



CAMBRIA TOURISM BOARD (CTB)
(Cambria Local Fund Advisory Board)
Board Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2025

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Greg Pacheco at 1:09 p.m.

Members Present

Greg Pacheco
Jim Bahringer
George Marschall
Steve Kniffen
Karen Cartwright

CBID

CAO Cheryl Cuming

Guests

Katherine Gillen, Cambria Chamber;
Michael Thomas, CCSD;
Jessica Blanchfield, Archer & Hound
Advertising; Jill Jackson, CTB MA.

2. Consent Agenda Items

Board Meeting Minutes – May 13, 2025

Jim Bahringer moved, and George Marschall seconded, to approve the board meeting minutes of May 13, 2025, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment

Michael Thomas gave a brief summary of CCSD activity. He shared that the East Ranch community park restroom is now open. They set a goal of 1.34 million funding for the skatepark, and two thirds have already been raised. He said they appreciate the \$47,500 contributed by the CTB. He hopes that once the skatepark is complete it will bring visitors and more heads in beds.

4. Discussion & Action Items

4.1 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Marketing Committee Budget

Jessica Blanchfield gave a presentation on the proposed marketing committee budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and a recap of the current fiscal year. She projected it on a screen. She began by reintroducing her team. She said it is not just her, but a whole team working daily on the Visit Cambria account. She has been in the field for twenty years and expanded her company considerably over that time. She projected photos of the Archer & Hound Advertising Team and introduced the directors of each department. There are currently thirty employees and counting, twenty years in business and April 2024 they acquired a second agency. They are now the largest agency in the region.

Jessica said that for the current fiscal year their efforts focused around a few things. First, we wanted to understand our audience better and as you may recall, last year we proposed a software program that allowed us to look at visitations. It assisted in their understanding of all of the demographics of Cambria's visitors. Who they are and where they are from. This led to a much more valuable advertising campaign. They can utilize the software to compare assessment income and visitation. She displayed a chart of visitations year over year. It allows them to see personas of who is traveling. July then December are our highest visitation months. It also layers in data like their Experian data, that kind of thing, which lets us know their purchasing habits. As we go into paid

media. By learning about and targeting these personas we have really increased our numbers including cost per thousand is low as we have increased our impression numbers; we have increased our page followers and likes. Every other month they are creating robust, high value landing pages. The weather triggered ads are running now when temperatures reach above 99 degrees in the valley and will run throughout the summer. They will be doing more seasonal ads because they can see that they are working. Their recommendations include utilizing data driven personas to target specific visitors, and itineraries with Meta. Pinterest results vary, impressions were up, engagement numbers were down but clicks increased. It is the Wedding venue inquiry driver. Karen asked what was happening with that. Pacifica has garnered bookings. Jessica displayed examples of the ads and said that next year they are going with only weddings. She reviewed Google metrics, some costs increased, but they are going after higher quality visitors which turns into better conversions. Website metrics, new users increased by about 6%, engagement sessions fell about 4%, length of time increased to two minutes. SEO is organic and is still one of their highest performers, which is why they need to create the content to keep this going. The custom landing pages they build every other month always include a stay opportunity. Seasonal and event opportunities are included too. Email marketing open rate continues to be high at 38.5%. They also created some automated emails last year, one for itinerary sign up. They have used BlendFest in the past, once tickets are purchased an email is automatically sent inviting them to book a room. These and the wedding inquiries are also put into a drip, or journey, campaign, where we continue to communicate with them. Each of the journey campaigns also have higher than average click through rates. She said that due to this success they are recommending changing platforms for the coming year. There is a platform that specializes in automation and journeys. It also integrates a robust AI engine, which can predict users' likes and interests. It will allow data segmentation, and marketing specific to an individual. This will build more robust journeys. Its ability to mix and match will create more conversions. The costs are on par with what is currently paid for the email subscription. There will be some additional front-end work required by them to detail those buckets, but they believe this will be much more successful in the long run. She continued that app usage peaks in July and October. Scarecrow Festival uses yard signs with a QR code to encourage app usage in October. The banners they hoped to use never worked out, so this year they would like to implement signage throughout town. Year over year downloads saw an almost 15% increase, sessions increased 44%, page views saw a 50% increase. They plan to increase usage, including push notifications and guided tours. The biggest guided tour created every year is with Scarecrow Festival. She shared that they work hand in hand with them. She said she also has ideas how to implement this with the Chamber and create a cool partnership opportunity where they can promote Chamber members, through guided tours, like wine walks or art hops. We would like to integrate and allow for a better user experience. Greg asked how many total downloads the app has. Jessica said she has it in her notes and will find that number. She said that you can see the difference between new users and returning users and how that parrs out every month. 65% of our users overall are returning, which is great data. People are using this as a tool as they come and then you can see the usage per month, October being of course the highest. Cheryl suggested using the same signs at the Cambria Christmas Market Shuttle stops. Jessica shared screenshots from the app. It allows you to look at activities and the weather, places to eat and drink and lodging, geo based, for example everyone will be listed but it will serve the ones first that are closest to you. The My Plan feature allows you to save activities for your visit.

