in various locations.
 - h. Visit SLO CAL Welcome available to customer facing employees in the industry. SLO CAL EDI Study results available also.
 - i. Avila Beach's assessment collections were 20.29% of overall total contributions for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

6. **Budget Update:** Stephanie Rowe reported that assessment collections in October totaled \$20,212.39. Available funds (including the carry-forward) total \$377,623.18. Funds after approved applications and anticipated expenses removed total \$132,173.77.

7. **Committee Reports:**

a. **TJA Activity Report/Website Analytics Update – John Sorgenfrei, Claudia Torkelson and Rick Turton:**

John Sorgenfrei reported that they reached out to the Pale Kai Outrigger Club which is headquartered in Avila to ask if they have any events that the board could sponsor for overnight stays. John said they discussed potential races between Avila and Pismo or Morro Bay. Their race season is May through September. They were receptive to the idea and John thought this might be something that SLO CAL would want to be involved in. John also looked at other clubs but they are headquartered in other areas.

John and Claudia recommended increasing the social media ad spend by \$1,000 a month from \$4,000 to \$5,000 to target specific niche markets. They have noted positive results from people coming from Facebook onto our website and leave to go make reservations. John noted that we still had enough budget for the increase and still do a large digital campaign in the spring. **The board agreed to move forward with increasing social media advertising to \$5,000/month within the current budget.**

Chery Cuming gave an update on the LFA Imperative CBID Co-op program which includes SEM and paid social. The board approved \$12,000 to participate in the program in July 2022. The CBID Board recently increased its matching funds so Cheryl encouraged the board to increase its funding now to take advantage of the matching. **The board agreed to frontload an additional \$500 per month to the current \$1,000 spend within the current budget.**

Claudia Torkelson reported on the social media activity in the last month. Facebook fans decreased by 22 fans to 78,991. She said this is fine because she is looking for engagements and link clicks to get people to our lodging pages more than increasing fans. Total Impressions -41% to 225,141 and engagements +92% to 22,472. Videos watched +11,358% to 7,677 because Claudia has gotten more incredible video footage from our CBID videographer. She was able to post the new videos on Instagram and people can see them on Facebook as well. She noted the top posts. Instagram gained 85 new followers for a total of 38,231, with impressions up +34% to 1,211,854 and engagements up +4% to 9,094. She noted the top posts for Instagram. As noted before, she ran a lodging specials ad that reached over 153,000 people, 1,508 content interactions, and 2,155 ad taps directly to our lodging specials page. She also ran a Harvest on the Coast promotion that reached 48,051 people and drove 700 ad taps to the tickets page. YouTube increased slightly last month to 461,192 lifetime video views, down to 85 monthly video views and 0.6 average monthly hours watched. She listed the top five videos. Ken asked if we should start running ads on YouTube now that we have some new footage. Claudia said that she would look into it. She also reported that the Pinterest campaign has started and it's currently in its learning period. She was meeting later with Pinterest customer support to optimize our ads to drive the most traffic to our lodging specials page. She would have more to report next month. The monthly blog was about apple picking in Avila Beach.

Rick Turton reported on the website stats for the month. The total unique visitors for November were 20,441 vs 12,406 for a +65% increase year-over-year. Search was 32.5% and paid search was 23.6%. He noted that traffic sources from Claudia were listed in the Other column for 32.%. Top page views are the usual with Hotels, Lodging, Bob Jones Trail, and Events. We had almost 82% visitors on mobile devices which is driving our annual average to over 77%. There were over 4,600 visits from CBID paid search efforts for 2.62 paid search pages/visit vs. 2.69 site wide average pages/visit which is great. He did not report on the referral data because he noticed an anomaly and will correct it next month.

8. Presentations:

- a. **Visit SLO CAL Welcome Customer Service Training Program** – Alyssa Manno presented an update on the new program. It's a first of its kind, certified online customer service-learning program designed for SLO County's Travel & Tourism industry. Visit SLO CAL funded the development of this program to increase customer service skills and visitor satisfaction across the county, providing a tool for employers to add to their workforce development resources. The self-paced program is designed for customer-facing employees or volunteers in the tourism and hospitality industry. Its goal is to provide knowledge, tools and resources to be experts in customer service. It came about after a 2019 customer service satisfaction survey in the county where we received a 60% which is not terrible, but we can do better. It's free to all and available in English and Spanish on mobile or desktop. There are six required modules for participants to complete, including three-tiered customer service modules that are industry specific for lodging, restaurants and experiential attractions like wineries, breweries, cultural attractions and recreational businesses. Participants who complete the training will receive a certificate and pin and become a certified, SLO CAL Welcome expert. The program is estimated to take between 3-5 hours. Businesses with employees who successfully complete training will become certified SLO CAL Welcome Experts in Service. SLO CAL Welcome registration can be found on SLOCAL.com/Welcome. The program was launched on November 15th, and they have had great feedback so far with 280 people registered and 180 people SLO CAL Welcome certified.

- b. **2022 Harvest on the Coast Follow-up Report** – Kathleen Naughton presented a recap from the Harvest on the Coast weekend on November 11-12. She reviewed the various advertising components from John Hansen Advertising. Top markets were Los Angeles and Northern California. The event had a total of 401 attendees broken down as follows: 42 bought Weekend Pass tickets which included the Aquarium and Grand Tasting events on Friday and Saturday; an additional 58 bought Sip and Savor tickets for just the Aquarium event for a total of 100 for Friday night; the Saturday Grand Tasting had 188 tickets sold with 102 tickets for the Rare and Reserve Tasting experience. The Rare and Reserve Tasting was the most expensive ticket but was the first to sell out, so they are learning much about their first event after the pandemic. They had about 360 attendees at the event and were aiming for 450. Based on the Eventbrite survey of ticket buyers, 100 stayed in Avila Beach with 36 "Maybe". Those who said they were staying in Avila, 34 stayed 2 nights (17 rooms x 2 night) = 34; 42 said they were staying 3 nights (21 rooms x 3 nights) = 63; 24 said they were staying 1 night (12 rooms x 1 night) = 12. So there was a total of 109 room nights for the weekend with the potential for an additional 18 room nights from the "Maybe" group. The data for the complimentary shuttle service was as follows: two shuttles ran from 11am – 5pm and covered two routes. Route 1 drove 2 attendees to the event and 18 on the return to all hotels. Route 2 drove 8 attendees to the event and 20 on the return only to La Fonda and Lighthouse Suites. There were no attendees picked up from the vacation rental stops. Overall, they did not get the attendance they thought they would get: 100 for the Friday evening Aquarium event and 450 for the Saturday Grand Tasting. Their out of market was only a third of attendees which is different from 2018 and 2019 where about 60% were out of market. Stephanie Rowe reported that the overall feedback she received from attendees at her booth was very positive especially the Rare and Reserve Tasting event up in the Clubhouse. Kathleen is predicting that the next events will be smaller scale around 250-300 attendees for a more high-end exclusive experience. She also noted that her member wineries would like to build on the Wine VIP promotion partnership from earlier in the year. There would not be time for 2023 but she will come back to discuss a partnership mid-year.

9. Action/Discussion Items:

- a. None

10. Future Agenda Items/New Business:

- a. None

11. Closing Comments: None

12. Next ABTA Local Fund Area Board Meeting:

Dates: **January 11, 2023**

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.