

SCT Board of Directors Board Meeting
 January 24, 2024 3pm
 SCT Board Room
 400 Aviation Blvd, Suite 500. Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Meeting Minutes

Members: **Joe Bartolomei, Jennifer Buffo, Thera Buttaro, Margaret Grahame, Keo Hornbostel, Monica Hubert, Kirstyne Lange, Kirk Lok, Crista Luedtke, Brian Marchi, Brandon Mrkvicka, Tony Pace, Bert Rangel, Edward Roe, Caroline Shaw, Tim Zahner, Scott Alonso, Brian Sommer,**

Invitees: Ethan Brown, McCall Miller, Kristen Madsen, Mary Roulades, Bill Arnone, Claudia Vecchio, Todd O’Leary, Lori Angstadt, Kelly Bass Seibel, Jonny Westom, Conrad Braganza, Jessica Quigley (recording secretary), Tracy Koch, Mary Roulades, Anthony Davis, Michael Ferguson, John Berean, Jason Lee, Tom Hazinski, Scott Beck, Dave Bratton,

Public: None

Absent: **Brandon Mrkvicka, Brian Marchi, Caroline Shaw, Crista Luedtke, Scott Alonso, Margaret Grahame**

| Agenda Item/Issues | Information | Follow Up Action | Person Responsible | Date Due |
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| Meeting Call to Order | Meeting commenced at 3:00pm | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Roll Call | <i>Roll call taken for all members</i> | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Public Comment | NA | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Statement of Abstentions | None | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Approval of Consent Items. | <p>Motion: K. Lange S: J. Buffo to approve the consent items- Approval of Agenda: January 24, 2024 Approval of BOD Minutes: November 15, 2023 Acceptance of Committee Minutes: Governance November 7, 2023 Finance & Legal Committee November 13, 2023 With the addition of Item 8b – September & October Financials</p> <p>Ayes –10 Nays – 0, Abstentions – 0 K. Lok had not yet joined the meeting. B. Sommers not yet</p> | | | |

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| | <p>and 400 travelers from Western States¹ with an annual household income of more than \$100K who are open to wine tasting and restaurant dining, exploring scenic beauty, and arts and culture travel experiences.</p> <p>To gain added insight and clarity about the factors impacting visitation, five key assumptions were analyzed in the study:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial concerns of travelers 2. Perception of San Francisco's media narrative 3. Rise of outbound international travel 4. Effect of Sonoma County Tourism messaging and advertising 5. Changes in the winery experience <p>Several enlightening pieces of data from the study show that the decision to travel continues to be impacted by various external factors:</p> <p>Interest in other domestic destinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four in ten travelers say that interest in other domestic destinations is the most important factor impacting their travel choices. o 61% of all travelers and 66% of western travelers also agreed with this statement— <p>which is reflective of the sample base as they are travelers who did not visit Sonoma County in 2023.</p> <p>Interest in Sonoma County vs. likelihood to visit over next 2 years for leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67% of California travelers are interested in visiting Sonoma County; however, among western travelers, this decreases to 58%. • 59% of Californians are most likely to visit Sonoma County compared with a 38% likelihood among western travelers. • In terms of visitation frequency, 36% of all travelers surveyed indicated they have never visited | | | |

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| | <p>Sonoma County; this increases to 47% among travelers from western states. The study found that the “been there, done that” effect is minimal leaving a sizeable portion of the surveyed audience interested in visiting Sonoma County.</p> <p>Awareness/familiarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one quarter (29%) of all travelers say that Sonoma County is just not on their radar. 47% of Californians and 58% of western U.S. travelers agreed with this statement, respectively. • Lack of familiarity about the destination (things to see and do) is prominent among western U.S. travelers (44% western travelers vs. 36% California travelers agree with this statement). <p>1 Western U.S. states sampled: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana.</p> <p>2</p> <p>San Francisco perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one quarter (28%) of all travelers say the spillover effect of San Francisco’s negative media narrative is a deterrent to visiting Sonoma County. • 42% of all survey participants agree that San Francisco’s woes have made visiting Sonoma County less attractive. This opinion is especially prominent among those who reside outside California with 49% of western U.S. travelers agreeing with this statement. <p>Interest in international destinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One quarter of all travelers say choosing an international destination over Sonoma County is the most important factor influencing their travel choices. 47% also agreed with this statement. • Western U.S. travelers are more likely to travel domestically (4.7 trips – Western U.S. travelers vs. 3.8 trips – California travelers), while California travelers | | | |