Jessica said, we have talked about a lot of recommendations, but this will summarize everything. We want to deepen that persona based story telling because we have so much rich data and we know who these people are we know what they like we want to make sure that we're leaning into that even more with our tailored content, our segmented e-mail journeys. All of those sorts of things that we just talked about. We do want to refine our media targeting to make sure that we are always looking for efficiency. We are constantly after efficiency and again by layering in this data that we have been doing we are seeing that those efficiencies are increasing. She continued that we want to leverage the seasonal patterns and really capitalize on that persona visitation. She said that because we are starting to see trends, for example January the sunset boomers are big travelers to Cambria, so we can serve ads specifically to them. As they looked at the personas they discovered that they like personalized travel. On the website we want to continue producing those bimonthly landing pages and SEO optimized blog so those are two separate things with which we will continue. She said that we want to leverage event tracking. We actually, over the last month, have done a pretty robust job

at leaning into Google's tag manager opportunities. She said that they have literally gone in and created tracking tools for every single event and additional buttons. This also leads to our ad conversions. We do want to expand Google ads. They tested zip code targeting with layering in that data of visitation they can tell what top zip codes are coming to the area. Last year we ran a successful summer campaign and this year they would like to add a winter campaign and a Christmas Market campaign to make sure that people are coming into the area and staying in other lodging properties. This will likely expand November into December.

We are recommending a decrease in spend on Cycle Central Coast. We are still going to continue to engage with the community, but we are going to lessen our ad spend so that we can focus on nurturing the communities that we have built and then reinvest those dollars into a seasonal campaign specifically for Visit Cambria. You will see collectively there are not many months that we are not running some sort of a seasonal campaign, and this is in addition to the ongoing stuff that we are doing. She said that they are really trying to lean into the visitor data that they have, and they are leveraging it to get year-round visitation. Jessica explained that there is an ongoing conversation that Aaron Lynn is leading to create a Cambria specific cycling event. It could be a replacement for Eroica but better. It will be completely owned and run by locals, which is great, and I think it is a great opportunity to invite people from the Eroica mailing list and international visitors. A date has not been finalized but it looks like it is going to be a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, three-day event, probably in April. She said that they do have dollars set aside to promote the event on Cycle Central Coast. Lodging specials will remain for this coming year, it is doing really well for us. It is on multiple areas of the website. She shared some screenshots.

The in-town app signage in our budget now is for fifteen freestanding signs. We would want to identify trusted partners in the community that are in high visibility areas with lots of traffic in front of their establishment. We would ask them to be responsible for taking care of the sign. We budgeted for the signs to be changed four times per year, always with a QR code to download the app.

She explained that she has spreadsheets that she will hand out, but basically this is the way the pie chart works out. We know our total budget is \$400,000 for the year, 51 percent is invested in our paid media and outreach, so that is where the bulk of our investment is. Hard costs and subscriptions are next. Cycle Central Coast is decreasing and will be 13% of the budget this year. Content development decreased to about 11% this year. The total budget this year is down about 4%.

