



**Board of
Directors**

Michael Hanchett
Paul Panchal
Miguel Sandoval

Jeanne Hucek
Admin Coordinator

San Simeon Tourism Alliance

MEETING MINUTES
DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

A board meeting of the San Simeon Tourism Alliance was held on **April 17, 2018** at the Cavalier Cove Room, 250 San Simeon Avenue, San Simeon, CA 93452. It was called to order at 1:08 PM and was presided over by the President of the Board, Michael Hanchett, with Jeanne Hucek as secretary.

Board Members Present:

Mike Hanchett
Miguel Sandoval

Board Members Apologies:

Paul Panchal (excused absence).

Staff: Cheryl Cuming, SLO CBID CAO;

Jeanne Hucek, Visitor Center Coordinator and SSTA Recording Secretary.

Guests:

Jim Allen, Marketing & PR Director for Hearst Castle; Tim Bridwell, and Cam Arnold, Friends of the Elephant Seal (FES); John Ehlers, Adjutant American Legion Post 432; Taylor Hilden, Cambria Scarecrow Festival; Mark Hucek, General Manager, Cavalier Oceanfront Resort; Stacie Jacob & Brad Rubin, Solterra Strategies; Chelsea Modlin, Consumer Marketing Manager, Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance; Greg Pacheco, Cambria Inns; Carolyn Skinder, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary; Katie Sturtevant, Stewardship Travel Program Director

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENT(S)

Greg Pacheco was in attendance to represent Cambria Tourism Alliance. The Erocia California bicycle ride has shown interest in moving their event from the current headquarters in Paso Robles to our area. The 2018 event drew 1000 participants. To accommodate them Cambria will need help with funding and hosting they would like the board to acknowledge if there is interest in supporting. Michael indicated that San Simeon has interest in supporting collaborative efforts with Cambria as a whole and in specific this event. Greg advised that Wes Hatakeyama will contact SSTA directly.

CORRESPONDENCE

Michael reported that he would get together with Cheryl after the meeting to review the following items:

1. Contract from Mille Matz for two trade shows.
2. March billing from Solterra Strategies.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous March 20, 2018 meeting was made by Miguel and seconded by Michael, all were in favor.

SLO CIBD MONTHLY REPORT – Cheryl Cuming

Cheryl shared a success story about a jointly funded project in Cayucos to open the 1st street beach access and include a whale tail bench. She offered it as a creative and appropriate use of CBID collaborative funding. She reported that financially 18.3% of total bed tax returned to our community. Her observation of the TOT tax decline spurred a lengthy discussion about the health of the San Simeon tourism market due to the continued Hwy 1 closure. Cheryl advised the board that there's no problem with allocating the Solterra core marketing contract annually versus taking it all in one budget year. The County BIG program received 17 requests totaling just over \$250,000 for the \$100,000 in available funding.

SOLTERRA CORE MARKETING MONTHLY REPORT – Stacie Jacob

Stacie reported on several public relations efforts which included the following:

Road Tripper Blogger Julianne

CBS This Morning – *Aired March 4 and caused a spike in web traffic.*

Hearst Castle Spotlight – Parade Magazine

The Unexplorer, Susan Guillory

AFAR – Coordinating Hearst Castle photo shoot (Visit CA Pitch)

Cheryl added her thanks to Jim Allen for sharing the Great Big Story lead with her.

Sunset Travel Award

Visit SLO Cal

IPW Story Pitch

Chef Curtis Stone – *May 3 with 4 Australian Journalists*

CCTC Visitor Map

Visit SLO Cal

Hwy 1

Cheryl reported that she will approach Adam Sacks from SLO CAL, on collaborating on Hwy 1 re-opening campaign.

San Simeon Website – New content

FES 20th Anniversary Docent Interviews

New Blogs

Instagram Ready San Simeon

Family Featured Activity – Hiking the Boucher Trail

Brad re-viewed the analytics for the first four months of the new web site. He reports heavy traffic Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday. Organic traffic was up 15% in March for the first time since the new website launched. The results show a 71.95% attainment of the target goals. The overall bounce rate was favorable at 3.8%. The top out-of-area feeder markets were Los Angeles and San Francisco metro areas, Fresno, San Diego, Sacramento and San Jose. The website generated 466 book-now clicks. The March newsletter had an open rate of 15.5%. Stacie reported that there was growth in followers on all three social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Discussion

Ad word spend for coming months – It was agreed that Solterra should continue to spend at the current rate. Cheryl interjected that the board should consider using the funds leftover from the previous contract period toward this initiative.

REPORTS/UPDATES:

1. Visitor Center Report – Jeanne Hucek

Jeanne reported that foreign visitors accounted for 45.3% of the traffic seen at the center. The amount of traffic was down with a decrease in US visitor traffic of 30% whereas International was down 47% year over year.

Foreign (top ranked): Canada, Germany, Australia, China, Israel

The chamber is coordinating a Community Volunteer Fair to be held at the Cavalier Cove room on May 16, 4:00 – 6:00 PM to celebrate the current volunteers and all that they do for our community as well as to attract new ones. We have identified 16 organizations in the area that rely on volunteers and we will be inviting their current volunteers and asking for participation by manning a table to answer questions that attendees may have. More to come in the weeks to follow.

2. Alliance Partners Reports/Updates

HEARST CASTLE: Jim Allen shared that he passed along a schedule of publicity to Cheryl. Their visitor traffic continues to be down 15% as a result of the Hwy 1 road closure. The castle is hosting a film crew on Sunday, April 22, 2018 for Visit Australia.

