



**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 **July 17, 2018** at the Cavalier Cove Room, 250 San Simeon Avenue, San Simeon, CA 93452. It was called to order at 1:03 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
Paul Panchal

Staff: Cheryl Cuming, SLO CBID CAO;
Jeanne Hucek, Visitor Center Coordinator and SSTA Recording Secretary.

Guests:

Lynette Harris and Cam Arnold, Friends of the Elephant Seal (FES); Jim Bahringer, Chair Cambria Tourism Board and Cambria CSD; Ryan Cooper, Piedras Blancas Light Station; Dennis Frahman, Cambria Center for the Arts and Cambria Scarecrow Festival; Taylor Hilden, Cambria Scarecrow Festival; Mark Hucek, General Manager, Cavalier Oceanfront Resort; Stacie Jacob & Brad Rubin, Solterra Strategies;

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENT(S)

CORRESPONDENCE

Cheryl reported that she would get together with Michael after the meeting to review the following item:

1. Billing from Solterra Strategies.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the two previous (May 15, 2018 and June 7, 2018) meetings was made by Miguel and seconded by Paul, all were in favor.

SLO CIBD MONTHLY REPORT – Cheryl Cuming

Cheryl reported that the five-year relationship with Coraggio Group, the firm they retained to help them develop a strategic marketing framework, came to an end in June. Their goal for August is to start the execution of the 8-9 marketing initiatives that were identified. Stay tuned for more to come on this in the future.

Cheryl provided a synopsis of some great coverage that we recently enjoyed.

National Park eBlast

Cambria: Best CA Walking Towns - USA Today

Cambria: #7 Happiest Seaside Town in America - Coastal Living

Cheryl complimented the board on the manner in which they regularly conduct themselves and provided them with a copy of a document titled Code of Civility for their reference.

Cheryl commented on the Synopsis of 2017 report that looked back over the past year. Since the inception of the CBID, (FY 2009/2010 vs 2016/2017) the overall growth in TOT has increased 57%. The CBID has been marketing the region as the CA Highway 1 Discovery Route, a consumer facing brand since late 2014. They are entertaining an opportunity to partner with SLO CAL on implementing Revivalist ware, a tool that tracks visitor movement and spending. July 2017 - April 2018 San Simeon has received 18% of the BID assessment collected, which is down from 20% last year.

Finances

From Jan to June 2018 San Simeon's contribution was down by 12.8 percent to the total CBID assessment which was down 3%. Available funds – \$173,132.58

SOLTERRA CORE MARKETING MONTHLY REPORT – Stacie Jacob/Brad Rubin

Stacie reviewed their public relations efforts.

- She announced that San Simeon is being featured in the August issue of Sunset Magazine as a Runner Up in the Day Trip category. This provided exposure to the 2.5 million readers of the publication for a mere \$425 entry fee. Well done Solterra Strategies!
- With regard to the social media efforts, we are closing in on 5,000 Facebook followers.
- Jim Allen shared a list of upcoming press visits to Hearst Castle for us to touch base with for this or a future trip/editorials.
- Her team is working with writers from both the LA Times and the San Jose Mercury on articles relating to the impact of the 547 day road closure. Stacie is looking for businesses that are willing to comment, she asks that folks reach out through Jeanne.
- The July eBlast newsletter will feature the Hwy 1 ribbon cutting ceremony.

Brad reported on the analytics.

- From January – June 30th, returning visitors are on the rise. All green is all good!
- Year over Year acquisitions – On organic search we now own the top three spots on google. He noted that searches are focusing on a brand component which is compelling.
- June saw the all-time record for number of users. 8,347.

- Paid search was 50% of the traffic and organic traffic almost doubled. YOY organic was up 71%.
- In terms of Channel acquisition, we've seen more traffic than we've ever had.
- There were 1033 reservation leads in June. Paid search led to 412 reservation leads at a cost of \$4.13 per lead and a conversion rate of 7.7%.
- For the first time we had a high number (78) of organic email acquisitions.
- Camping had 206 leads, Cavalier was second with 92 and San Simeon Lodge enjoyed 54 which was a huge jump for them which Brad attributes to the new photos and video that were recently added to the site.
- Ad word spend was \$1702.72
- Brad shared the STR report with the group, noting that San Simeon is the only area in the county with a growth in occupancy since May 20th.
- For June, Solterra sent 5781 eBlast newsletters. 1566 people opened the newsletter, an open rate of 27.09%.
- He indicated that they have dedicated space on the news page where we feature interviews from the Friends of the Elephant Seal docents. He also provided a copy of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines for our reference.
 - Dennis Frahman asked Brad if he can provide the Scarecrow Festival folks with feedback on the behavior of the visitors from the list they provided. Cheryl spoke to a better way to go about getting that data. She suggested that they consider sending a follow up email as tickets are purchased which recommends accommodations in the area and provides a link to the San Simeon website.

