

MINUTES
CITY OF PISMO BEACH
Conference & Visitors Bureau
Wednesday, April 16, 2008, 3:00 P.M.
Council Chambers, 760 Mattie Rd.
Pismo Beach, CA 93449

ROLL CALL 3:10 PM

Chair Jamison called the Meeting to Order

Boardmembers Present: Chair Jay Jamison, Vice Chair Chet Hogoboom,
Gary Baker, Joseph Scott

Boardmembers Absent: Tamara Burnes

Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Kris Vardas
Staff Present: Suzen Brasile, CVB Executive Director

Chamber of Commerce: Rebecca McMurry
Public: John Sorgenfrei, TJA Advertising
Rick Turton, Pacific Leisure Marketing
Gordon Jackson, Mission Inn of Pismo Beach
Marilee Hyman, Resident

OPENING BOARD COMMENTS

Councilmember Vardas spoke about China tourism rising.

Vice Chair Hogoboom said March was a strong month and April was more challenging. Gas prices affect tourism.

Chair Jamison said there's not much spending. Spring Break was down from last year, projections looking good. More cancel their long trips and made reservations for here for shorter trips. Depends on where the Spring Break falls.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. McMurry announced tickets for the Chamber's Taste of Pismo event on April 27, 2008 and brought extra posters. Tickets are \$50 per person.

Ms. Hyman said she polled 67 adults at the East Egg Hunt, and found out about it from the website, hotels called it mixed media.

Mr. Jackson said March was a strong month; April picked up 7% the end of the month 60% to 70% occupancy. He attended a SLO County BID Meeting and they approved 5-0 the first step in forming a City Tourism Business Improvement District. John Solo, a Morro Bay hotelier, and San Luis Obispo County VCB Boardmember, is acting as director.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action: Boardmember Baker made a Motion to approve the Minutes as presented, seconded by **Boardmember Scott**. Motion passed 4-0-1, Boardmember Burnes

2. BUSINESS ITEMS

a) **VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER REPORT**

Ms. McMurry said phone calls to the Visitor Information Center were up in March from last year. They haven't heard many complaints about the paid parking. Most people are just confused about where the paid parking is. Target date for opening the Visitor Information Kiosk on the Pier is May 16th, to partner with the National Tourism Week event, the CVB is doing.

Mr. Turton will be working on digital signage, which will be seen in both the Visitor Information Center, and in the Kiosk. Hours for the Kiosk will be 11-4 Thursday and Friday, 10-4 Saturday, and 11-3 Sunday, May through September, only. The Kiosk will be open on holidays. There will be a limited amount of information at the Visitor Information Kiosk and there will be no sales of items there.

b) MARKETING UPDATE

Mr. Sorgenfrei gave an update on the Live Radio Remote with “The Octopus, 91.5” out of Ventura. He said we received a lot of publicity because the radio team not only broadcasted during their normally scheduled time, but they also called in on their cell phones. Because of this, he said we pretty much own the drive time, having exposure during both the morning and evening commutes. This is great for any Los Angeles city, as they are in their cars a lot more there.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that he is in the process of preparing another remote, this one in partnership with Charter Communications, and Sunny 102 (which hits Modesto, too). The radio station is doing a Contest where they are giving away an iPod every week, leading to a grand prize of a 5-day trip to Pismo Beach. It will be very similar to the remote with “the Octopus”. We will be mentioned on the radio for a solid month as they are promoting the contest.

Mr. Sorgenfrei gave an update on the DVD, saying that he has all of the changes and it can see it on the website.

Ms. Brasile mentioned www.gopismo.mobi our webpage designed especially for mobile phones as a prototype.

Mr. Turton said that with this website, we are on the cutting edge, and we receive up to 90 hits a day from cell phones on the “mobi” website, which surprised even him.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said our connection with Trip Advisor’s website, which has 20 million viewers, was a \$15,000 ad campaign. We were able to target the areas, which have 800,000 users. The trend is that people want to talk with human beings, rather than the computer summary of a location and that these promotional partnerships will push people to www.classicalcalifornia.com it will start soon.

Ms. Brasile said per City Manager Kevin Rice’s request, that the City has obtained 2 more parking lots for use during car show. The parking lot at the Portuguese Hall will have paid parking for the event, and the PG&E parking lot will be free of charge for the event. The combination of these 2 parking lots will add extra 600 parking spaces. **Ms. Brasile** said that there is a full-page ad on the back of the car shows publication, showing the added parking. She was told the publication would go out prior to the show and to more than just the vendors this year.

Councilmember Vardas asked about “The Winemakers.” **Mr. Sorgenfrei** said that while we tried really hard to get them into Hearst Castle. The production team’s requests were unrealistic, and delayed, so we had to decline the final shooting episode. **Mr. Sorgenfrei** said that Pismo Beach would still be getting a lot of publicity in that we are listed in the credits (with our website url), many parts of Pismo Beach are featured in the show, and we get to say that we are “The Home of the Winemakers.” We will also have footage of the show to use in our own promotional efforts.