FES: Tim Bridwell reported that the camera for the live feed at the Rookery has been experiencing some difficulty but seems to be working now. The Speakers Bureau is ready for summer and interested parties should reach out to schedule. Pot holes have been a problem this winter and Cal Trans has not been responsive, but Tim is learning that Sheri from the supervisor's office gets results. For the first time in years their board of directors is going to have a retreat to discuss the 5-10-year plan. This Sunday, April 22, 2018 nine new docents will graduate from their training program. The office manager, Wendy, has re-organized their space and Tim invites everyone to stop by.

3. Blendfest Update (Feb 9th-11th) – Chelsea Modlin

Friday night's dinner sold out. Sunday blending seminar sold out before the details were published on the website. They can attribute 245 room stays directly to the event. Chelsea indicated that they had great success partnering with a new wine app called Wine Ring. Ticket Sales were up 9%. The analytics showed that 77% of attendees had a

household income over \$100,000 and 25% enjoy a house hold income above \$200,000. In 2018, 58% of the attendees were above age 55 and 67% were from outside SLO.

4. Stewardship Travel Program (STP) Update – Katie Sturtevant

According to a recent poll, nearly 75% of travelers polled think it's important, somewhat important or extremely important that their travel dollars benefit the communities they visit. The Oceans movie which was played at the Hearst Castle Theatre during the Coastal Stewardship celebration drew over 4,000 attendees. They are working to identify a giveaway for guests who attend next year. She suggested that there is opportunity in offering Stewardship packages that are being missed and cited the Shoreline Inn in Cayucos as an example. There was discussion about the benefits of giveaway promotions.

5. Highway 1 Closure Update

There is interest in having a meeting with Tim Gubbins, Caltrans District 5 Director to discuss progress. Michael indicated that he has been in touch with SLO Cal and Big Sur and that they too have interest in meeting. All interested parties show concern over the length of the closure and the impact it's having on local business. Hearst Castle reports a 15% or greater drop in attendance. Lodging partners reported revenues as much as 40% below pre-closure levels. Following a spirited discussion about reporting metrics the board asked Cheryl for historical TOT tax information as some feel that the deficit could be even larger. Michael shared concern that another bad summer season could force some local businesses to close their doors.

6. Sunset Magazine Travel Award Submission

The judging will be conducted by Sunset's editorial staff, based on the following criteria: relevance to Sunset audience (50%); newsworthiness (20%); uniqueness (20%); aesthetic appeal (5%); convenience and feasibility (5%). The judging process will take place between February 28, 2018, and April 1, 2018, and winners will be announced in the August 2018 issue of Sunset.

ACTION ITEMS:

American Legion 4th of July Grant Request – John Ehlers

The American Legion has been presenting a firework show in Cambria for the last 35 years except for one year when the conditions were too dry, and they couldn't get a permit from the fire marshal. The costs are up to \$16,000. This ask is not in shoulder season and this year the holiday falls on a Wednesday. The Legion is hoping that the mid-week date will spur visitors to extend their experience through the front or back end of the holiday. They are in the process of re-designing the ticket stub for their raffles to capture email addresses. The Cambria Tourism Alliance has agreed to fund \$6000 of the \$16,500 that was requested. Carolyn thanked John for the thorough clean-up efforts on the beach.

Michael indicated that the board went back and looked at the fund history and noted that the initial grant award was for \$6000 with subsequent years at \$4000. Further, the board has made the recommendation that the organization work to find other long-term funding sources. John

affirmed that the Legion is working to find funding and that this week they send out 300 solicitations to local businesses seeking their support.

A motion to grant \$4000 to the American Legion for 4th of July Fireworks was made by Michael and seconded by Miguel, all were in favor.

In an effort to help the Legion raise funds towards their expenses and gain additional email addresses, the Cavalier agreed to donate a room package.

Cheryl clarified to John that the total of the grants that have been approved is more than \$5000 so the request will move forward to the county CBID for their consideration. She commented that the peak-season aspect of the ask is a concern as the application clearly states shoulder season as a requirement. Michael remarked that the current market conditions in San Simeon should help mitigate this concern for 2018 as this is an unusual environment.

1. Ocean Fair MBNMS Grant Request – Carolyn Skinder

This year will mark the 9th year of the Ocean Fair, a stewardship program which provides learning opportunities to attendees. For 2018 the fair has been scheduled for August 25th which is when most school districts in the draw area are back in school, so while it's not in the shoulder season that's defined by the county it is the period that San Simeon starts to feel the effects of a lag in traffic. The MBNMS shares this event with 20 conservation partners. The fair is during peak whale season and historically the attendance falls between 600 and 800 people with many return visitors.

Cheryl clarified that the total expenses are \$5234 but that the request is to cover the cost of the tents and Carolyn confirmed that this is the case. As a follow up Cheryl confirmed that the fair does not make any income.

The application states that the MBNMS as a federal agency is not permitted to solicit for email addresses of the general public. The board recommended that they work with their partners and volunteers to find a resource that can collect the data. In an effort to help obtain email addresses, the Cavalier agreed to donate a room package and Miguel offered to include dinner at the San Simeon Lodge.

Cheryl indicated that she is working on standardizing a survey to be used at sponsored events. Cheryl will follow up and provide the survey questions to Carolyn.

A motion to grant the requested \$2229.50 was made by Miguel and seconded by Michael, all were in favor.

Meeting adjourned: 2:42 pm

**Next Regular Advisory Board Meeting:
Date and Time: May 15, 2018 @ 1:00pm
Location: Cove meeting Room**