REPORTS/UPDATES:

1. Visitor Center Report – Jeanne Hucek

- Jeanne reported that foreign visitors accounted for 42.4% of the traffic seen at the center. The amount of traffic was down 15.6% from 2017 to 2018 with 656 visitors and an average of 27 visitors served per day. California composed of 30%. Foreign (top ranked): Germany, England, China, Australia, Canada.
- Visit SLO Cal Brand Ambassadors visited the Piedras Blancas Light Station and Ragged Point.
- Good Life Florida Magazine visited our area and stayed at the Cavalier.
- SuperFAM 18 – UK announced that San Simeon will be included in their tour this October.
- Chamber partnered with Cambria Scarecrow Festival folks to host San Simeon Scarecrow Children's Workshop held on June 19th. The event was well attended with more than 27 guests and completed 9 scarecrows.
- The San Simeon Chamber attended the American Legion 4th of July festivities with the Cavalier Oceanfront Resort and collected email addresses in exchange for the opportunity to win a two-night stay. Local resident, Carole Adams was the lucky winner!
- Jeanne noted the upcoming Sunset Soiree event that the Pacific Coast Wine Trail is hosting to benefit Piedras Blancas Light Station on Erin Martin's, (Harmony Cellars) behalf.

- The search for additional volunteers for the Visitor Center continues. Fingers crossed that one is starting next Tuesday!

2. Alliance Partner Reports/Update:

Friends of the Elephant Seal: Lynette Harris and Cam Smith-Arnold

Lynette Harris announced that they recently welcomed their new docent coordinator, Carol Henderson. They have exhausted their supply of the 50,000 rack cards in just nine months. They have placed another order of 50,000. The Friends of the Elephant Seal newsletter, Among Friends, is enjoying a circulation of 850 interested parties. The latest edition will feature an article about Highway 1 opening. Visitor traffic is down 15% to last year and 34% to 2016. FES has been attending the Coastal Stakeholders meeting and enjoying the collaboration among partners. Lately, they are experimenting with setting up a Family (aka School Group) table at the bluff and so far, it has been well received. FES plans to march in the Pinedorado Parade and to create a scarecrow.

Cambria Scarecrow Festival – Taylor Hilden and Dennis Frahman

Taylor reported how excited the group is to be celebrating the 10th Anniversary this year. She went on to share that there's a new vibe within the organization as they work diligently toward October. Dennis spoke to some to their campaign to get additional funding. New this year, the kick off appreciation event is a series of fun filled activities including a Treasure Hunt Mystery dinner in September and Octoberfest celebration in conjunction with the Lyons club where winners will be awarded. If possible, the Cambria Scarecrow Festival would like to see the children of San Simeon attend.

Cambria Tourism Council – Jim Bahringer

Jim noted that Pinedorado is coming up. He shared that the CTC may sponsor the Car Show and Chili Cook Off next April.

Piedras Blancas Light Station – Ryan Cooper

Ryan reported that the Wednesday Hike In tours are going well so far this summer. They are looking forward to the Hops for Tops event in October. The seismic retrofit to the Fog Signal building is almost done. A part of the Water Tower communication project went live on Monday. He looks forward to cleaning up the old communication equipment from the property.

3. Highway 1 Opening Update

Michael announced that he has received confirmation from Cal Trans that Highway 1 will open Wednesday, July 18, 2018 at 10:00. Stacie invited the audience to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony planned for Friday, July 20, 2018 at 11:00 AM. She also shared that someone from Solterra will be visiting to take photos in the near future. According to Cheryl and Stacie Co-Op advertising is slated to begin before the Friday ceremony.

DISCUSSION:

1. Marketing Option

Chinese Tourism Development via California

Michael asked for an update on this opportunity. Jeanne explained that we were contacted by Lillian Zheng who operates a firm that seeks to improve travel to the US for Chinese visitors and publishes the Middle Land Newsletter which targets LA, NYC, Orange County, San Diego, San Francisco -Northern CA. Stacie and Jeanne determined that this opportunity is better entertained at the county level of the marketing funnel.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Funding Consideration for H1 Co-Op

Visit SLO CAL recently announced a new advertising co-op opportunity designed for their partners in the North Coast, Morro Bay and Los Osos areas in celebration of the reopening of Highway 1 at the end of this month. The campaign will run for a minimum of 4 weeks beginning July 16-August 12. Depending on participation, campaign could extend to 6 or 8 weeks. Visit SLO Cal has committed \$40,000 to anchor this project and is seeking \$10,000 per destination to participate. Cheryl identified matching funds that CBID is able to bring to the table for this effort.

