



Minutes

Visit San Luis Obispo Marketing Committee

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

8:30am

Embassy Suites

333 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chuck Davison

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Amanda Diefenderfer, Christen Goldie, Lori Keller, Heather Muran, John Sorgenfrei,

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Brendan Pringle, Michael Wambolt

Call to Order at 8:34am.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Davison thanked the Marketing Committee for their dedication these past few months, and introduced Becky Singh, VSLOC's Director of Marketing, who will start on December 14.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of November 10, 2015 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

C. Davison asked the Marketing Committee to approve the Consent Agenda.

ACTION: Moved by Sorgenfrei/Cuming to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**Motion carried: 8:0:2
Keller/Diefenderfer abstained.**

BUSINESS ITEMS

4. Update on Previous Month Board Meeting

Majority of the VSLOC Executive Committee felt that the OTA/Booking.com model was the best option due to the connectivity; however consensus was not reached on a solution to replace JackRabbit. The Board decided to put the Booking Engine item on hold until next year, allowing time to conduct further research, and authorized the removal of JackRabbit's referral engine from the VSLOC website—a savings of approximately \$2200 per month. This could be a topic at VSLOC's next Industry Educational Symposium on February 3, 2016. The Board also approved the build of a new website by Simpleview.

Committee Discussion — Sorgenfrei suggested going back to the community DMO boards in order to gain more consensus among constituents before choosing a new booking engine solution. Diefenderfer and Cano also suggested taking the issue up with the individual DMO boards, arguing that members represent the most active lodging partners, but Diefenderfer noted that 75% of the last symposium's attendance consisted of active board members.

Public Comment — None.

5. SAVOR the Central Coast Recap

Davison presented a recap of SAVOR the Central Coast. The Main Event attracted total of 3,964 unique attendees (excluding volunteers, staff, and vendors). The Opening Night Event attracted 1296 attendees. Adventure Tours attracted 394, and Special Events and Dinners totaled 260 attendees. According to the post-event survey, 9.4% of attendees stayed in a vacation rental, and the average stay was 2.6 nights. Web stats were not high from a traffic standpoint, as the SAVOR website has no SEO. This would be an expensive build, as it would need to be done 12 months in a row—not on and off. For the first time in the event's six-year history, the event was profitable (\$12,116.11 profit), all from cutting expenses. Davison also discussed Fast Forward Event's preliminary recommendations for 2016.

Committee Discussion — Cuming inquired if Hearst Castle was being considered for next year's Opening Night Event. Davison noted that challenges included decreased capacity and other costs, but that this was always an option. The Committee discussed the use of a centralized lodging booking process. Davison noted that the Fast Forward Ventures will be reviewing Sunset's involvement in future events, and pointed out changes at Sunset due to turnover. Sorgenfrei noted that it may be time to consider a new media partner, and suggested Wine Enthusiast might be an option. He suggested that in terms of media FAMs, DMOs should share the list of "flaky" journalists who take advantage, and don't produce any articles.

Public Comment — None.

6. DMO Spotlight – City of San Luis Obispo

Cano showcased the SLOTBID's new website (SanLuisObispoVacations.com), which just launched. She noted that the previous website was not even mobile-friendly, and the new site is fully responsive and visually inspiring. Cano also presented the new "ShareSLO" YouTube channel, and played several videos from the site, one of which received more than 50,000 views within the first week. Davison added that the company that produced the event, PMG, is currently doing a photo and video shoot for us.

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment — None.

7. Catalyst Marketing

7a. Research RFP Review

Mark Astone, CEO of Catalyst Marketing, noted that the fall media campaign launched on November 16, 2015. Banner ads and radio ads have been produced and launched.

Astone discussed the timeline for a Research RFP which would cover two different studies: 1) current demographics and a visitor share of wallet study; and 2) feeder market destination awareness study. These will set benchmarks moving forward. Proposals will be evaluated January 12. Then, on January 19, VSLOC would invite finalists to present. Data will be available by April or the beginning of May. Astone asked for the feedback of the Board on the RFP before it is sent out to agencies in the afternoon. He also noted that other buy-in options will be available for communities to get additional data. Davison added that once it is released, the final RFP document will be available on the Members Area of the VSLOC website.