Jessica stopped and asked for any questions for this last year or ideas for this coming year. She shared some additional ideas, obviously it does not have to be this coming year, but I did want to put some ideas together, especially as we are trying to leverage a partnership with the Chamber. One of the ideas is seasonal pop-up experiences. A digital kiosk for the visitor center is perhaps another idea, due to the difficulty of keeping volunteers in the office to answer visitor questions. Also, AI usage-based website integration for seasonal pop experiences. A couple examples, love letters we could perhaps have vintage mailboxes placed in various locations in town and people could bring their letters of gratitude to Cambria, or how they met their loved ones in Cambria. These are the type of stories that we hear on social media all the time. It gives people an opportunity to have an experience when they come into town and we could then share some of those letters on the Cambria feed on our social media or websites. It would be a nice, fun, interactive thing. Waves of reflection - artistic mirrors placed throughout town inviting visitors to pause and reflect. This may be an opportunity for the Chamber to utilize too. The digital kiosk costs about \$7,000 to \$10,000 to purchase with a \$200 subscription fee. It is managed through the back end like a website. Ads can be run on the kiosk. It is an opportunity for revenue, and it has a selfie booth. Then lastly I will not go through all of this, but AI powered website integration is similar to what we talked about with the new platform we are going to be using for e-mail. There are AI tools that can be integrated with the website that do very similar things. She continued, we can suggest content based on the user data as people are coming to our site. It is new technology that I would not necessarily want to push into immediately. She said that they are implementing it for another client, so will just continue to keep the board posted. She asked if anyone had questions. Cheryl shared that a small town in France has a Letter Writing Festival. They are mailed for free. Jessica said there are quite a few examples

internationally. Jessica explained that they try to create the best experience for every visitor so they return to Cambria and share their experiences with friends who will come and stay. Cheryl shared, as a complete side note, she just got back from a trip where she was in Budapest and met a couple who visit Cambria every year for a month, and said it is by far their favorite place. Jessica confirmed that the signs are in the budget, but they do need to confirm the partners for them. Jim asked how much is budgeted for the signs, because the CCSD needs revenue, for \$30,000 maybe they could put up the banners. Jessica said \$3,750 is budgeted, not very much. \$2,000 each quarter to change them out. Jessica handed out a spreadsheet and stated, this is our budget in total. She said, we broke it out into Visit Cambria media outreach, Visit Cambria content development, and Cycle Central Coast which is \$52,000 in total. Also at the bottom of the last page are the future opportunities.

Greg confirmed with Cheryl that contract renewal will take place annually, but it may be renewed upon approval of the County contract as long as there are no changes to the budget and scope. Jill asked Cheryl if a longer than one year contract might be possible and Cheryl explained, no, because the County renewal with H1TA is only for one year at a time.

4.2 CTB Marketing Partner Contract Renewal

The contract with the current marketing partner, Archer & Hound Advertising, will end on June 30, 2025.

Jim Bahringer moved, and Karen Cartwright seconded, to approve the Marketing committee budget as presented, and renew Archer & Hound Advertising, for the period July 1 through June 30, 2026, with annual renewals based upon the renewal of the County contract with H1TA. Motion carried unanimously.

4.3 July, August, September CTB Meetings

Greg explained that the board should discuss dates for July and August. Jill shared that the Lodge is not available for the September meeting. Greg said we might just cancel September. He is not available for August. George said that he is not available for the July meeting. Greg said that the concern is getting the Christmas Market Shuttles funded in time. Jill confirmed that John Nixon said he can have the funding application ready and be available to attend the July 8 meeting.

5. Information Items/Presentations

5.1 CBID Reports

Local Fund Summary – June 2025

The report was provided to the board but not discussed at the meeting.

