
Santa Maria Valley Tourism Marketing District (SMV TMD)

Advisory Committee Minutes

January 19, 2023

11am Radisson

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Advisory Committee: Cherag Patel, Jerry Patel, Seth Foster, JP Patel

City Staff:

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

Guests: Atul Patel

KPS3 | Team: Brittany and Sarah

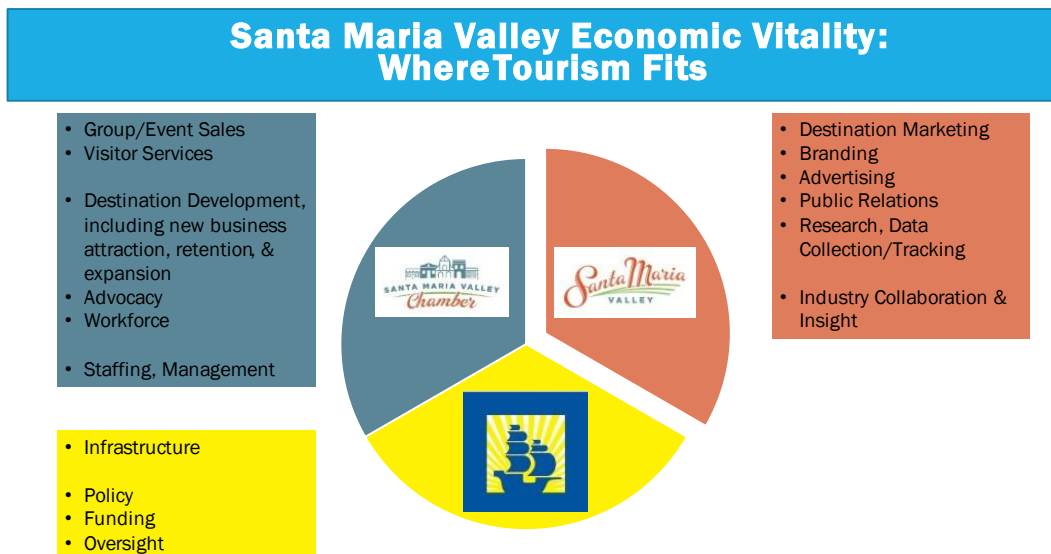
Call to Order by Cherag at 11:10am

Roll call – Committee majority present.

Public Comment: None.

Presentation: Glenn’s presentation - SMV Economic Vitality: Where does Tourism Fit?

- 3 key players include City – Chamber – Tourism District.



Business Advocacy & Services · Tourism · Economic Development

Promote a Strong Local Economy · Promote the Community · Represent Business Interests · Build Business Relationships

- Strategic Priorities FY 21 – 23 centered around a Thriving SMV
 - Community attractions – downtown revitalization, education, events
 - Effective workforce
 - Engaged leadership – connector of groups to encourage collaboration
 - Increasing business activity – destination development, biz dev and econ dev
- Tourism Strategic Plan Elements
 - Targeted efforts like the Events & Festivals strategy to attract and support large group events
 - Annual efforts summarized in the Marketing Plan outlining current strategies and methods, and including targets and metrics
 - The foundation of the TMD is the Management District Plan, which defines the TMD’s purpose and objectives, and frames the allowed uses of the funds. Glenn shared the “Allowable Expenses document and reiterated that the TMD main focus is marketing and the related activities.
- Glenn reviewed details on how both the TMD and the SMVCC are funded based on identified marketing efforts

Cherag asked about advocacy and Glenn confirmed that this is the role of the Chamber. He noted the Biz Government Roundtable, which meets monthly, and Glenn voiced the importance of getting lodging owners involved. Glenn will share the policy framework process with the AC.

Cherag also asked about the access and opportunity of pursuing grant monies, and it was noted that the current TMD operating agreement does not disallow this stream of funding. JP suggested grant monies to create more infrastructure, like sports fields. It was noted that a large percentage of field time is currently set aside for local use. Chamber recommended we invite Parks/Rec director to speak to this in a future TMD meeting.

JP noted possible interest to get TMD involved in advocacy organizations like CHLA and CLIA.

Glenn shared status update on development of the City General Plan and anticipates that beginning in April 2023 the City will seek public input around land use, with Planning Commission input in May, and City Council review in June. Goals and policy work should begin in Summer 2023, which is when we need tourism leaders actively involved in the conversation as this is where tourism-related policy gets formulated. JP interested in joint venture with the City to invest in a comprehensive destination strategy.

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

Motion to accept consent items: JP moved; Jerry 2nd. Motion passed.

Business Items

Discussion & Action Items:

Mid-Year Financials:

Glenn commented that we are currently ahead of budget and will look to make recommendations at the March meeting on how to invest the excess collections projected at approximately \$70,000 – Seth suggested we target an infusion of extra funds in Fall 2023 to drive momentum into off-season. Glenn also reminded the AC that we currently have \$125,000 within the Opportunity Fund, as well as \$60,000 within the required 4% Operating Fund.

Glenn asked lodging owners what they are predicting for remainder of the year. It was noted that business is solid and hitting 2021 numbers. Some softness anticipated in January – March with Spring Break through Summer looking steady. Opportunity exists in ADR and overall owners are continuing to feel optimistic. Atul noted we need to increase our rates to meet business per diems.

Information Items:

KPS3 presented the mid-year marketing report including:

- 14% increase in web visits – totaling 173,000 and a 24% increase in unique hotel PVs
- Hotel referrals are down 2% so have implemented updates on the lodging pages, which has created an increase Y/Y since the changes have been made
- SEO and keyword search rankings are strong with 171 in the top 10, 76 in the top 3 and 43 ranked #1
 - JP asked about keywords focused on business travel and Seth supported an effort in attracting mid-week and business travel.
- We are thrilled with the year-over-year growth we've seen for our primary organic search and paid digital media KPIs, and we aim to see greater increases as the year goes on relative to growth over last year.
- We've exceeded our organic social media engagement rates so far this year. Now, we turn our attention to creating more of the content that resonates with our audience to maintain and grow those interactions.
- With high-value stories and mentions, we've already exceeded our publicity value goal while trending a bit under our story placement goal, which we aim to increase with new media relationships and a consistent news cadence.
- While our email open rate and clickthrough rate are both consistently well above goal, we are actively working to boost our monthly subscribers by website design optimizations and dynamic content.

VB | TMD Director Report:

Jenn presented VB | TMD update:

- Events: Restaurant Month and Human Trafficking seminar
- Wine Trolley saw 770 unique riders
- CalSAE – 9 exchange appointments with 6 solid group sales leads
- GM | Sales Manager meetings will resume

- Taz shared Visitor Guides and encouraged lodging to actively hand out at the properties
- Upcoming Trade Shows:
 - IMM (January 2023)
 - LA Travel & Adventure Show (Feb 2023)
 - SF/Bay Area Travel Show (March 2023)
 - IPW – Jenn asked if there was any interest from properties to attend as a partner?

Updates:

Chairperson/Committee Member Reports:

Future Agenda Item

- Excess budget recommendations, including Fall 2023 mid-week/biz travel promotion and CHLA | CLIA memberships
- Alex Posada, Rec/Parks

Adjourn at 12:50pm

Next meeting: March 16, 2023