



VISIT CARMEL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
Sunset Center and on Zoom
Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921
Thursday, November 21, 2024
2:00 PM

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark Watson, Inns-by-the-Sea; Carrie Theis, Hofsas House; Amy Herzog, Executive Director; Candace Fecteau, Stilwell Hotels, Chip Rerig, City of Carmel; Mary Crowe, Marc + Rose; Rich Pepe, Pepe International (virtual); Greg Ahn, Folktale, Mark Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; Tim Twomey, CRA; Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber of Commerce; Michael La Pier, Monterey Airport; Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber of Commerce.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Nicole Dore, Visit Carmel; Dani Hannah(virtual), and Brittany Bober(virtual), Ty Whitaker, The Abbi Agency (virtual); Suzanne Gravelle(virtual), CAR; Dale Byrne, Carmel Cares; Lindsey Stevens, See Monterey; Ken Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Ashlee Wright, City of Carmel; April Montgomery, Links Club.

Pam Sheppard, Chair, called the Meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dale Byrne made a request for funding for improvements for Ocean Avenue median restoration project. Kati discussed preliminary ATT Shuttle plans.

MINUTES:

Mark Watson made a motion to accept the minutes from October 15, 2024. Mary Crowe seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

BOARD ELECTION

Amy Herzog asked to close nominations for Board Elections and to elect as a slate the new and returning board members.

Chip Rerig moved to approve Mark Stilwell as nomination for Board Member. Mary Crowe seconded. Unanimous passing of acceptance.

Motion to approve slate of members as presented by Pam Sheppard, seconded by Greg Ahn. Board elections as follows:

- Chip Rerig
- Greg Ahn
- Pam Sheppard
- Mark Stilwell

- Michael La Pier
- Tim Twomey
- Kati Enea

Vote passed unanimously with no abstentions.

SEE MONTEREY

Lindsey Stevens offered the update from See Monterey for November 2024

- Presented overviews for Q1 with earned media and public relations.
- Presented the luxury campaign re-design “seek and find”
- Launching new website on December 4th with AI integration
- MONTEREY County Tourism 2030 roadmap
 - Realignment of tourism economy potential
 - Including consideration of new hotel rooms in county and opportunity presented.
 - Looking at larger community planning moving forward
 - Analysis of residence perception of importance of tourism in Monterey County shown by area
 - Breakout of new guest rooms 1000+, over 600 already under construction
 - Overall discussion of general satisfaction of residence in county
 - Visitor Profile Study break down of visitor demographic, reasons for travel, and method of arrival
 - Presentation of themes for Managed Growth

EVOLVING THE ORGANIZATION:

Presented by Amy Herzog. Possibility of changing structure of current organization.

Currently we are a 501c not for profit with no employees, office space, meeting space, equipment or storage space. In 2025 we become a 10 – year old company funded by the original CHID and now the CRID as well as the City and special projects. CHID was formed as a 1% assessment on overnight stays with a 5-year term. It is now 2% with a 10-year term.

Research shows most DMOs do have employees.

State of CA has specific conditions for employment status independent contractors versus employees. In consideration employee packages will need to be considered as well as payroll insurance policies as well as space considerations.

Looking to form an Ad Hoc committee regarding this possible transition. Budget considerations would be in the forefront moving forward.

Mark Watson spoke in favor. Mark Watson, Pam Sheppard and Mary Crowe will be involved in committee.

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Amy offered an update on Destination Stewardship, beginning with statement of importance of sustaining resources. Discussed ways we reach community w/the message of “love Carmel like a local”.

- Working with Chamber to be the hub for some of the messaging and swag with appropriate messaging. This can be a revenue generator for the Chamber, with some of the funds earmarked to support local efforts.

In recent surveying, 72% of local residents agree that Destination Stewardship is a valuable effort.

Looking at the next steps:

- Create a task force including members of the community.
 - VC board member, CRA, Chamber, and a Representative from the City. Who else?
- Examine the Vision
- Revise strategy with clear guidelines
- Recommendations for direction to Board of Directors of Visit Carmel for feedback.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Annual Report and marketing plan completed.

