



**San Luis Obispo County  
Tourism Business Improvement District Advisory Board  
(CBID)**

Board Meeting Minutes  
March 27, 2024, 12:00 p.m.  
Cambria Pines Lodge

**DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED**

CBID Board Members Present: Mike Hanchett, Gary Setting, Bram Winter, Melissa Kurry, Laila Kollmann, Aaron Graves  
County Liaison: CAO Cheryl Cuming, Tessa Cornejo  
Absent: Matt Masia  
Guests: Mayla Lohne, SLO CAL; Lori Keller, Bruce the Dog

**Call to Order**

At 12:05pm

**Public Comment**

CAO Cuming announced that Matt Masia plans to attend the April meeting.

Laila said that the Highway 1 signage is confusing, and Mike shared that several attempts have been made over the years to ask CalTrans to make it clearer.

**Presentations**

None

**Administrative Items**

**Roll Call:** Gary Setting, Melissa Kurry, Bram Winter, Laila Kollmann, Aaron Graves and Mike Hanchett are present.

**Consent Agenda:** A motion was made by Mike Hanchett and seconded by Laila Kollmann to approve the February 28 minutes. With no further discussion, these minutes were approved by a voice vote of the Advisory Board; Aaron Graves abstained.

**Financials:** Financials are reconciled through February. Items of note:

- General Fund and BID Bunch expense tracking report \$102,205; YTD is \$922,153.
- YTD collected revenue is \$1,036,677 which is \$73,644 under budget.
- YTD expenses paid are \$922,153 which is \$460,629 under budget.
- Net income is \$386,984 more than budgeted YTD.
- Overall cash increased by \$325,846 from June 30, 2023.

There was a \$1.5M budget re-forecast presented. Key items include that the trend for year-end is around \$1.42M. CBID previously supported supplementing the shortfall with approximately \$100,000 from contingency, and CAO Cuming shared that about \$60,000 is possible in potential expense savings, which leaves a \$40,000 shortfall. Mike said that March is looking good and he is seeing an uptick for spring. Aaron noted that Atascadero has been down 20% according to STR.

CAO Cuming shared a new opportunity to contract on a project with Matthew, owner of Whereabout. The CBID supported this opportunity.

CAO Cuming shared that the BOS was seeking approval of \$100,000 in funding to survey a future ballot measure to increase TOT by 3%. The funding did not receive the majority vote needed from the BOS. Laila said that she watched the video of the meeting and TOT was noted as a “financials savior” for the County. It was noted that Supervisor Legg noted that the potential increase will come back before the BOS in the next two years, and that Supervisor Gibson was in support of the survey.

#### **Administrator & Partner Updates:**

SLO CAL has announced that Chuck Davison is moving on; he had been with SLO CAL since 2015. CAO Cuming said that the recent Marketing Retreat was well done. Aaron said that he is excited about the evolution at SLO CAL, and noted that Cathy Cartier is stepping in as interim CEO. She has been with the organization for three years. Melissa inquired about the interim timeframe.

#### **Upcoming Events/Deadlines**

- Board meetings: April 24 and May 22
- Form 700 due by 4/2
- CBID Renewal dates at BOS: ROI 4/9 and public meeting on 5/14

#### **Strategy/Ideation Topic**

##### **24 | 25 Marketing Plan Direction:**

Lori Keller reviewed a presentation that outlined the Big Ideas as we head into the new fiscal year.

# Highway 1 Road Trip

**BIG IDEAS FOR 2024-25**

COUPLED WITH A LOT OF CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT/FINE TUNING

## Background

*"The Bid Bunch Team has done a phenomenal job of **evolving H1RT**. Nowhere else will you find a more robust collection of information about anything from elephant seals to Valencia Peak than H1RT, that's for sure.*

*This last year, my role transitioned slightly to include more campaign and email work, as opposed to more site-specific writing. It has been eye-opening to **operate at a broader level** with campaign goals, and to help **integrate messaging** across a wide variety of media. I am **encouraged by the changes the organization has made**, and by **how they're being received...**"*

## The Big Things

## New Branding Integration

- **Innovate Our Creative Direction:** Create fresh, bold concepts that resonate with our target audience.
- **Add New Creative Director:** Focused as a springboard position to direct the creativity within our team as we're looking for everyone to add their inspiration to further tell our story.
- **Establish Brand Guidelines:** Create comprehensive brand guidelines that cover all aspects of our visual and verbal identity to provide a consistent framework for all our communications and creative endeavors.
- **Curation of assets with video and video shorts:** With video offering an opportunity to tell our unique story in a much richer way, our content creation focus changes from our current scope.



