

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

Wednesday, January 10, 2024  
Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort Boardroom

**Board Members Present:**

Dean Hutton, Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort  
Ken Kelly, Coastal Vacation Rentals  
Mindy Hunter, Avila Village Inn

**Board Members Absent:** None

**CBID:** Cheryl Cuming

**Others Present:**

John Sorgenfrei, TJA Advertising  
Claudia Torkelson, TJA Advertising  
Rick Turton, TJA Advertising  
Tom Walker, TJA Advertising  
Stephanie Rowe, ABTA administrator  
Christopher Oh, Avila Lighthouse Suites  
Kathleen Naughton, SLO Coast Wine  
Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg, SLO County  
Kelley Abbas, SLO County

- 
1. **Call to Order:** By board chair Dean Hutton at 10:02 am.
  2. **Roll Call:** Stephanie Rowe
  3. **Public Comment:** None
  4. **Consent Items:** A motion was made by Mindy Hunter and seconded by Dean Hutton to approve the November 15, 2023 minutes. With no further discussion, the minutes were approved by unanimous 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. Web traffic is going well with users and sessions up.
    - b. Email subscribers over 110,000 and Facebook fans over 111,000.
    - c. TOT/Assessment collections soft for November and YTD is slightly down but not overly concerned. Looking at a better March and April.
    - d. CBID Board meeting on January 24 at Cambria Pines Lodge.
    - e. Was part of a meeting with various agencies for an update on the Highway 1 reopening. Caltrans announced an estimated date for full reopening of Highway 1 at Paul's Slide in late spring 2024.
    - f. Launched winter Wildlife campaign which was previously called the Season of Coastal Discovery. A toolkit is available on the members site.
    - g. In coordination with the winter Wildlife campaign, article in National Geographic about the Monarch Butterflies. The Monarch Butterfly interpretative signs that LFA boards approved have started being installed. The sign the ABTA Board approved is waiting until Avila Valley Barn completes the garden where it will be installed.
    - h. The CA legislature passed two measures, SB478 and AB537, to increase transparency of advertised prices beginning July 1.
    - i. Avila Beach's assessment collections were 20.66% of overall total contributions for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.
  6. **Budget Update:** Stephanie Rowe reported that assessment collections in November totaled \$18,487. Available funds (including the carry-forward) total \$369,209. Funds after approved applications and anticipated expenses removed total \$185,046.

## 7. Committee Reports:

- a. **TJA Activity Report/Website Analytics Update – John Sorgenfrei, Claudia Torkelson, Rick Turton and Tom Walker:** Claudia reported on social media activity in the last month. Facebook fans dipped slightly by 0%/-2 fans to 81,168. Total Impressions -47% to 137,917 and engagements -32% to 9,752. Videos watched increased +107% to 119,800. She noted the top posts. Instagram gained +1%/182 new followers for a total of 43,451, with impressions -21% for total 383,905 and engagements -10% for total 5,225. She noted the top Instagram posts. She also reported on the social ad spend which was a lodging specials boosted post: reach 190,715; website visits 5,337; profile views 1,103 and the cost per website visit .57 cents. She noted that she sent out five Instagram collaboration requests and only received one acceptance. The board discussed the process and Claudia confirmed she will send an email notification in addition to the request. YouTube increased slightly last month to 463,957 lifetime video views, down to 316 monthly video views and down to 2.3 average monthly hours watched. She listed the top videos. The monthly blog spotlighted Avila Village Inn. The quarterly newsletter sent to our subscribers was about Avila Restaurant Month and had an open rate of 25%. Claudia also noted that an influencer couple, @cal.euphoria, will be visiting in early February and staying at the Avila Lighthouse Suites. Their focus is on outdoor reels, and they have high engagement rates.

Rick Turton reported on the website totals for the calendar year. The total sessions for the year were 363,743; 313,745 users and almost 700,000 page views. The unassigned traffic source was from Claudia's efforts with over 107,000 sessions and organic Google search had 123,000. The top total page views were Avila Beach Lodging with over 27,000 views and Avila Beach Lodging Specials with almost 66,000 views. We had an average of 82% visitors on mobile devices which is very high. In 2023, we had 115,700 visitors come in via Google, Yahoo and Bing compared to 121,000 last year for a -7.17% decrease year-over-year. Link tracking was positive overall. Rick noted that it looked like 7 people came to our website from Cycle Central Coast during December which was the first takeover month for the year. Stephanie Rowe will check with Archer & Hound for more detailed data for the takeover month and influencer we hosted.

