



CARMEL RESTAURANT IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (CRID)

COMMITTEE MEETING

At Sunset Center and via Video Conference

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 10 am

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Ken Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Gian Pepe, Pepe Int'l (virtual); Alyssa Ross; Il Fornaio (virtual); Lorena, Grill on Ocean Ave; Anthony Carnazzo, Stationaery; Monique Black, Chez Noir; David Huh, Sushi Heaven.

Committee Members Absent: April Montgomery, Links Club.

Also in Attendance: Amy Herzog, Visit Carmel Exec Director; Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Dani Hannah, The Abbi Agency; Rigo, Folktale; Rich Pepe, Pepe International; Walter Georis, Casanova; Wendy Walker, ASB; Kristen Ridout, Toro Sushi.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Ken called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

Public Comment:

None.

Minutes: Ken asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes from June 18. Monique made motion to approve, G seconded. Approved unanimously.

Executive Director Report:

Quick intros done.

Amy reviewed goals for the meeting today including review of the CRID Mission; major projects; marketing priorities for the future; open discussion.

CRID has been approved thru 2033. Current assessment rate is 0.25%. Originally formed to meet the marketing needs of the restaurants with a self-sustaining financial fund.

Original objectives were reviewed, and included creating marketing that would serve the needs of all restaurants. We'd like to come back to these objectives and make adjustments.

Also reviewed Visit Carmel's overall funding – 80% of which comes from hotel overnight stays.

Discussion ensued about some of the misstatements that have been made regarding the availability of these funds to the City. Amy explained how Improvement Districts work in terms of City collecting the

funds and Visit Carmel being the Administrator of these funds. City cannot co-opt these funds for other purposes.

Marketing Report:

Jeff reviewed the overall destination campaign currently running – *A Storybook Kind of Place*. All the different kinds of paid media – digital, print, broadcast. Added Connected or Streaming TV which gives us a national presence, heavily CA of course.

Also added *Check Please* – SF Bay Area PBS show. Huge affluent regional audience. Also a kick off event here last Spring.

Review of really increased metrics on clicks and visits to website. Also City TOT data showing increases in occupancy and rate.

Jeff reported on the IP data on how many visitors are going to the restaurants. (1.1 M visits into restaurants, shows increase over last year.) One follow up question: Can we determine how many visitors are “local” and how many are from elsewhere.

Other input: Let’s make sure to focus on marketing even more locally during the slow season.

Review continued about the “Culinary Carmel” reels for social media. Two general sizzle reels focus on regional and then the drive market gets fed a separate one that encourages overnight visit. The also showed the individual restaurant reels. 22 have been done so far.

Printed pieces reviewed including the new Carmel Dining Guide 8-page insert. Also the tear-pad map which is the hotel work horse.

Discussion about Culinary Week. Review of why we created the event in the first place. It supports the overall branding as a culinary destination. It has been growing. 40 participating restaurants this past year.

Feedback from the restaurants re Culinary Week: Monique pointed out that we should try to incorporate some of our natural spaces into the festival. Make it more of an experience. Walter also concurs. Had been wanting a free event where all restaurants donate. To make a culinary statement we need to show our best. Perhaps it’s a bunch of pop ups. Candlelight dinners outside. Take advantage of the walking destination. Anthony suggested a smaller version of Outstanding in the Field vibe. Take even more advantage of the walkability factor. Wendy also suggested that her staff would have more buy in if perhaps some restaurants were partnered together. A huge challenge is getting the participation. Excitement for ideas is one thing, but getting the restaurants to do something beyond their restaurants is challenging. Walter and others suggested quality over quantity. Maybe less restaurants, but more cool factor and high level. Locations: beach, Forest Theater, Sunset Center. Maybe we lean on Nile to create a Concours for a Cause sort of event for CCW.

PR and Social Media Report:

Dani started with a review of top earned media hits for the past year, which included 120 media placements with 24M in estimated view counts. Highlights in Goop, WSJ, Diablo, The Observer and Atlanta Journal.

Social media had increased across the board in impressions, engagement and audience size. Implementation of Tik Tok and more video content creation.

Also highlighted recent placement in Sept of Food & Wine placement. Also in Sept focused on Meet the Makers as well as a new Skip Gen influencer campaign. Great hit in SJ Merc News this past month, Observer, Sunset mag and Business Insider. T+L placement about whitest sand.

Showed some of the fams coming into market.

Social media in Sept had big increases in metrics as well. Showed individual stakeholder posts. Top content is video. (Added Veronica, who is local, to capture organic footage of scenes and events in town.) Discussion about how integrated the social media is and some examples of in-person feedback we have had from visitors.

Open Discussion:

Amy referred to the survey responses. Seems that most comments focused on building events, focus more locally during winter, focus on quality and creativity of restaurants. Amy feels that the quality and creativity has improved during the past 5 years. And we are becoming more well-known for food & wine but have room to grow.

Discussion turned to how much improved some of the Culinary Week events could be and also how we could have a stronger community if we had a closer social connection between the restaurants. Instead of the morning meetings with lawyers and insurance, what about just a regularly scheduled social gathering? Walter was especially pushing for this, but the group concurred.

Focused on humanizing the stories. Showed a review of Best Kept videos. Furthermore this is an opportunity for generational knowledge -- the younger restaurateurs to learn from the older generation who have been here for so long.

Decided to create a gathering. Have Walter, Pepe, Tony Salameh, and Ken speak. Film it for a story of the way the community here comes together (Best Kept footage). Maybe different restaurants can take turns hosting it and also make it a potluck? Another storytelling idea is that there are so many restaurant owners who used to work at other restaurants – Anthony working for Pepe when he was 17. Wassim worked at Village Corner and then at Anton & Michel before starting the Grill on Ocean Ave.

For Culinary Week, perhaps we have pods around town and pair restaurants together? Enlist Nile to help us with this, perhaps in addition to or in place of the Farmer's Market Showdown.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting: none.

Meeting adjourned at 11:42 am.