Councilmember Vardas and **Boardmember Scott** both agreed and acknowledged that we will be getting a good rate of return above and beyond what we paid. The **Board** all agreed.

c) JOINT COUNCIL MEETING – MAY 6TH

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that with all we have accomplished this year, the theme should be upbeat. It would be appropriate to have Suzen speak about the CVB and Jay to talk about the Board. We need to thank the City Council for continued support, reminding them that TOT goes into the General Fund for the infrastructure the citizen’s enjoyment.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that we have a great story to tell, because we're getting a huge return on limited investment that is done annually.

Boardmember Scott acknowledged that it's tourism that drives this whole community.

Mr. Turton said that we're claiming 70-80% of the sales tax generated is by non-residents. You can add in 700-800 thousand (+), onto the 6 million we generate through TOT.

Councilmember Vardas and **Ms. Brasile** both said that they would like an update on the mobile website during this presentation as well.

Ms. Brasile said that this meeting would come in good timing, as she has to put in a proposed Mid-Year budget request by the end of the month. She will speak to Mr. Rice about it. She would like to include the pier people counter, 3 digital screens for the VIC's, funding for the mobi website and the butterfly brochures (which she has a \$12,000 bid.)

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that he could always ask for the COLA 5% increase. We are going into some very competitive times as business is going to be slower. Because of the economy, everybody is going to be doing everything they can to grab those tourists. Cities are going to be tripling budgets through their BID's. He said the Council would need to know our basic marketing plan, where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going to be. TOT has doubled in the 10 years since **Ms. Brasile** has been working for Pismo Beach. We have been successful and now is not the time to stop. We need to step it up more now, before we fall, as it's hard to regain the loss and move forward.

Mr. Turton suggested asking for more money because we are driving TOT because every time we put more money in we get a 5 times the investment back into the market.

Mr. Sorgenfrei recommended asking for \$100,000 to shore up our stable markets of Bakersfield and Fresno, because they'll be targeted by other destinations. Have \$25,000 for Fresno, \$25,000 for Bakersfield, \$25,000 for Northern California, and \$25,000 to continue our efforts in Thousand Oaks. This money would go towards media.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that he could put together a program to reach valley cities again (not just Bakersfield and Fresno). **Ms. Brasile** said that she would like to take the promotions away from print media and focus more on news sponsorships & websites. She asked for the Board's input.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that we could do a remote with a larger broadcasting network from Bakersfield (like we did with the radio), and because we have cash, it would work. He said that if you watch the news in Bakersfield. It would provide the weather for Pismo Beach and along with the valley towns because it's that important.

Ms. Brasile said that the last T.V. promotions we did were tailored to the areas we sent them to and they worked well. The Board agreed.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that we could also put together a co-op where we pay for 2/3 of a promotion and merchants or hotels pay for the other 1/3.

Boardmember Scott said that it would be difficult to sell to merchants right now.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that we could do 2 instead of 4 merchants; hoteliers with marketing money could ride on the coat tails of the Pismo Beach Getaway.

Ms. Brasile said that the only problem with T.V. advertising is that we are in the midst of all the Political stuff before November.

Mr. Turton would like to see more money go towards pay per click. He said he has been experimenting in MSN and Yahoo Search Submit Express and can do a lot with twice as much as he is spending now.

Mr. Sorgenfrei agrees, and comments that if he is doing his job, people will go to the website, and so we need a strong website, which we do have. He says that **Mr. Turton** should ask for money with plans of adding more to the existing website. Our print advertising and all of our promotions drive them to the website, because that's where we will sell them and get them to our hotels website links.

Boardmember Scott wants to know about the psychographics, because the audience drives what we are going to do.

Chair Jamison commented that branding or top – of – mind awareness is where he comes from. Said that he isn't going to go onto the Internet to search for places he wants to go. He'll decide where to go and use the Internet for research on that destination. He mentions that people make decisions differently, and that the balance of two concepts is really important.

Mr. Sorgenfrei agreed that balance is important. He said that we need to reacquaint people to us and we need to focus on people who can drive here. He said that on Trip Advisor, we went to targeted areas, against our competition, if they are going to Monterey or Santa Barbara, they will see Pismo Beach ads now.

Boardmember Scott said that we have attributes, and that we need to go to “most – likely to...” before we decide where we're putting our money.

Boardmember Hogoboom agrees with **Boardmember Scott**, because his customers from Bakersfield now aren't the same as his customers from Bakersfield were 8 years ago. He has fewer cash paying customers and more people paying with credit cards. He feels that more people will be reluctant to pay \$75 for a tank of gas to get to Pismo and that needs to be taken into consideration as well.

