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## Santa Maria Valley Tourism Marketing District (SMV TMD)

Advisory Committee Minutes

October 6, 2022

12:30 Santa Maria Inn

### DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Advisory Committee: Cherag Patel, Ryan Swack, Ketan Panchal, Jerry Patel, Seth Foster, JP Patel

City Staff: Mark van de Kamp

Chamber|Staff: Emily Kitts, Jenn Harrison, Glenn Morris, Taz Dougherty, Cheryl Cuming

Guests: Chuen Ng, City of Santa Maria

KPS3 | Team: Brittany and Sarah

**Call to Order** by Cherag at 12:30pm

Roll call – All present.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Presentation:** Chuen Ng, City of Santa Maria, presented the Santa Maria General Plan update. Full presentation is available and below are excerpts:

- Shared draft Vision, Areas of Change and Guiding Principles:
  - Encouraged AC members to provide input throughout the process
  - Areas of potential transformation including downtown, neighborhoods in the city core, southwest neighborhoods, Main/Broadway corridors and expansion to the northwest and/or east (target growth areas East of 101)
- Next Steps
  - Explore plan alternatives including visual renderings and alternative analyses
    - Inter-related considerations for analyzing alternatives include density, specific land use, supportive land uses (parks, open space, etc.), required infrastructure, level of services & amenities and evolution of specific areas (downtown, Main/Broadway, older shopping centers, conversion of AG land). Also noted were design, transportation, implications on tax revenues and where it supports the vision statement
    - Alternatives are focused on future job creation

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**Business Advocacy & Services · Tourism · Economic Development**

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- Policy and Plan development (2023 is timeline for policy development)
  - Chuen noted that the General Plan Economic Development Chapter will focus on tourism development and the AC would be instrumental in this area as the City looks at the economic impact and future opportunities for tourism.
- Explore competing objectives and tradeoffs
  - How to best balance the quality-of-life issues
    - Ease of travel & parking vs. increased density & public transport
  - How to best accommodate for future growth
    - Sprawl development patterns and low density creates higher maintenance costs

Chuen addressed questions from the Advisory Committee including:

- Does draft vision statement cover areas like business quality of life – Yes, will be call out at the goal level within the plan.
- Is the City open to how we get to the best outcomes – Yes, public/private partnerships will be key.
- How is tourism part of the future of Santa Maria as unsure if the vision covers this area – Interested in input from lodging leaders and encourages the Advisory Committee members to become an active part of the policy development phase.

**Consent Calendar (minutes, STR, TOT and financials):**

Glenn comments that June TOT was revised and reflects an increase of 15.39% (different than document included with the AC packet).

Motion to accept consent items: Ryan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jerry. JP abstains. Motion carries.

**Business Items**

***Discussion & Action Items:***

**City of Santa Maria General Plan:**

Discussion around the General Plan captured additional comments from the committee:

- What do we want to see in Policy & Development:
  - High-end restaurants
  - Multi-use event facilities
    - Carving out specific time for tourism uses
    - How can we become the destination for team sports?
  - Focus on safety
- Need to ensure tourism is visibly included within the final Vision Statement
  - Cheryl will share statement with AC and provide feedback to Chuen

**SM Travel Economic Impact:**

Glenn provided updates EI data noting that statewide data shows 20% spent on activities, Santa Barbara County noted 38% and SMV was projected at 40%, sharing TripAdvisor data that shows average expense for activities and stands to reason that percentage

would be in the 40 – 42% range. JP noted we have some 'work to do' when it comes to the destination set (Pismo, Paso, Napa, Temecula and Solvang/SY Valley. Importance of future development was discussed, and Mark suggested Vernon Group. Mark also noted that there are 4,000 – 5,000 housing units anticipated over the next several years. Glenn will extend an invitation to attend a future AC meeting.

JP suggested that other destinations partner with their jurisdiction/city to capture accurate data, and we need to explore this opportunity. Mark note JP Proper study would highlight future opportunities, and when asked if the City may want to pursue a research study said that the budget does demonstrate interest in having these types of future partnerships.

### **Nominations for Open AC Seat:**

Cherag thanked Max for his dedication as past chair, and his service to the organization. Cheryl confirmed nomination process, with submitted nominations being brought to the Nomination Committee, including Cherag, Ryan, Ketan and JP. Seth offered to serve if an additional person was needed. Jerry nominated Gilda Cordova. Lodging constituents will be asked to submit nominations by end of October so that the Nom Comm can provide a recommendation to the AC at the 12/1 meeting.

### **Information Items:**

KPS3 presented marketing report including:

- Website & Marketing performance: focus on optimizing lodging pages for more visible 'book now' button to improve Hotel Referrals and adding a CTA on the website to capture email addresses, along with a social campaign to gain more subscribers.
- Other updates:
  - Creative: Including more SM 'attitude' in social to draw attention and stop the scroll; launched 3 new email subscriber campaigns
  - PR: highlights include Roadrunner magazine 11-page feature on touring motorcycle, VisitCA and Thrillist
  - Search: Organic search is up by almost 15%, with a good gain in unique hotel pageviews. Noteworthy search ranking improvements on Google include 'wine tasting CA central coast from #7 to #1.
  - Social (Sarah): prioritizing video on IG and TikTok; focus on storytelling; topped 3 million impressions.
- What's Next/Upcoming initiatives:
  - Spice campaign refresh – KPS3 presented 3 creative ideas (Less is More, Unfiltered, How we Roll). Overall the AC liked Less is More, with some reference to previous Spice campaign.
  - Lodging detail page updates
  - Email drip campaign updates
  - Influencer program selection with Glocally, scheduling and upcoming FAM

## **VB | TMD Director Report:**

Jenn presented VB | TMD update:

- Wine trolley – Taz reported that they are considering expansion; 583 wristbands distributed with 1,900 riders; wineries are marketing; extended through 11/30.
- CalTravel Summit: Jenn attended and confirmed that meetings are coming back; looking at various meeting planner opportunities for 2023.
- Hospitality Internship program: Jenn confirmed the AC does have interest in a program, with overarching interest in more vocational training.
- Upcoming Events: Tamale Festival and AirFest
- Upcoming Trade Shows:
  - LA Travel & Adventure Show (Feb 2023)
  - SF/Bay Area Travel Show (March 2023)
  - CalSAE Seasonal Spectacular
  - IPW – Jenn asked if there was any interest from properties to attend as a partner?
- Officially welcomes Taz as a member of the team

## **Updates:**

**Chairperson/Committee Member Reports:** Cherag thanked the past chairs, staff and team, noting that he is excited to be involved as the chair.

## **Future Agenda Item**

- Nomination Committee & selection of Vice Chair
- Events & Festival Strategy outcomes
- Note: AC asked that FairPark be invited to share future plans

**Adjourn** at 2:27pm

**Next meeting:** December 1, 2022 at 12:00pm