Committee Discussion.

Public Comment – None.

7b. Fall Campaign Update Including Results to Date

Astone provided an update on Fall Campaign results. In terms of PR, Marc Gendron (Catalyst's Director of PR) reached out to 30 companies last month, with 5-8 interested in writing stories about the County. Catalyst has also drafted press kit materials, and requested several media FAMs. Astone gave an overview of popular keywords, geographical trends of mentions, and trending hashtags. He also presented the social media report for November. Catalyst is looking at underperforming areas and beginning the tweaking process in its digital marketing.

Committee Discussion—Diefenderfer noted that the data on geographical trends was great, but that it doesn't give direction or have anything to do with tourism or VSLOC. Astone responded that Catalyst is still drilling down into the data. Cuming asked if Catalyst was following the Facebook pages for all the DMOs. Davison responded that Jordan Carson, VSLOC's Marketing Coordinator, was monitoring all of these pages and using supporting hashtags in appropriate posts. Davison asked for feedback on the statistics, based on the campaigns run by the local DMOs. Sorgenfrei suggested building awareness in the area before the campaign. He added that digital is easy to track, but not always the most effective. Akers suggested that a lot of Verdin's campaigns have been more action-based, with contests and specials. She also suggested using Pandora, which has been effective at driving traffic for them. Sorgenfrei suggested boosting VSLOC's Facebook and Youtube marketing to build a strong fan base, and added that since radio is doing so well, VSLOC might want to consider shifting some of the digital marketing dollars to radio. He noted that DMOs could possibly do a "destination showcase hour," where all destinations were supporting one picture.

Public Comment – None.

7c. Countywide Icon Usage by Community DMOs

The VSLOC Board approved the Countywide Icon with the "SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY" text and white outline of the County. VSLOC is looking for input from DMOs on how this can be used. We will be sending renderings of this icon to you via email in the coming days.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

7d. Additional Co-op Options

Astone presented some much larger co-op opportunities in the Bay Area News Group publications, Sunset, SF Chronicle, and the OC Register for consideration. Davison said that VSLOC would be paying 50% of the cost.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei noted that the target is right, but the frequency might be an issue, as a newspaper advertisement would be a one-shot deal, with a short shelf life. He added that it might help if there was a contest related to it. Akers agreed that the short shelf life might be an issue. Cano noted that these opportunities weren't very much outside the box, and that she believed many of the DMOs could tap into Bay Area News Group. She added that she didn't want to just be shifting funds into co-op opportunities in media that SLO could already afford on its own. Sorgenfrei suggested placing ads in lifestyle publications instead. Diefenderfer said she would like to see some opportunities to reach Phoenix and other domestic and international feeder markets. Keller added that it will be interesting to see the research on brand awareness in these markets. Sorgenfrei added that he thought California should be the primary target. He noted that many people in California still haven't discovered the County. Allen asked if Catalyst had considered wine bottle neck tag ads. Davison responded that VSLOC is looking at opportunities to do a contest promo display at places like BevMo.

Public Comment – None.

8. CEO Report

VSLOC is still waiting for a decision from Alaska Airlines. Alaska is looking for a fall route, while the Airport and VSLOC were hoping for a spring route. VSLOC and the Airport have asked them to write letter of commitment to the DOT so that the Airport's \$500,000 grant can be extended into next year. A response is due back from Alaska Airlines before Christmas. All the conversation at the meeting with Alaska was very positive. Alaska Airlines was surprised with the \$100k that VSLOC offered in initial launch advertising.

VSLOC received positive feedback from the Advisory Committee meeting during its meeting on December 3, 2015. One key issue at the meeting was that of illegal vacation rentals.

A full photo and video shoot is scheduled for this week. This will provide a wide selection of quality digital assets.

The VSLOC office is closed December 24-25, 2015, as well as January 1, 2016.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2016. Location is TBD.

Committee Discussion – None.

Public Comment – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:36am.