# Measuring Our Success

## BRAND LIFT STUDY:

Investigate **economical** methods to create a baseline and then follow up with another study in 12-18 months to measure the impact of our new branding efforts

## ARRIVALS TECHNOLOGY:

Continue to look for **Arrivals technology** that works for us (stay length/affordability)

## SURVEY OUR DATABASE:

Developed and deployed a two-pronged **survey of our database** based upon whether or not the potential visitor had downloaded a map to get an understanding for **the benefit of maps related to travel intent**

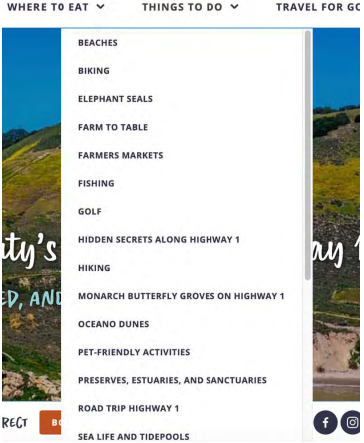
# Website Usability from a User's Perspective



Content is primarily **optimized for search engines**, resulting in our website's organization and **navigability falling short**. This makes it difficult for users to locate and access information efficiently.



**Rebuilding the infrastructure** of the website with the focus being to **improve the user experience** with improved navigation, a superior interactive mapping platform, and a revamp of the listings pages to provide more curated results to users rather than the firehose of data.



# Fine Tune "New" Technology

## TECHNOLOGY SHIFTS PROVIDE BOTH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:



**Use of First Party Data:** Our growing database (and from our partners) combined with AI to model look-a-like audiences in testing that has proven to be very effective

**Optimizing Strategies in Real Time:** Google Ads employ machine learning to optimize campaigns based on click-through rates and landing page behavior to **improve ad targeting**. In testing, AI targeting is a significant improvement over traditional methods.



**Campaign Performance:** AI and machine learning will be utilized to analyze campaign performance data, offering **insights and recommendations for improvement**. And its integration within programmatic dashboards and GA4 it simplifies data analysis making our **spending more efficient** and results easier to understand.

# Public Relations In Person

**Themed FAMS:** As the publishing world continues to change, we will be testing a focus on themed FAMS to get writers to visit and ensure coverage with major publications **featuring experiences** in line with current travel trends including, Coolcationing (traveling to temperate destinations) and **Wild feasting** (curated culinary experiences in natural environments with the incorporation of hyper-local and foraged ingredients) among others.



## Reopening of Highway 1

Once again fully open to explore, H1RT is working with Visit California, Visit SLOCAL, and Visit Monterey, along with San Simeon, Cambria, Hearst Castle and Morro Bay, to **develop programs and messaging** that can be deployed when the time is right.

Questions?

Aaron indicated he would be concerned if people stopped asking if Highway 1 is open. Mike said that he really appreciates how far the CBID has come and that the focus on strategy is key. Gary said that he feels being nimble has been key.

### **Discussion Items**

**2024 | 2025 BID Bunch Evolution:** CAO Cuming reviewed the current org chart and discussed a focus on:

- Adding a creative director role to manage brand integration
- Producing campaign videos and digital ads that 'speak' to the new brand
- Adding two new tools: MuckRack and BrandFolder

### **Marketing Roll-Up Report & PR Updates:**

- With four months remaining in the year, the website has already reached 900k sessions
- Open rates on recent eblasts were 47% and 41%
- Email subscribers were 121,170, with an increase of 15,000 in the last two months
- Organic traffic numbers reflects that GA4 looks to have data restored; users were up 46% in February and sessions were up 47.5%
- Paid media is seeing gains in driving engagements, conversions and cost-per metrics
  - 70% of all visitors are coming from paid media and 65% of conversions
  - January and February have generated map downloads equal to 50% of prior year
  - Retargeting has contributed to over 26k conversions and 746k engagements
  - Google Ads clicks exceeded 60k; cost-per-click dropped to \$0.40
- Public relations details were touched on, including trends and recent IMM show:
  - consolidation of media houses, rise of the freelancer, decentralization of media, press trip policies and restrictions, and media meetings & missions
  - IMM recap included meeting with 23 editors, on-staff writers and freelancers; coverage and several media visits are already confirmed from the effort

### **Action Items**

#### **CBID Contract Renewals Kempler & CrowdRiff:**

A motion was made by Mike Hanchett and seconded by Bram Winter to approve \$44,100 for a 12-month contract for Kempler Consulting, beginning July 1, 2024. With no further discussion, the motion was approved by a voice vote of the Advisory Board.

A motion was made by Laila Kollmann and seconded by Aaron Graves to approve \$24,842.70 for CrowdRiff 12-month renewal beginning July 1, 2024. With no further discussion, the motion was approved by a voice vote of the Advisory Board.

#### **Local Fund Board Members**

**Edna/Arroyo Grande Valley:** A motion was made by Bram Winter and seconded by Laila Kollmann to renew Jena Wilson to the EV AGV board. With no further discussion, the motion was approved by a voice vote of the Advisory Board.

#### **Local Fund Area Applications**

None

### **Closing Comments**

The board thanked CAO Cuming for organizing the board meetings each month.

### **Future Agenda Items**

- BID Bunch presentations: May PR & STP, June paid media
- BID Bunch, LFA Bylaws, CBID & LFA Policy updates

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:29pm