



# Minutes

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## Visit San Luis Obispo County Advisory Committee

### Visit San Luis Obispo County Advisory Committee

#### Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 8, 2016

3:00pm

Embassy Suites

333 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER: Chuck Davison

**PRESENT:** Matthew Bronson, Dave Buckingham, Lynn Compton, Tom Frutche, Jim Guthrie, John Headding, Katie Lichtig, Steve Martin, Tom O'Malley, Mariam Shah, Trevor Keith, Ed Waage

**ABSENT:** Erik Howell, Jim Lewis, Jan Marx, Bob McFall

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chuck Davison, Michael Wambolt, Brendan Pringle, Pam Roberts, Jordan Carson

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** John Arnold, Aaron Graves, Jay Jamison, Rachel Lima, JP Patel, Val Seymour

**MARKETING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ashlee Akers, Terrie Banish, Molly Cano, Amanda Diefenderfer, Gordon Jackson, Jennifer Little, Heather Muran

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**Call to Order at 3:07pm.**

#### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

Committee Discussion—None.

Public Comment—None.

#### CONSENT AGENDA

#### 3. Approval of May 5, 2016 Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Discussion—None.

Public Comment—None.

**ACTION:** Moved by Headding/Graves to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**Motion carried: 12:0**

## **BUSINESS**

### **4. Funding and Allocation**

Pringle highlighted the completion of VSLOC's first audit under the Management District Plan for FY15/16, which found no material weakness or deficiencies in internal controls. VSLOC has moved from a cash-based to an accrual accounting system for the FY16/17. The budget is being re-forecasted for Board review and approval on January 18 to align with the recently approved Strategic Plan and Operational Plan. Pringle provided a breakdown of the FY16/17 budget and the FY16/17 TMD funding received to date. He also provided an overview of staffing. Pringle noted that on-time assessment remittance has been a challenge for some communities, and requested that cities use ACH payment and VSLOC's remittance form when sending funds.

Committee Discussion – Lichtig asked for clarification on the staffing budget.

Public Comment – None.

### **5. District Highlights to Date**

Davison recapped the goals of the district and some of VSLOC's major highlights since the last meeting, including the development of a multi-year Strategic Plan and Operational Plan, new air service development from Seattle to SLO, event sponsorship, new brand development and efforts to target international markets like China and the UK. Davison described VSLOC's role and purpose in air service development. He noted the Board's decision to shift sponsorship funds to major events like AMGEN and taking the SAVOR – A San Luis Obispo County Experience on the road to regional food, wine and lifestyle events. He also described VSLOC's new branding and positioning, and explained the business case behind this major initiative.

Committee Discussion – Lichtig asked why Chicago was not considered as a flight destination. Davison explained that Denver is a hub for United Airlines and currently they don't see Chicago as a route option. Compton suggested there might be a potential branding conflict with the name of the gas company (SoCalGas). Frutchey asked if the brand resonates with non-English speakers. Davison responded that it resonates with non-English speakers and that linking SLO County back to California is key to its positioning. Frutchey also asked why VSLOC is targeting UK. Davison noted that, until this past year, the UK was the largest inbound market, and that many UK visitors are already travelling to Santa Barbara. Heading asked if VSLOC purchases data on international markets, and Davison noted that VSLOC currently subscribes to international VisaVue Travel data.

Public Comment – None.

### **6. Next Steps**

The Advisory Committee received a copy of the FY16-18 Marketing Plan. VSLOC has contracted with B&D for the development of a Countywide Conference Center Feasibility Study as approved by the Board in VSLOC's Strategic Plan. The goal of a conference center would be to solve for the gap in mid-week and shoulder season lodging business. Davison noted that this has become increasingly important with the impending closure of Diablo Canyon Power Plant. Davison discussed VSLOC's strong partnership with Visit California, and how their newest international television ad features sand boarders at Oceano Dunes. VSLOC's agreement with AEG for the 2017 AMGEN Tour of California is being finalized keeping the race in SLO County. The race will start in Pismo Beach, and end in Morro Bay.

Committee Discussion. Shah noted that Grover Beach is building a conference center and performed a feasibility study. She asked if there were ways to partner. Davison noted that B&D has access to the Grover Beach study, the Cal Poly study and others and the size and scope of the facility under review would be unlike anything currently in or planned for

in the county. Heading asked if there were any true metrics that showed that the international exposure of AMGEN translates to visits. Davison responded that their data does not drill down that deep.

Public Comment – None.

## **7. Open Questions and Discussion**

Davison requested feedback on the following open questions:

1. In your conversations, what are you hearing Visit San Luis Obispo County is doing well?
2. In your conversations, what criticisms are you hearing of Visit San Luis Obispo County and what areas of improvement should we consider?
3. In your specific communities, what can Visit San Luis Obispo County do for you?

Committee Discussion – Lichtig and Waage noted that they have heard complimentary feedback on the marketing that VSLOC is doing, Lichtig applauded VSLOC on balancing the needs of the community in a way that is respectful and professional. Heading noted that the strategic information and availability of data and metrics that VSLOC is providing is extremely helpful. Shah noted that many in Grover Beach likely don't even realize that VSLOC is responsible for the increase in occupancy and wedding venue bookings in the past year. Buckingham said that he always tells those opposed to the TMD that it takes some time to demonstrate results, and noted that VSLOC could do more to directly communicate their effectiveness in the short term. Heading and other Committee members commented that awareness was an issue, and recommended producing a two-page summary/scorecard to distribute to constituents. Rickards noted that the co-op advertising opportunities offered by VSLOC have been well-received in Atascadero. Bronson and Lichtig noted that importance of tourism infrastructure. O'Malley suggested that city managers and elected officials can help VSLOC lobby elected officials at the state level for important tourism related issues, and could assist communities in working closer together. Patel noted that the County is in a growth phase and encouraged the Advisory Committee members to start a discussion on workforce housing and the issue of illegal vacation rentals.

Public Comment – Brian Wright (Visit California) commented that VSLOC has come a long way in two years, and from the State of California's tourism perspective, VSLOC is doing a fantastic job.

## **8. Tourism Impact**

At the Central Coast Economic Forecast, Beacon Economics noted that the leisure and hospitality industry was the largest contributor to job growth in the county. Davison presented some key charts and graph from their presentation for support, and showed the countywide growth of RevPAR and occupancy. Davison also showcased VSLOC's Visa Vue Travel infographics, which are available to download on the Members Area of the VSLOC website.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned at 5:01pm.**

## **REMINDERS**

The next Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, June 1, 2017 at 3:00pm.