

## MORRO BAY TOURISM BUREAU BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 10, 2015 – 9:00am  
Vets Hall – 209 Surf Street | Morro Bay, CA 93442

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Member Solu called the meeting to order at 9:00am

Members Present: Michele Jacquez, Taylor Newton, Jack Smith & Joan Solu

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Brent Haugen, Jazmyn Strickland, Aaron Young

City of Morro Bay Representative: Sam Taylor, Deputy City Manager

### II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no members of the audience that stepped forward for public comment.

### III. CLOSED SESSION REPORT

The Board of Directors (BOD) approved the compensation package adopted by the BOD on 3/20/14. Member Newton made a motion to accept the package as presented, Member Smith seconded and motion was carried 4-0.

Member Jacquez made a motion to accept the report for record, Member Smith seconded it and the motion carried 4-0.

\*Member Solu suggested to the board to move up two agenda items including the 2015-16 Event Funding and Discussion & Direction Regarding the Recent Article, “Rethinking Tourism Promotion Models”, due to the limited availability of some of the board members attending the meeting. Member Jacquez made a motion, it was seconded by Member Newton and the motion was carried 4-0.

### IV. 2015-16 EVENT FUNDING DISCUSSION

Executive Director Haugen wanted clarification from the BOD on the \$5000 in matching funds for this year’s sponsorship of the Morro Bay Harbor Festival. There was board discussion concerning the Morro Bay Harbor Festival securing funds post the decision of the BOD in sponsoring the event to match with dollars rather than in-kind. Haugen

Executive Director Haugen also proposed that the \$24,750 difference in the proposed end of year number to the actual end of year assessment number for 2014-15 be used to support events in the future with a matching funds process. He indicated that there is approximately \$10,000 currently in the budget for event funding. After board discussion, it was suggested by the board that Haugen come back with a written policy to enable adopt a policy.

Member Solu opened this discussion to public comment. Jonni Biaggini from the Morro Bay Harbor Festival stepped forward to thank the BOD for the sponsorship dollars provided this year. She indicated the hotels and other businesses are thrilled and excited about the event being free, plus the new format and fireworks display. The Morro Bay Harbor Festival will be held on Saturday, October 3, 2015 from Noon-9pm with a short fireworks display at the end of the night.

Biaggini reported that she will provide the documented information on funds received to secure the \$5000 in matching funds from the Morro Bay Tourism Bureau.

Member Solu closed public comment, seeing there were no other members of the audience who stepped forward.

Member Solu suggested that we give special consideration to free events verses gated events. Member Newton suggested that we give special consideration to multiple day events. Member Jacquez recommended to review past grant policies before creating a new one to review. Executive Director Haugen pointed out that Sales Manager Young recommended that we reach out to existing events and try to attract them to Morro Bay, rather than trying to get groups to create new ones.

This discussion will be added to future agenda items.

V. DISCUSSION & DIRECTION REGARDING THE RECENT ARTICLE, “RETHINKING TOURISM-PROMOTION MODELS”

Member Solu opened up the conversation to discuss the Morro Bay City Manager’s article in the Bay News.

Member Newton began the discussion by giving credit to the city for exploring different options and for city council giving a directive to city staff. Newton went on by stating that as a city appointed advisory board member, that he has not been directed by council on the role of the advisory board in this situation and felt like it would be helpful to understand the direction or course of action as the advisory board moves forward. Member Newton ended his comments by acknowledging the upcoming workshop on September 22, 2015 and will look forward in understanding more of the direction post that event.

Member Smith posed a question to Deputy City Manager, Sam Taylor why the city chose to communicate via the Bay News article verses approaching the advisory board directly.

Deputy City Manager Taylor responded that he was directed and has communicated to the advisory board that it was his role to research and explore different models. Taylor commented that Executive Director Haugen has been helpful on supplying information on business improvement districts nationwide. He has also consulted with John Lambeth to gather information on the BID models in county as well as the rest of California. Taylor stated that most models in the county are under the city, but have found that both types have worked in the county. He stated the workshop will give a better understanding on whether the city council will want to keep the current model, make modifications to the current model or change the model to be under the auspices of the city.

