

Santa Maria Valley Tourism Marketing District (SMV TMD)

Advisory Committee Minutes

May 16, 2018

3:00 p.m. (Santa Maria Inn)

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Advisory Committee: Jean-Luc Garon, Ryan Swack, JP Patel, Susan Garcia, Jerry Patel

Absent:

City Staff: Jason Stilwell

Chamber|Staff: Chris Slaughter, Glenn Morris, Jenn Harrison, Cheryl Cuming

Guests: Seth Foster, Max Tucker

KPS3: Rob Gaedtke, Rachel Curran, Bob Whitefield

Call to Order by Chair Jean-Luc Garon at 3:04 p.m.

Public Comment None

Consent Calendar: Minutes and Financial Report

Cheryl reviewed new financials format.

It was noted that the March minutes were not correctly included within the board packet, so they will be brought to the July meeting.

Financials, STR and TOT reports were discussed, and Ryan asked about the Media planning budget to actuals and the social media compared to budget. Glenn noted that these will 'true up' in the June financials. Jerry asked about the event investment and noted that smaller properties are concerned about the direct impact for their tourism investment. JP noted that numbers are down in SLO County as well.

Financials accepted. Motion: JP and 2nd Susan. Motion carries.

Business Items

KPS3 Team Report: Rob reviewed meeting topics and shared new sizzle video. Overall web performance saw good increases in organic with a positive movement in bounce rate. Good progress pushing Facebook users to the website with over 900 sessions in April.

Business Advocacy & Services · Tourism · Economic Development

Rob noted the spike during Strawberry Festival from out of area potential visitors, with total sessions at 15,111 (+29% Y/Y) with 1,8908 conversions or +14% Y/Y. Search now represents 54% of all traffic (compared to 29% last year) as we evolve our organic strategy and less our investment in paid (down 43% Y/Y to 23% of total sessions). SantaMaria.com did send solid referral traffic to our SMV.com site. Hotel pageviews were +39% at 400/month with a 31% Y/Y increase in clicks to hotels profiles. Overall SEO performance for organic search visits exceeded 8,000.

Bob Whitefield, SEO: In 2016 was had 20,000 Google searches and in 2018 we have 38,100. Typically, we SMV.com is #1 when folks search for Santa Maria Valley and #3 when they search for Santa Maria. Bob reviewed the SEM Rush details showing it would cost \$6,700/month to buy the traffic we have created through SEO. Of the total April impression, 58% were hotel searches and 83% of the traffic was organic.

PR and Media Update: Rachel reviewed the content and PR highlights, including the coverage from LA Foodie with 116,000 Instagram followers. Rachel noted that Facebook is driving referral traffic and we are tracking those posts that drive the most engagement. Rachel also shared the native efforts, including the Outdoor Project and the Outdoor Collective blog.

Discussion Items

2018|2019 Marketing Plan outline: Cheryl provided an overview on the process to develop the marketing plan outline and noted that a final plan will be presented at the July meeting based on feedback provided at today's meeting. Rachel reviewed the outline including:

Path to purchase

Asset assessment

Target Audience – noted that Fresno and Bakersfield will be targeted through social media and PR and we will conduct a test to confirm engagement. We will also explore Gilroy/Salinas and the southern San Jose area. Santa Clarita, Simi Valley, Burbank and Glendale will also be explored. Ryan asked about if we had targeted the Central Valley within the last year, and Glenn confirmed we do not focus 'hard dollars' there, and rely on social media and PR. Ryan feels like they currently go to Pismo Beach and Glenn asked if we should compete directly to pull them south to SMV? Susan shared concerns about targeting Santa Clarita and we may want to focus on Burbank and Glendale. Seth suggested we expand into Thousand Oaks and others along the 101 corridor. JP noted that Bakersfield is a straight shot and would also to us to consider Las Vegas. Glenn noted that we will refine the target audience and bring back for further discussion.

Personas – Rachel reviewed and noted interest in exploring the viability of both the Hispanic marketing and the solo traveler.

Rachel concluded the discussion with a review of the marketing categories and the budget allocated for each.

Action Items

2018 | 2019 Budget and Management Plan contingency maximum/FY

investment: Glenn reviewed the budget details with \$700,000 projected assessment collections for 2017|2018 and proposing slight decrease (2%) for the upcoming fiscal year with \$690,000 in projected assessment collections. Glenn recommended a total available budget of \$676,250 and discussed the contingency `set aside of 4% with a \$60,000 cap and when reached, it would roll into the marketing. The 4% represents approximately \$24,900 and is recommended to use to pursue the "big idea". The overall investment in marketing is proposed at \$554,000. Glenn asked the board's support of the budget. Budget accepted. Motion: JP and 2nd Jean-luc. Motion carries.

Rob pitched the Big Idea with the goal of going viral. Criteria would include:

- Shareability
- Technology innovation
- Repeatable

KPS3 wants to invest in this idea as well and has agreed to put funding behind it if approved. The idea is to create your own piece of art through a "swirl `til you spill" concept and potentially including a visible partner like Tide..."The Art of Santa Maria Style". Other idea where discussed with BBQ sauce and spill the beans options. Susan likes the idea and so does JP. It was agreed that Cheryl will outreach to the AC to confirm any other Big Idea concepts and KPS3 will continue to do legwork and discuss further at the July meeting.

Updates

- Chairman's Report: Glenn spoke about the pole banners noting they are \$100/banner and would last 6 months. Parks & Rec places them and there are several locations along key thoroughfares. Jerry is interested I Broadway and Main.
- VCB/TMD Report: Jenn provided several updates:
 - Social Media Training went well and the next will be planned for September
 - Tourism Development meeting is under way and more info will be provided at future meetings.

Committee Member Reports: None

Good of the Order: None

Future Agenda Items:

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- Chair and Vice Chair
- Approval of March minutes
- Evolve the Big Idea
- Pole banner details

Adjourn at 4:48pm

Next meeting: Wednesday, July 18 at 3pm

Note: Future AC meetings will occur on the 3rd Wednesday, every other month

