



Minutes

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

8:30am

Sands Inn & Suites

1930 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chuck Davison

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Amanda Diefenderfer, Christen Goldie, Brent Haugen, Gordon Jackson, Lori Keller, Heather Muran, Jennifer Porter, John Sorgenfrei

ABSENT: Judith Bean

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Becky Singh, Brendan Pringle, Kylee Jepsen, Pam Roberts, Jordan Carson

Call to Order at 8:30am.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Visit San Luis Obispo County has released its new 2016-17 Visitors Magazine. Magazines will be distributed next week.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of January 12, 2016 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

4. Approval of January 19, 2016 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment – None.

ACTION: Moved by Jackson/Porter to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion carried: 12:0

Allen arrived after this motion carried.

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. Update on Board Action

The Board approved the Marketing Committee's recommendation to take SAVOR on the road and accept proposals from those who wish to continue the SAVOR event. VSLOC would pursue 3-4 events a year (e.g. the San Diego Bay Food & Wine Festival).

The Board unanimously approved contracting with Merrill Research for the 2016 Research Project, and unanimously approved the FY2016-18 Marketing Agency RFP.

Originally, the Board voted to table the decision on a booking engine option for a few months as the website was developed. However, the Executive Committee requested that the Booking Engine item be added to the agenda and recommended the Booking.com (OTA) solution. The Board approved contracting with Booking.com for the booking engine on the VSLOC site.

Committee Discussion – Keller asked how the Board came to this decision, and if there was discussion about looking at other options down the road. Davison clarified that Booking.com costs nothing to start, and can be cancelled at any time. He also noted that many mid-level properties were not represented the last time the Board discussed this issue, and they felt that the bigger hoteliers were not allowing the smaller ones to capture this business. Davison noted that JackRabbit was a broken model, and this will offer an alternative. Booking.com will come in-market so that vacation rentals and B&Bs can meet with them.

Public Comment – None.

6. Marketing Agency RFP

Davison discussed the Marketing Agency RFP timeline. VSLOC has 14 intent-to-bids, and a few of the agencies represent some of the larger DMOs. Proposals are due February 18, 2016. VSLOC will conduct a full review February 19, 2016, and provide feedback to the Marketing Committee for the meeting on February 25, 2016.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

7. Coraggio Strategic Planning Proposal Update

VSLOC has begun discussions with Coraggio Group to create a strategic plan. Coraggio has worked with SLOTBID and Visit California, among others. The goal of the plan is to identify the top initiatives that will make VSLOC successful. The cost would be \$30,000 and the timeline to complete the plan would be April/May 2016, in concert with the completed research project. The Board will review their proposal on February 17, 2016.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei noted the importance of involving VSLOC's marketing agency in the process. Davison agreed that agency involvement would be valuable, but also clarified that Coraggio would only be creating a strategic plan, and not a marketing plan. Cano and Banish described their positive experiences with Coraggio at the SLOTBID and the City of Atascadero, respectively.

Public Comment – None.

8. Sponsorship

VSLOC has \$35,000 remaining in its sponsorship budget.

Festival Mozaic (July 13-24, 2016) has requested \$15,000 + \$5,000 in-kind media sponsorship. Davison highlighted the sponsorship benefits of their proposal, and noted that the 24% of attendees are out-of-market.

International Chardonnay Symposium (May 12-14, 2016) has requested \$50,000 in seed funding, and \$10,000 in marketing funding. Davison highlighted some of the sponsorship benefits.

Public Comment – Bettina Swigger, Executive Director of Festival Mozaic, noted how FM has grown and attracted an affluent out-of-market audience. She highlighted the many locations throughout the county where the event takes place. The average stay for guests is 3 nights, and many stay 5-7 nights. Swigger said that the \$15,000 would be spent mostly in print publications and direct mail marketing.

Linda Parker Sanpei, representing ICS, provided background on ICS, and noted that the event is truly an international event, and fills the void that was left by World of Pinot and other similar events that left the County. The seed funding would be spent to bring a high-caliber of attendees into the region.

Committee Discussion – Cano noted that Festival Mozaic is a world-class event, and that she sees this as an opportunity for it to grow. Haugen asked for clarification on the goal and purpose of sponsorship, and Davison noted that it is two-fold: 1) driving immediate results (heads in beds), and 2) helping consumers understand the market (long-term). Haugen expressed concern that the older demographic that attends Festival Mozaic is too limited, and that the event takes place during the high season. Sorgenfrei expressed a similar concern about the timing.