Taylor explained that the workshop is another step in having an open conversation about what model will work the best for Morro Bay. It will allow for public input as well as opening up the conversation with city council. Taylor stated a preliminary staff report to be released this week detailing out staff recommendations and discussion points for the workshop. He reported some of the concerns city and city council has with communications between both parties and fiduciary oversight of funds.



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MORRO BAY TOURISM BUREAU

Taylor ended his comments by complimenting the TBID for their hard work. He stated that he would be remiss in not giving credit on the impact to Morro Bay without the marketing efforts of this group.

Member Jacquez commented that she was concerned that the stakeholders who are directly impacted have not been included in this conversation. Jacquez stated that she and many others have volunteered numerous hours to help facilitate marketing efforts to create success for Morro Bay. She also stated that she takes the oath of being on the advisory board very seriously including the fiduciary oversight responsibility. Jacquez went on and commented that the bureau has had great momentum and she would hate to see that momentum stop or slow down, due to this exploratory process. As a business person, Jacquez stated that it takes 5 years for a business to ramp up and the bureau has been successful in two. She was also concerned that she hasn't seen a specific plan from the city and it is difficult for her to support a change without understanding the overall plan.

Member Solu was contacted by many hoteliers on what is going on and they had deep concerns on a change in the current tourism model.

Member Solu shared her concerns in regards to an expansion of city government or increased government regulation when the city has every opportunity to communicate with the Tourism Bureau and TBID. Solu went on and addressed additional concerns regarding communications. She explained that it is the bureau's job to work in collaboration with the assessed hotels, the city, the business community, the Chamber of Commerce and other partners to create economic strength for our community. Solu stated that it is difficult to build economic strength in a city of small businesses by excluding from conversations and negating efforts of smart, experienced professionals in fields that the city has no expertise in and whom the city needs in order to be financially strong to provide services. She went on and was concerned that there is a lack of communication to the advisory board, the hotel consortium and business community on what the city's goals are for revenue in regards to transient occupancy tax (TOT) in the next 5 years. Solu stated that there is a great opportunity to work and communicate better together with the predicted 2018-19 economic downturn to sustain economic growth and jobs. She went on in stating that the growth in tourism throughout the business sector over the past 6 years has created good-paying jobs that can support families. It has also helped new businesses arrive and thrive in town and will continue to help rebuild infrastructure and support city services such as City Hall, the Police and Fire Departments. Solu ended her comments by reporting that the city has been happy with the TBID's performance and the revenue that it has produced over the years. She would be willing to working out the details on city and council desires to create better and more transparent communications and systems between the bureau and the city for future success.

Member Solu opened this discussion to public comment. Jonni Biaggini future success of tourism in Morro Bay is not with city government, but with private enterprise and the existing model already established in the city.

Member Solu commented that the city council voted 5-0 in support of the county-wide tourism marketing district (TMD). She noted that the TMD model is exactly the same type of model for Morro Bay that was recommended and supported by city management staff earlier this year.

Member Solu requested to sit down with Deputy City Manager Taylor to review the ordinance, reporting and the fiduciary responsibilities. She explained that previous annual reports had been submitted, but was not aware if they were accepted by file by the council.

Member Solu reported that the board will take a 2 minute break as Member Smith needed to leave to meet a group from Sweden at his store. Member Solu stated that the meeting will resume again at 9:50am.

#### VI. VISIT SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY UPDATE

Member Solu made a motion to move up the Visit San Luis Obispo County update per Executive Director Haugen's request, Member Newton seconded it and the motion carried 3-0.

Val Seymour, Morro Bay Liaison for Visit San Luis Obispo County will provide an update on the Tourism Marketing District (TMD). Seymour reported that there are exciting things choosing marketing committee, inclusive, other businesses and not represented here in Morro Bay that should be here in the city.

Seymour began her report by stating that the board has been working on many preliminary items such as Brown Act Training, establishing board terms, assembling the full board and selecting marketing committee members. Seymour went on in reporting that the board has selected a marketing firm from the marketing committee recommendation. Catalyst was selected and between them and the TMD, they have announced their first year priorities. 3.4 million will be dedicated in year one on promoting the region during off peak slower months to new customers to choose San Luis Obispo county as their destination of choice. She went on in stating that the TMD will focus on feeder markets including the San Francisco Bay Area, Southern California, Central Valley and a few markets outside of California.