5.2 CBID Presentation

Greg asked CBID CAO, Cheryl Cuming, for her update. Steve Kniffen asked if there is a list of the new non-profit board members. Cheryl explained that the H1TA Directors and the CBID Advisory Board are the same members. She said the CBID recently was on the BOS agenda for the annual renewal of the BID with the County, which was successful. She explained that each month they start with the CBID meeting, which lasts about ten minutes. The CBID meeting is concluded and then they call the Highway 1 Tourism Alliance meeting to order. Steve responded that it seemed confusing, he watched the last couple of Board of Supervisors meetings, and asked for more details about the 6/3 BOS meeting. Cheryl said the CBID's annual renewal took place at the 6/3 BOS meeting, which is why the CBID was before the BOS even though the non-profit was effective as of May 1, 2025. She confirmed that there was some concern raised because the protest percentage was 8%, with 4 hotels protesting. Cheryl confirmed this topic will be discussed at the upcoming CBID Advisory meeting on June 25. Two of the properties that protested are located in Cambria, Moonstone Landing and Little Sur Inn, with the protest signed by Daniel Legg. Steve noted that was concerning and confusing as the percentage that did not protest was 92%. The County BOS have asked for a satisfaction survey. Cheryl said that the County Advisory member, Tessa Cornejo, was going to provide more information on the BOS request at the June 25 CBID meeting. Constituent protest is weighted based on the properties percentage of contribution. There were 18 individual vacation rental owners and four lodging properties that protested, two in Cambria (noted above),

Avila Lighthouse Suites (which recently changed ownership) and Cayucos Beach Inn. George stated that if the assessment were lost it would just be added to the general fund and he said we do not want that. Cheryl corrected George as the assessment would no longer be collected if the CBID did not exist, and that the protests would have to be at 50+1% for the BID to be eliminated. George agreed and said, but the County would probably absorb it in the occupancy tax. It was noted that the County is looking to increase TOT in the near future. Cheryl said it would be a shame to lose the ability to do the good local work the CTB has done, George agreed. Cheryl said that the new non-profit, H1TA, is now providing admin/audit/legal services, and that the County is receiving approximately \$60,000 a year in admin fees to disperse funds, support the annual renewal and coordinate board member renewal/resignation/appointment functions. The County continues to have oversight as the CBID is a 1989 BID. All of the other tourism BIDs in the County are 1994 BIDs, except for the City of SLO, they are also an '89. Cheryl said, keep in mind in 2009 when we started the protest percentage was 27%, and last year the percentage was under 1%. The CBID and LFAs have done a really good job involving the 10 unincorporated communities and doing all these projects and programs, and keeping money local. Noting that since 2009 over 200 events have been funded by LFA monies, as well as 60+ beautification | infrastructure totaling over \$1.8 million in monies coming into these 10 local communities. Cheryl said that it is very important that the Board of Supervisors know how you value the work of the CBID and the Cambria Tourism Board. The BOS does have the ability to motion that the CBID no longer exist, which means these funds would no longer exist. We are fortunate to be renewed for one more year. Cheryl said that she will have better information after the June 25th CBID meeting. Cheryl shared that the current CBID and H1TA board members are Gary Setting, Mike Hanchett, Bram Winter, Laila Kollmann, Melissa Kurry, and Aaron Graves (will be in new H1TA Chair as of July 2025). The CBID\H1TA has a vacant seventh seat that was filled by Matt Masia, and are interested in getting someone from the North Coast. If you have anyone who is interested, please let Cheryl know.

Cheryl reviewed the June update for the board, April TOT as you can see did really well. We are trending to end the year flat year over year, which is better than most, so thankful for that. The budgeting will be the same for next year. Marketing is doing really well; we are up year over year and have almost 145,000 subscribers and a 51% open rate.

5.3 Cambria Chamber of Commerce Update

Steve Kniffen introduced the new Director of Membership and Marketing, Katherine Gillen. She worked for the Morro Bay Chamber for three to four years and increased their membership by over 200%. She has already been able to solicit four new members for Cambria. She is excited to work with the CTB and likes the digital kiosk idea. She would like to have at least one Chamber event per quarter. She is excited to work with the current Chamber board members.

5.4 Budget Reports

Month Ended April 30, 2024:

Revenue and Expenses

Marketing Budget Expenditures

Grant Funding Detail

The budget reports were provided to the board but not discussed at the meeting.

6. Future Agenda Items/New Business

None.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Jackson
Managing Assistant