

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

April 19, 2023

Public meeting location at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort Boardroom

**Board Members Present:**

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

**Others Present:**

John Sorgenfrei, TJA Advertising  
Claudia Torkelson, TJA Advertising (via Zoom)  
Rick Turton, TJA Advertising  
Stephanie Rowe, ABTA administrator

**Board Members Absent:** None

**CBID:** Cheryl Cuming

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1. **Call to Order:** by Chair Dean Hutton at 10:10 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 February 8, 2023 minutes. With no further discussion, the minutes were approved by a voice vote of the local Advisory Board.
5. **CBID Local Fund Area and Financials Update:** Cheryl Cuming gave an update for the past month.
  - a. Happy to report that website traffic has finally picked up after rebranding to Highway1RoadTrip.com from Highway1DiscoveryRoute.com.
  - b. Organic sessions were up 28% Y/Y to 112,654 and users up 31% to 98,358.
  - c. Facebook fans over 109,000 with over 3.1million impressions and 131,500 engagements.
  - d. TOT/Assessment growth a little soft for February year-over-year: 2021- \$89,334; 2022- \$121,759; 2023- \$89,513. March was down 30% Y/Y due to weather but hope to rebound in April.
  - e. Gave an overview of the CBID Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 derived from feedback from over 100 stakeholders. The mission and direction remain the same to promote memorable visitor experiences while being stewards for thriving, welcoming, and cohesive communities. There are new objectives and strategies.
  - f. Next CBID Board meeting April 26 at Cambria Pines Lodge.
  - g. Confirmed all BID Bunch contractors have expressed an interest to renew for another 2 years and may add a couple more contractors to round out their marketing efforts including a specified email strategist.
  - h. New wildflower content and Best Beaches Toolkit available on Member page.
  - i. SLO CAL quarterly website demographics mirror CBID demographics for period January-March: 72% located in CA (21% in LA; 9% in San Jose, 5% in SF); 21.2% are 45-54; 20.9% are 35-44; 20.1% are 55-64; 54.3% of site visitors are female; 12% were repeat visitors to the website.
  - j. Avila Beach's assessment collections were 18.25% of overall total contributions for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

6. **Budget Update:** Stephanie Rowe reported that assessment collections in February totaled \$9,876. Available funds (including the carry-forward) total \$354,617. Funds after approved applications and anticipated expenses removed total \$196,112.

7. **Committee Reports:**

- a. **TJA Activity Report/Website Analytics Update – John Sorgenfrei, Claudia Torkelson and Rick Turton:** John Sorgenfrei reported that they are working on launching the LA Times campaign as noted in the budget at the end of April through May. The target market are folks in Southern California who love food & wine and beaches. The campaign will focus on things to do at the beach without crowds. The budget for the campaign is \$35,000.

John also gave an update on the Pale Kai Outrigger event. The organizers are excited to partner with us. They are looking at holding the event on September 23 in Avila Beach. They are estimating about 100 out of town guests with a Hawaiian them. They would like to start out small and then look to grow the event perhaps in partnership with Pismo Beach. Cheryl suggested incorporating a wine element to give visitors more to do while they are here. Stephanie Rowe will work with John to send the funding application to be presented at the next meeting.

Claudia Torkelson reported on the social media activity in the last month. Facebook fans decreased by 46 fans to 78,952 which is normal. Total Impressions +42% to 420,862 and engagements +2% to 35,665. Videos watched +36% to 163,500. She noted the top posts. Instagram gained 612 new followers for a total of 40,196, with impressions down -51% to 835,376 and engagements up +96% to 15,633. She noted the top posts for Instagram. She is continuing to create reels from the CBID videos. She also reported on the Pinterest campaign which ran from January-March with an investment of \$2,000. She has been meeting with Pinterest customer support to optimize our ads to drive the most traffic to our lodging specials page. The campaign went very well with impressions, engagements, and total audience numbers up. She recommends allocating funds for Pinterest in the future. March spend focused on a road trip to Avila reel that did well. People reached was 461,735, impressions were 646,000, profile visits were 2,905 and the cost per visit was only .40cents. She included the link if the board wanted to watch the reel. YouTube increased slightly last month to 461,735 lifetime video views, up to 155 monthly video views and 2.2 average monthly hours watched. She listed the top videos. The monthly blog promoted Avila Beach as your Central Coast Basecamp. She also showed the new Avila video asset.

Rick Turton reported on the website stats for the month. The total unique visitors for March were 28,306 vs 24,590 for a 15.11% increase year-over-year and 39% increase in total visitors year-to-date. He noted that traffic sources from Claudia were listed in the Other column for 42.35%. Paid search was 17% of all of our sessions. The most visited page was Avila Events with over 3,000 views. Other top page views were Avila Hotels with over 2,600 views and Avila Lodging with over 1,900 views. We had over 83% visitors on mobile devices, which is very high. Top views on mobile were Avila Events, Hotels and Lodging. There were over 4,800 visits from CBID paid search efforts for 2.65 paid search pages/visit vs. 2.84 site wide average pages/visit which is pretty good. CrowdRiff galleries continue to do well with 8,600 views. Lodging referrals were up +32% with 4,500 in March this year vs. 3,400 last year and we are up 2,100/+18% referral sessions for the year. Overall, a very good month for ROI.

8. **Action/Discussion Items:**

- a. **Discuss and evaluate marketing services RFP submissions / Determine final selection for award of contract** – Cheryl Cuming noted that the process recommended by the County was for a marketing committee meet to discuss and score the RFP submissions and then to make a recommendation to the board. Cheryl noted that because two board members getting together to

discuss the submissions would be considered a quorum, she suggested Dean Hutton and Stephanie Rowe form the marketing committee.

Dean reported that the average scores from the marketing committee for the three submissions were: Red Bear Films-80.5; Matchfire-94.5; TJA-98. Dean and Stephanie noted that they rated TJA higher because the agency has decades of experience in tourism marketing, deeply understands the scope of work and our objective of increasing overnight stays, partners within the County with other tourism organizations for increased collaboration, and has key staff that are hands-on, flexible and results driven. For these reasons, he noted that the marketing committee recommended continuing to partner with TJA.

The next board member reported their scores: Red Bear Films-92; Matchfire-98; TJA-89. The main reason for the low score for TJA compared to the others was because of a concern about the Avila website. The board member felt that the website needs more focus including updated content, and for it to be more vibrant, fresh, optimized, and interactive. The board agreed.

The last board member reported their scores: Red Bear Films-83; Matchfire-93; TJA-100. The lower scores for Red Bear Films were because, while they had much experience in global brands, they did not show demonstrated expertise in tourism marketing, had high costs, and did not show demonstrated technical ability. Matchfire was scored lower also because they did not show a deep level of experience with tourism marketing, and did not show demonstrated technical ability. As an example, CrowdRiff is a visual marketing platform that was mentioned in TJA's proposal multiple times, but was not mentioned in the other two proposals.

**After discussion, the board agreed to continue with TJA Advertising, asking that they place a priority on implementing a website refresh.**

**A motion was made by Golda Escalante, and seconded by Dean Hutton, to continue the partnership with TJA Advertising for a 2-year contract from July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025. With no further discussion, the action was approved by unanimous voice vote of the local Advisory Board.**

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

- a. Pale Kai Outrigger Races Funding Application
- b. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Draft Budget and Allocations

**10. Closing Comments:** None

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

Dates: **May 17, 2023**  
Time: **10:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
Location: **Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort - Boardroom**

**12. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:51 am.