Seymour continued to discuss Sunset Savor the Central Coast. Although this event has lost money over the years, it has gained popularity and attracts visitors from outside of the area. She went on in stated that there has been a change over this year with the addition of contracting with Fast Forward Events, a promotions company that will eventually own the event and share 10% of the profits with Visit San Luis Obispo County.

Executive Director Haugen also reported that there are very positive things happening with Visit San Luis Obispo County and the TMD. Haugen stated that he is seeing true co-operative advertising programs; giving one example of the Visit California Travel Guide. One of the first initiatives of the TMD was a negotiated purchase of a 2-page spread in the travel guide to reduce the cost to the TBIDs in the county. Haugen went on in stating that something that would normally cost the bureau \$20-\$40,000 is costing the Morro Bay Tourism Bureau \$6500 to be a part of a 2-page spread. He ended this portion of his comments in stating that this initiative reaches out to an audience that normally the bureau could not afford to do on their own.

Haugen ended his overall comments concerning the TMD that he feels that Morro Bay has even more input, due to having two different individuals holding a seat on the board of directors and the marketing committee.

Member Solu accepted the report from both Seymour and Haugen for file.

VII. FALL/WINTER CAMPAIGN PRESENTATION

Ashlee Akers & Lisa Campolmi from Verdin Marketing presented the proposed creative for the 2015-16 season. Akers provided the following report to the BOD – see attached report – [Morro Bay Tourism Bureau Fall Campaign](#)

Akers highlighted the position statement - Morro Bay provides outdoor adventurers, millennials, retired travelers, and families with original coastal experiences wrapped around a historic landmark, the Morro Rock. Through a variety of bay activities, ocean-to-table seafood and craft libations, and a relaxing seaside environment, we promise visitors a voyage to remember.

Some areas of focus is on multi-generational families (including pets too), lifestyle vertical marketing, digital media and billboard media was the focus of the fall campaign.

Campolmi reported how much that she researches self involved way in responding. Travel based on passions verses always age groups. Tier One markets – tier two markets – uses multiple markets and vehicles to reach the different audiences.

We want to be able to react to what is happening in the market quickly.

Campolmi also went over the detailed media plan for fall 2015 – see attached report – [2015 Fall Media Proposal](#).

Member Solu complimented Verdin Marketing for their reporting and transparency provided to the board as well as the public. Love wish you were here messaging. Fine with the creative on the billboard.

Member Newton would like to see an initiative for the bureau to consider marketing gardening in Morro Bay.

Member Jacquez loves that the bureau is focusing on niche marketing. She ended her comments to Verdin Marketing on the great reporting they have provided to the board..

Executive Director Haugen wanted to end this portion of the presentation to give an update on the website update. Haugen provided a copy of the new design (both mobile and desktop) to the board. Haugen explained that by using the analytics and information from the agencies, Mobi Manage was able to receive direction on a site that would work well for Morro Bay. Haugen explained that currently, the bureau has to maintain two different sites (mobile and desktop), but with the new site, only one has to be maintained. Haugen went on to explain that the new site is simple and clean, plus allows the images and photography to speak for itself. Haugen reported that the project is on schedule to launch the new responsive site in November.

Member Newton commented that he hopes that the bureau is planning to infuse more video content into the new site. Haugen replied with a definite yes and explained that the current platform is limited in providing video content. He also wants to assure the board that the video content provides an authentic look and experience with Morro Bay.

Member Solu accepted the report from both Verdin Marketing and Haugen for file.

VIII. APPROVAL OF August 13, 2015 MINUTES

Member Newton made a motion to approve the August 13, 2015 minutes, Member Jacquez seconded the motion and the motion was carried 3-0.

IX. TREASURER'S REPORT

Member Newton and Executive Director Haugen provided a summary of the treasurer's report provided by Executive Director Haugen – see attached [Treasurers Report](#).

Member Jacquez made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for file, Member Newton seconded and the motion was carried 3-0.