Challenges –

Slow Q1 & Q2
Lagging international
Strong competition

Opportunities-

Storybook marketing campaign
Hotel inventory back at higher rates
Expanded culinary scene

Stakeholder Communications and Community Relations

- Innkeeper dinner at La Playa
- Carmel Chamber Partnership
 - Visitor Center
 - Printed Materials/content – redesign of key brochures

Meet the Makers Recap

- Better flow and dispersing of attendees
- 433 tix sold over 350 LY
- New Branding
- Centralized start location
- Cross promoting

Airport Update

- Mike La Pier announcing his retirement in June
- Sun Country MSP To MRY 70% - experiment
- Paid media Co-op in fly markets

Marketing Opps and Networking

- Visit California Outlook Forum
- Central Coast California

RFP for Social Media Services

- Proposed timeline suggestion
- Beginning January 6 with Decision planned for March 20 and start of July 1

Upcoming

- Next meeting December 19 - Closed session contract renewal for marketing director
- January 6 - PR/Social Media RFP release
- January 16 - Annual Meeting at La Playa

MARKETING UPDATE:

Jeff Burghardt presented the marketing update.

2024 Integrated Marketing

- Breakdown of Digital/TV Media and new 2024 Media incl Check Please, addition of MNTN.
- Special Offers and Packages landing page utilized much more

2024 Record results

- New users 1.2 M
- Landing page up 1,535% change
- Hotel Referrals 2024 exceeds all previous
- TOT increase of 25.5%
- Have new IP data from cell phones for overnight stays
 - Up 13% in overnight stays based on this
 - Will soon have spend data
 - Overnight by region

2025 Growth Strategies

- AI ready Media
- Google Performance Max – will test that
- Check Please! paid ads again
- Meta – can create VIP Audience to push offers
- MNTN connected TV – “hardest working software in Television”. 9.7M TV ad views from Jan 2024 thru November, with 50K click thrus to website. 1M households reached. Top geo areas are LA, SF/Oakland, Sac/Central Valley.
- Email Marketing – with new refreshed look. Lowest cost, greatest return.

Fly Market Campaign

- Paid Social and CTV (Facebook/Instagram/MNTN)
- Customized ads to each market
- MRY invested \$30K total to the co-op

Carmel Wine Walk

- Overhauled the app and updated the printed brochure
- New Digital Campaign
- 616% up YOY – 1,400 users since August!

Meet the Makers

- 74% over the year before in terms of traffic to page

Restaurant Campaign

- Ads run both locally and regionally
- Restaurant Reels – 26 completed. Organically posted and then boosted.
- 260% increase Website Traffic YOY. And a HUGE increase in Culinary Week web traffic.
- Print Ad and Dining Guide Booklet – Great Reception

New Brand Assets

- New Video Shoot continuing. Use David Martinez each time so that it all works together with same look and feel.
- Focus on Culinary/Wine/Art/Lifestyle/Hotels
- New Exciting Creative including Storybook kind of place

PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE:

Dani Hannah and Brittany Bober presented:

October Recap

- Focus on crush season and upcoming holidays
- 8 media placements - 3 regional, 4 national. Incl Food & Wine mag as major highlight
- 5 Upcoming FAMs

Influencer collaborators

- Skip Gen Influencer campaign – hits both new younger market as well as current Carmel Demographic. @Saramer has 6.2% engagement rate and content had great results.
- Coming up is Emma Grace and Memama
- Costal Grandma – Lex Nicoleta
- Seattle Tasting Twins – focus on culinary, ease of travel between two destinations. MRY co-op.

Social Media Performance

- Substantial YOY growth with 2,291 new followers
- 6M impressions
- Engagement 9.4 % rate (105% increase YOY)
- Engagements in Facebook/Instagram up
- TikTok showing increases above industry average
- Reviewed stakeholder partner posts for the month and most popular posts.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mark Watson presented the October financials.

Balance Sheet

\$1.295 M total bank accounts

- \$53K up in revenue for the month
- PR and social spending on track YTD
- Marketing over budget slightly – timing
- Admin on track

Comp Set – July/August period

- Increase 12% RevPAR for August only down to Morro Bay
- 82% occupancy - 3% increase YOY in occupancy. Tied with Monterey.
- ADR up 8% YOY to \$450 – new hotels coming back online
- We have 17% share of comp set – up 9%

When you look at change in CPI vs change in TOT, the creation of the CHID has rocketed the TOT, 93% increase over CPI. Marketing the destination works! General discussion regarding occupancy percentages in Carmel. Effects. Outcomes and ways to drive occupancy responsibly. Note of caution that Smith Travel Research is downgrading its 2025 predictions due to economic headwinds. Concern over flat sales tax collections discussed. Also, challenges of maintaining a healthy occupancy is different based on size of hotel.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Pam Sheppard Adjourned the meeting at 4:30 PM