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

Advisory Committee Minutes

February 1, 2021

11am | Radisson

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

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

City Staff: Mark Van de Kamp

Chamber|Staff: Jennifer Harrison, Glenn Morris, Nathan Tausch, Cheryl Cuming

Guests: Dennis Smitherman, City of Santa Maria

KPS3 | Team: via Zoom: Brittany, Nicole

**Call to Order** by Cherag at 11:11a

Roll call – 6 members present; Jerry absent.

**Public Comment:** None.

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

Glenn noted a decrease of 1.9% in ADR on December STR. JP is concerned that the STR does not represent true picture as it only contains 50% of the properties reporting. AC asked if the City could provide additional revenue reports that could clearly demonstrate the current situation. Glenn noted that the November TOT reported a decrease of 6.7%.

Motion to accept minutes: Seth moved; Ryan 2nd. Motion passed.

Motion to accept financials: JP moved; Ryan 2nd. Motion passed.

**Business Items**

**KPS3 Report**

**FY 2022 | 2023 Mid-Year Report**

KPS3 Team reviewed July – December 2023 Mid-Year marketing outcomes:

* Website saw a 9% increase
* Hotel referrals saw a 50% increase to almost 5,000
* PR stories placed reported at 166, exceeding goal
* Newsletter sign-ups are down so KPS3 is exploring ideas on how to improve, however we have improved our open rate and un-subscribe rate
* #1 rankings on Google is performing well with 59 in this position and a 37% improvement Y|Y
* Social media is tracking well against goals, exceeding in all categories
* Plan is to bring a minimum of 2 more influencers into SMV before end of June
* Highlight includes:
  + We hit or exceeded 2 major goals so far this year:
    - PR story coverage or earned media story placements
    - Instagram followers
  + Big gains in SEO with CA Trip Planning going from position #64 to #4
  + Hotel referrals are up 56% Y|Y – JP asked how we can further support budget properties and KPS3 will provide report by property at the next AC meeting.
  + Social media amplification rates are each 1 – 3 % points above benchmark for these KPIs in the tourism space
* What’s Next:
  + Increased goals for PR and Instagram to create stretch goal
  + Increase hotel conversions rate from paid digital efforts
  + Promote more newsletter sign-ups
  + Need to right-size the decreases in branded search. Brittany reviewed results of the most recent Wellness creative branded content campaign

Note: the complete full report is available upon request.

Nicole reviewed the details for the new PR tracking program, Muck Rack. KPS3 is providing as a value add - at a cost of over $6,000 per year. AC was appreciative and excited for do a deeper dive into PR and what we hope to accomplish in the new fiscal year.

Nicole also shared follow-up report from IMM, Visit CA media event in New Year City. Nicole and Jenn met with 40 journalists, with a goal to obtain 5 key placed stories next year. Standouts included freelancers who write for Conde Nast, T&L, Bon Appetit, AAA, Oprah Daily, Self, Reader’s Digest, Fodor’s, Westways, LA Times, Forbes, USA Today 10 Best…and more. Jenn commented on the quality of the media, and that we are confident we will gain coverage from several promising journalists.

Brittany concluded the KPS3 presentation with a results overview of the Mid-Week promotion, with 141 gift cards redeemed and 283 room nights booked generating projected room night revenue of almost $35,000. The lodging category breakout was: 12 budget, 191 brand and 80 boutique. CAO noted that the cost of the program broke event with the revenue.

***Discussion & Action Items:***

**Allocation of Reserve Funds:** Glenn noted that TMD currently has $350,000 in cash reserves and provided a recommendation on how best to invest these monies:

* Contingency Fund $60,000 (as required by the Management Plan)
* Major Event Fund $150,000
* Visitor Development Fund $30,000
* Operating Reserve $15,843 (as of 12/31/2023)

Advisory Committee discussion included how many events are included and was noted it would look to create up to 2 new events, and the importance of meeting a hotel room night minimum impact. Discussed the need for creating an SOP for promoting new events.

Motion to accept recommendation as presented, including an implementation plan and SOP, with remaining funds kept within an interest-bearing account: Seth moved; Ryan 2nd. Motion passed.

**Agency Partnership Feedback**: Cherag asked the AC for feedback on our agency partnership. Seth noted he had no concerns, and wanted to confirm that the goals are reasonable and achievable, and that KPS3 is also pushing themselves to stretch our results. Jenn commented on the process and how we want to continue to challenge the team. Gilda asks her marketing team in Lompoc for a snapshot of the coming year; she challenges them on how to evolve the creative concepts into the future, so they have a multiple year creative strategy. JP really appreciates their work and wants to see more about PR. Overall, the Advisory Committee was very pleased with the partnership.

***Information Items:***

**VB | TMD Director Report:**

* Jenn provided updates as follows:
  + Airport: will meet with them in mid-February. Seth asked about future expansions and hopes for a new partnership with Southwest Airlines.
  + On-line TOT payment: Mark noted that you cannot currently pay TOT on-line, and asked if lodging would be willing to pay a 2.5% credit card fee. Members asked why garbage and water payment on-line do not require a fee. Cherag noted that hotels would probably not want to pay an additional fee.
  + Drone Festival: Jenn exploring this idea as a future city-wide event.

**Updates:**

**Chairperson/Committee Member Reports:**

Cherag shared insights from a recent human trafficking training. He urged all lodging folks to be aware that this issue is present in our community, and to ensure that their front desk staff are trained in recognizing the signs.

**Future Agenda Item**

* IPW 2024
* Airport update
* Creative Snapshot and PR Deep Dive

**Adjourn** at 1:17pm

**Next meeting:**  March 21, 2024