X. BOARD ELECTIONS

Member Solu reported that according to the bylaws that the Chair and Vice Chair must be lodging. Member Solu asked Member Jacquez to accept the position as Chair and Member Newton to remain as Treasurer. Both accepted and Member Solu made a motion to vote Member Jacquez as Chair, Member Solu as Vice Chair, Member Newton as Treasurer and Member Smith as Secretary; Member Jacquez seconded it and the motion was carried 3-0.

XI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & STAFF REPORTS

Member Newton was excused at 10:54am as he had a work commitment prior to the report. Because there isn't a quorum, the Executive Director's report will be accepted as file at the next meeting when there is a quorum present.

Executive Director Haugen, Sales Manager Young and Hospitality Coordinator Strickland provided an update with the Marketing and PR Firm RFP Update, Monthly Marketing & Operational Updates, Community & Stakeholder Correspondence.

Executive Director Haugen began the report on the update of the Morro Bay Visitor Center move. He explained the center will be open through Monday, September 28, 2015, but will be closed Tuesday & Wednesday, September 29 & 30, 2015 to get ready for the move to the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce building located at 695 Harbor Street. The current Visitor Center staff has the ability to apply with the chamber and the bureau has been

The remainder of the report can be read with the attached - [2015 Executive Director Report](#).

Haugen gave an update on the marketing and public relations (PR) request for proposal (RFP) process. The Morro Bay Tourism Bureau is initiating a policy that the RFP process happen every two years for a marketing and/or a public relations agency. Haugen continued by explaining that MBTB received (5) five proposals for both marketing and PR, (2) two for just marketing and (4) four covering just PR. He reported to the board that he was still reviewing and would narrow it down to have them review final candidates.

Haugen ended this portion of his presentation by stating that because we have established relationships with both Mental Marketing and Verdin Marketing, there will be an opportunity for a 30 minute presentation followed by a question and answer period.

In the end, Haugen wanted to emphasize that this process is to assure that the agency or agencies will continue to move the needle for Morro Bay.

Member Solu wanted to highlight that the locked information board at the Morro Bay Visitor Center needs to be taken down and the bureau retain it for use and the potted plants will also be used to enhance the chamber office or the community. Haugen stated that the moving company will be moving the potted plants, but appreciated the reminder on the locking information board. Member Solu offered to schedule a walk through with Haugen to make sure all of the items that need to be removed and/or moved.

Member Solu ended her comment by stating that she loves the new Morro Bay Visitor Guide, especially the map. Solu asked if the bureau would consider printing just the map in the future. Haugen stated it is a part of the evolution of collateral for the bureau. He ended this portion of the conversation by stating that it could be an optional pay-to-play option for the future.

Member Jacquez inquired about the electronic infoboard in the Visitor Center. Haugen stated that he has connected Liz Gilson and InfoBoard to move the current one to the new Visitor Center location. Haugen continued on bringing more boards into Morro Bay and will work with the city on establishing new locations.

Member Jacquez also asked the interest area for existing staff to move over to the new Visitor Center. The application process has opened at the chamber and the bureau has encouraged all staff to apply to keep a smooth transition. Haugen ended the conversation by stating that the bureau is taking a positive spin on the transition from the existing location to the new location.

Member Jacquez asked the question if the board packet is being sent to city council. Haugen stated not at this time, but would encourage this to be a future discussion when a quorum is present.

Member Solu asked if the light pole banners were going to be replaced. Deputy City Manager Taylor and Executive Director Haugen have been in discussion on what company produced the existing banners and how to replace the ones directing visitors to the Visitor Center.

**XII. DECLARATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

No declaration of future agenda items could be announced, due to no quorum present.

**XIII. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Member Solu announced that the Avocado & Margarita Festival is coming up this weekend and commends the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce for their great planning of the event.

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was called at 11:40am.

**MISSION STATEMENT**



The purpose of the Morro Bay Tourism Bureau is to promote and increase tourism in the city of Morro Bay by improving and strengthening the condition of the Tourism Business Environment. The objective shall be accomplished through the development and operation of a Tourism Improvement District and other marketing, branding and promotional programs and initiatives.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk (805) 772-6205. Notification 24 hours prior to the meeting will enable the city to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.