Jackson noted that ICS is definitely a “County” event, and would create an unbelievable opportunity for the County as it will stay perpetually local. Diefenderfer asked if there were efforts to bring events to North County, and Parker Sanpei responded that Tooth & Nail Winery might be holding a dinner, but that is still to be decided. Sorgenfrei said that it's important to look at the event from the consumer perspective: a consumer wouldn't want to drive to 10 different locations for an event. Muran said she saw the event as hugely beneficial. Porter suggested that the increase in anticipated attendance seemed dramatic. Parker Sanpei noted that the extended lead time in marketing the event will drastically increase attendance.

Diefenderfer asked to approve Festival Mozaic with the caveat that all funding be used for out-of-area marketing. Keller noted that FM was not just about heads and beds, but is a strong component of the County's cultural pillar. Jackson and Sorgenfrei supported the sponsorship on the basis that all funds be used towards out-of-area marketing.

Moved by Diefenderfer/Banish to recommend \$15,000 in sponsorship funds and \$5,000 in-kind sponsorship for Festival Mozaic, with a required focus on out-of-area marketing.

Motion carried: 11:2

Haugen opposed on the basis of a narrow demographic. Goldie opposed due to the peak season timing of the event.

Haugen expressed hesitation about the sustainability of ICS. Sorgenfrei noted that it has to have a certain amount of attendance in order to grow, and also noted that the event is different from other food and wine events in that it draws media, sommeliers and producers from all over the world. Porter noted that PRWCA's WineFest Event, a similar event, doesn't ask for funding. Porter also offered assistance in screening media. Cano suggested \$10k for seed funding and \$10k in marketing funding.

Moved by Cano/Goldie to recommend \$10,000 in seed funding and \$10,000 in marketing funding for the International Chardonnay Symposium.

Motion carried: 8:3:2

Muran/Sorgenfrei abstained.

**Haugen and Allen opposed, believing it set a precedent for other food and wine events to request funding.
Diefenderfer opposed because she didn't feel it was a countywide event.**

9. WebDAM

Item 9 was tabled due to time constraints.

10. DMO Spotlight – City of Pismo Beach

Item 10 was tabled due to time constraints.

11. American Airlines Co-op Opportunity

Sorgenfrei presented a new co-op opportunity that TJA Advertising and Mental Marketing organized—an 8-page advertorial in *American Way Magazine* (American Airlines' in-flight magazine). The total cost would be \$160,000, and would be covered in the approved VSLOC budget. Davison noted that American Airlines recently added a fourth flight from Phoenix to SLO, and that this would be a great showpiece to encourage other airlines (like Alaskan Airlines) to add flights to SLO.

Committee Discussion – Cano noted that San Luis Obispo could commit to it. Porter and Diefenderfer agreed that they could collaborate on a page. Jackson noted that Pismo Beach would be interested, and Banish noted that Atascadero would be interested.

Public Comment – None.

ACTION: Moved by Cano/Keller to recommend directing co-op funds to the *American Way* advertorial co-op opportunity.

Motion carried: 13:0

PRESENTATION

12. Catalyst Marketing

Catalyst Marketing informed VSLOC that they would not pursue the RFP process for FY2016-18. Davison highlighted some of the struggles that VSLOC has faced with Catalyst, and asked if the Committee saw any issues with terminating its contract with Catalyst.

Singh highlighted January metrics, unveiled VSLOC's new animated and static banners and pre-roll videos, and Davison noted that VSLOC's new press kit speaks to the breadth of the County. Davison and Singh presented two other co-op opportunities that Catalyst had recommended (*Phoenix Magazine* and *LA Magazine*), but the Committee expressed no interest in them.

Committee Discussion – The Committee did not express any concerns about terminating the contract with Catalyst. The Committee was not interested in the other co-op opportunities presented.

Public Comment – None.

CEO REPORT

13. CEO Report

Videos from the Winter Educational Symposium will be posted soon. The Tourism Vision Workshop will be happening on May 6, 2016, during National Travel & Tourism Week. Merrill Research will be delivering research results at the event.

Davison offered some highlights on SEO growth, and noted that January yielded a large increase in traffic, with 50,686 visitors.

Davison discussed a \$16,500 media opportunity that VSLOC is pursuing with BrandUSA in northwestern Canada, noting that Canada is a large market for the County.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:50am.