Ms. Hyman presented that 2/3 of audience for Shakespeare and Mozart at Dinosaur Caves Park were not from Pismo Beach. When she was promoting sales tax at the Easter Egg Hunt, the first 6 adults she talked with were not from Pismo Beach. After talking with 67 adults at the event, she discovered that they heard about the event through: the website, the Tribune, friends & neighbors, used to live in Pismo Beach, the hotels told them, or they called in and asked “what is going on in Pismo today?” Ms. Hyman said that events work & mixed media. She said that it's everything, not just one thing that pulls people to Pismo Beach. **Ms. Brasile** said this is the information she needed.

Mr. Sorgenfrei said that the focus should be on the San Fernando Valley for 2 reasons: 1). They have money and 2). They can drive here fairly easily.

Boardmember Scott said that they've been doing a company-wide study, and they are up 14 points, business is still very healthy. The Coach, Fergamos, Michael Korres market is still spending.

Councilmember Vardas asked about the County and Citywide Scope of Work, wondering if this study will build a case for what we are asking for, or if we are jumping the gun.

d) CITY SPECIFIC SCOPE OF WORK

Councilmember Vardas said wants us to stay on top of the Citywide Scope of Work. It is supposed to be completed September to October, and to be initiated in June. He said City Manager Kevin Rice wants a full CVB Board present to address the issue. We have the City Council's important concepts, and need the CVB's, too, on paper, so they can present everything. He asked if \$12,000 is enough. The CVB Board felt that we could spend \$12,000 on one item, alone. **Ms. Brasile** said she spoke with Carl Ribaud, of SMG, and he would be contacting her soon regarding the County Tourism Study, as well as the City Specific Study.

e) REQUESTS FOR FUNDING

Ms. Brasile reviewed the letter addressed to her from the San Luis Obispo County Visitors & Conference Bureau for a funding request in the amount of \$69,984 for 2008-2009, which reflects a fair-share formula developed by their Board of Directors. She reviewed the Attachment of all of their benefits. She gave the history of SLO County VCB funding requests.

Chair Jamison said he would question their list of benefits, as he gets more website hits from our Pismo Beach ClassicCalifornia website than he does from the SLO County VCB's website. **Vice Chair Hogoboom** said one of the benefits he, and others see, is not in those benefits listed, but in the print co-op programs that they offer. **Ms. Brasile** said our strategy in working closer with the hotels by notifying them of their individual monthly website stats is working towards making stronger relationships and we can try co-ops again with them and some merchants. Mr. Sorgenfrei said he could do co-ops, although they take a lot of work. **Chair Jamison** requested Co-Ops Ads to be on the next Agenda.

Action: Boardmember Baker made a Motion to decline the opportunity to fund the San Luis Obispo County VCB, seconded by **Boardmember Scott**. Motion Passed 4-0-1, Boardmember Burnes absent.

Ms. Brasile said **Councilmember Rabenaldt** sent her an email asking her to ask the CVB Board about their interest in having more events, such as lawn bowling, or an International BBQ Competition, that he saw that was very successful.

Chair Jamison said the CVB does not plan events; we do promotions to get heads into beds.

Action: All declined further discussion.

Ms. Brasile asked the Board for their opinion on the renewal of the \$400 Las Vegas Chamber Membership as well. She further explained that it was a trial membership for a year and she has received continuous sales calls for Pismo ads or trade, and hasn't had the mid-week business and networking with Allegiant Air she was hoping for, regardless of giving it time and also participating in their Business Showcase.

Action: Vice Chair Hogoboom made a Motion to not continue membership with the Las Vegas Chamber, seconded by **Boardmember Baker**. Motion Passed 4-0-1, Boardmember Burnes absent.

Ms. Brasile asked if we could advertise the new sandcastle contest "Can You Dig It?" coming soon on Saturday, May 3rd, as we have a small budget left available to do so, to encourage overnights.

Chair Jamison and **Vice Chair Hogoboom** said we could give up to \$800 and hoped it would encourage them to continue like Art in the Park has done so successfully.

Ms. Brasile said she has been holding www.pismocastles.com for this day, hoping an event planner would start this event. She thanked them for their support.

Chair Jamison made a Motion to give up to \$800 to advertise the new sandcastle contest, seconded by **Vice Chair Hogoboom**. Motion passed 4-0-1, Boardmember Burnes absent.

CVB BOARD / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Brasile reminded the Board of the Tourism Day event on the pier on Wednesday, May 14th.

Next Agenda:

Updates on the following items:

Kite Expo

Sand Castle event

Trip Advisors

The Winemakers

Radio Contest,

Visitor Information Kiosk

Business Items:

County & City Specific Tourism Study Updates

Co-op Ads Discussion

ADJOURNMENT 5:30 PM

Minutes prepared by Megan Grose