The proposal includes the following for a \$5,000 ask:

- Advertising for general SLO CAL Highway 1 experience
- Video Social Media Ads - ~33%
- Carousel Social Media Ads - ~33%
- SEM on Google - ~33%
- Custom Highway 1 landing page
- Highway 1 round-up blog
- New Highway 1 pre-roll video

Mark Hucek asked what is being done to prevent local, regional, and state resources from buying the same ad words, effectively competing with one another. Brad suggested that San Simeon invest in SEM instead.

A motion to approve \$5,000 in funding to be matched by the CBID for the Highway 1 Co-Op was made by Miguel and seconded by Paul, all were in favor.

In addition to the co-opportunity detailed above, Visit California – in partnership with Caltrans, Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau and Visit SLO CAL – are planning Hwy 1 Dream Drive experience in early August. The event is being designed exclusively for global media and influencers to be able to take part in a once-in-a-lifetime journey. Members of the media will have a front seat for an unforgettable day on the road. Airfare, transportation, meals and accommodations for the Dream Drive will be provided.

RECAP OF THE EVENT (Tentative)

In a nod to 84 years of Highway 1, the Dream Drive will assemble a convoy of automobiles from 1934 to 2018 for a caravan drive down the coast, from Monterey County to San Luis Obispo County, inviting an exclusive group of global journalists and influencers to come along for the ride.

The Dream Drive will kick off on the morning of August 9th with a ceremonial pace car-led lap around the famed WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca before heading down the coast. There will be a few group breathtaking photo opportunities and meal stops along the way to round out the experience. The caravan will cross the finish line in Morro Bay, where everyone will partake in a once-in-a-lifetime Golden Hour event and car rally in the shadow of Morro Rock. The evening festivities will take place from 5:00 – 8:00 PM.

San Simeon has already committed to host 8 -10 journalists during the event. A spirited discussion ensued as the board and the audience had many questions regarding the opportunity to partner with Visit SLO Cal. The group exhibited a strong desire for the LFA to participate, as the subject matter experts, in building the experience for San Simeon. Cheryl indicated that there's an ongoing component to this marketing opportunity. She also shared that the CBID has authorized her to match any funds for lodging and dining expenses that the LFA spends up to \$5,000.

Paul made a motion to approve up to \$5,000 in expenses for 8-12 journalist as part of the Dream Drive campaign with the stipulation that the funding come out of the unused funds from the previous Solterra Strategies contract, and that the CBID match \$5,000 with any unused portions being reserved. Miguel seconded the motion, all were in favor.

2. Beach Cleanup Bag Reproduction

A motion to approve up to \$5,500 for the re-order of Beach Cleanup Bags was made by Paul and seconded by Miguel, all were in favor.

3. Christmas Buses to Cambria Pines Lodge

The board has been asked to consider a proposal for San Simeon to host a bus shuttle for visitors attending the Christmas Market. There were concerns over funding. Mark Hucek suggested that they could consider offering bus shuttle on a limited number of nights like just Fridays and Saturdays. Michael indicated that he would like to support Hearst Castle tours during the same time frame.

Miguel made a motion to approve \$16,380 in funding for the Christmas buses to the Cambria Pines Lodge, the motion did not carry.

4. Electronic Messaging Signs

Michael indicated that he hopes to have a conversation with Tim Gibbons on Friday at the ribbon cutting ceremony to see what Cal Trans plans in regard to electronic boards at the gateway to Big

Sur and in our area. If there's interest in adding additional electronic signs, it would come at a cost of \$1200 per sign, per month and it would require Cal Trans approval.

5. Castle Christmas Tours

In light of the Board's interest in supporting Hearst Castle during the winter months, Jeanne will explore the offerings and guidelines to working it through with the Castle.

6. Cambria Film Festival

Dennis provided an overview of the funding request to support the Cambria film festival. Based on the results of their survey from last year, the festival is projecting that out of area visitors will represent 50% of attendees. They are targeting their marketing materials toward out-of-county visitors and working closely with hoteliers to create packaging opportunities. The festival has received 13,000 film from around the world for consideration thus far.

A motion to approve \$ 1,500 in funding for the Cambria Film Festival was made by Paul and seconded by Miguel, all were in favor.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Michael informed the board that there are several grant opportunities available as a result of the California Gas Tax for beautification projects such as:

Highway 1 Fencing

Bike Path

Pacific Coast Trail

Coastal Commission Bridge

Interest in working to attain available grant monies would include an initial spend to employ a firm such as Oliver Consulting to revise the community plan. The board showed interest in moving forward.

2. Cheryl asked the board to add an agenda item to consider funding Jim Allen's inclusion on the IPW conference in 2019.

Meeting adjourned: 3:02 pm

Next Regular Advisory Board Meeting:

Date and Time: August 21, 2018 @ 1:00pm

Location: Cove meeting Room