## 8. Action/Discussion Items

- a. **New Board Application from Chris Oh, Avila Lighthouse Suites** – Chris noted that he has been the Lighthouse Suites GM since October 2023 and is interested in serving on the ABTA Board to be a part of local business and tourism development, not only to see his operation prosper, but also to see growth throughout the county and uplift the local community.

**A motion was made by Dean Hutton, and seconded by Ken Kelly, to accept the application from Christopher Oh, GM at Avila Lighthouse Suites, for a seat on the Avila Beach Tourism Alliance Advisory Board. With no further discussion, the application was accepted by unanimous voice vote of the local Advisory Board.**

- b. **SLO Coast Wine Tasting Passes** – Kathleen Naughton presented the wine tasting passes. This is their biggest fundraising event of the year and are hoping to drive traffic to participating tasting rooms. The passes are on sale now through April. Each tasting pass includes access to 18 different wineries with no additional tasting fees for the time period purchased. There are three tasting passes: 24-hour pass to taste at four wineries; 48-hour pass to taste at eight wineries; 30-day pass to taste at all 18 wineries. Kathleen passed out postcards with the information and QR code. John Sorgenfrei suggested having the ABTA Board purchase tasting passes and creating a marketing campaign to promote them. He will present a proposal at the next meeting for the board to review.
- c. **Updates on Bob Jones Trail, Cherry Canyon emergency access, and future flooding improvements** – Supervisor Dawn Oritz-Legg reported that they are working on a project to alleviate the flooding that occurs on 1<sup>st</sup> Street in downtown Avila during high tide and high rain.

The project design estimated to be completed by mid-2024 is designed to reduce flood duration, and likely would not eliminate flooding entirely. She also noted that a detailed Diablo Canyon Emergency Access protocol has been developed for the north access route to Montana de Oro in case of emergency evacuation by residents and visitors. Next, she gave an update on the Bob Jones Trail. In Spring of 2021, SLO County received \$18M from Cal Trans to complete the Bob Jones Trail from Octagon Barn to Avila Drive. Negotiations and designs have been completed but one property owner is unwilling to accept a buy-out for easement of land. Eminent domain requires 4 votes they do not have. The BOS directed staff to apply for a project scope change with the California Transportation Commission. Staff will continue to proceed with right of way acquisitions and final design exploring all available options. The next update was about the Ontario Ridge and new roundabout. Since 2021, District 3 has worked with McCarthy property representatives & opponents to find resolution to a completed trail. In addition, Parks has been in the process of obtaining easements along the Ontario Ridge for a trail head at the future Avila Drive parking lot, which will be completed with the Avila Drive roundabout (Starts May 2024, Ends late 2025). This is a multiyear effort, where ultimately the McCarthy residential property & trail will need Coastal Commission approval. Finally, the supervisor reported that she has formed a committee to address issues from the Avila Valley Advisory Council such as concerts, parking, traffic, emergency access, and open space. She is inviting a member of the Avila business community to join the committee. Ken Kelly noted that he would be interested. She also noted that the San Luis Creek rests on private properties and it is the owner's responsibility to maintain and dredge the to mitigate flooding. She would be happy to get owners together to coordinate grants and resolution.

- d. **Pale Kai Outrigger Event 2024** – John Sorgenfrei asked the board if they would like to work with the Pale Kai Outrigger Club to grow the outrigger event they sponsored in September 2023. The event was mostly attended by paddlers locally and from around the state. He suggested that this year's event could grow into a Hawaiian experience with food, music and shopping geared towards attracting the public. The board agreed to have John move forward on discussions with the Pale Kai organization.

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

- a. SLO Coast Wine Tasting Pass Promotional Campaign, John Sorgenfrei

**10. Closing Comments:** None

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

Dates: **February 14, 2024**  
Time: **10:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
Location: **Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort - Boardroom**

**12. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 pm.