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| | <p>are slightly more likely to travel abroad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A smaller proportion of travelers, 27% of California travelers and 22% of Western U.S. travelers agree that they strictly prioritized international travel over domestic travel in 2023. • Among those who prioritized international travel, their top three reasons for doing so were to explore new cultures; fewer restrictions; better value for money than domestic travel. • Although international destinations do have a significant allure that affects consideration of Sonoma County, international travel did not replace domestic vacations in 2023. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 61% of all travelers say they took the same number of trips abroad as they did in 2022. o Only 21% say they took more trips abroad in 2023. In fact, western U.S. travelers are likelier to say their international trip volume remains unchanged year-over-year. <p>Domestic travel and competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater share of travelers (42%) said they took more domestic trips in 2023 compared to 2022; only 19% took fewer trips than the year prior. • In terms of other California destinations visited for leisure over the last 2 years, Lake Tahoe and Santa Barbara are Sonoma County’s biggest in-state competitors followed by Napa, Monterey, Paso Robles/San Luis Obispo. • Travelers are most likely to choose Lake Tahoe and Santa Barbara, followed by Napa and Monterey over the coming year. Sonoma County outpaces Paso Robles for choice of destination among western U.S. travelers while Monterey outpaces Napa among California-based travelers. <p>Financial concerns of travelers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A smaller but sizeable percentage of all travelers (35%) | | | |

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| | <p>say financial concerns and high cost of travel are the most important deterrents to visiting Sonoma County. This concern rises among western travelers, with 46% of them citing high cost of travel as a reason for fewer leisure trips.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The economic climate in 2023 also impacted trip volume and spending; all travelers said they reduced spending in restaurants, on retail, took budget-friendly and fewer trips (~30% each). • One in three travelers say the high cost of visiting Sonoma County has kept them from visiting Sonoma County with 56% citing high lodging costs as the top barrier followed distantly by high gas prices (37%) and restaurant costs (31%). • Despite cost concerns, travelers said Sonoma County continues to offer good value for money. <p>Winery experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All travelers ranked Sonoma County’s brand as strong and a highly desired wine country destination, second only to Napa across several other U.S. wine destinations. o However, a decline in quality of winery experience is impacting visitation. 36% of California travelers and 42% of western U.S. travelers agree that winery experiences have become less attractive (increased costs). o Semi-frequent (once a year) and infrequent (once every few years) winery visits were most common. <p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents are unlikely to say other wine regions are more appealing than Sonoma County. • Enjoying scenic beauty, wine with local food pairings, and sampling diverse wines were the top preferred winery experiences. Western U.S. travelers place more emphasis on intimate vineyard | | | |

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| | <p>tours with knowledgeable guides.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a third of past winery visitors (35%) said they made a reservation on their last winery visit, and among those who made reservations, 75% said the process of doing so was easy. <p>Effect of Sonoma County Tourism messaging and advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28% of all traveler’s recall seeing a travel advertisement for Sonoma County in 2023 (unaided). • Less than one in ten (8%) of travelers were turned off by Sonoma County ads they recall seeing. • In fact, over a third of travelers felt Sonoma County ads aligned and resonated with their travel preferences—a sentiment stronger among California travelers. • Sonoma County ads rank well in terms of inspirational power, with 54% of all travelers agreeing the ads did inspire them to visit Sonoma County. <p>Destination attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wineries, favorable weather, and outdoor recreation were the top three rated destination attributes followed by special events/festivals, unique tours/experiences, inclusive/welcoming atmosphere, local cuisine, and small town feel and neighborhood vibe. o Western travelers ranked favorable weather and unique tours/experiences higher compared to California-based travelers. • A reported 56% of all surveyed travelers actively seek out travel destinations that promote responsible tourism practices—rising to 62% among southern California based travelers. <p>Impact of access, natural disasters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing Sonoma County has lower overall impact; only 24% of travelers said Sonoma County is challenging to get to. | | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural disasters have also had a limited impact on visitation; only 11% of all travelers agreed that concerns about natural disasters have made visiting the County less attractive. Broader implications and conclusions • The non-visitor study findings are indicative of traveler perceptions among those who have not visited Sonoma County, and as such, low awareness of the destination is expected, among a range of other external factors at play in a competitive and evolving travel environment. • Among travelers who do visit Sonoma County, the visitor profile base remains a loyal one; 72% of overnight travelers are repeat visitors and 52% of overnight travelers have visited Sonoma County in the year prior (Source: Longwoods Travel USA visitor profile study, 2022). • Year-over-year analysis also shows that travelers have increased their affinity for using hotels, short-term rental websites, and the destination website for booking and trip planning—demonstrating greater awareness and familiarity of these resources among regular visitors. • In addition to external factors impacting visitation, there have been significant local shifts in how area lodging responded to the losses experienced during the pandemic and the rising costs of goods and services. Average Daily Rate (ADR) of hotels and short-term rentals grew by 11% and 12%, respectively in 2022, and RevPAR increased by 9% (hotels) and 12% (short-term rentals). • In 2023 however, hotels and short-term rentals reduced ADR by 6% and 5%, respectively, and RevPAR decreased by 11% (hotels) and 8% (short-term rentals) over 2022 levels, resulting in a marked decline in overall revenue. | | | |

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| | <p>• Over the last five years, there has also been a 15% increase in supply (available rooms). Reduced demand (room nights) and increased supply, in addition to lowering rates to fill more available rooms does affect the overall revenue and profitability of the lodging segment, and its impact cannot be underestimated.</p> <p>Scott Beck- CEO, San Francisco Travel Association gives presentation on his first 30, 60 & 90 day plans at new CEO.</p> <p>HVS Feasibility Study- Phase 1 Anthony Davis from HVS presents findings from Phase 1 of the Convention Center Feasibility Study</p> <p>As identified in the Destination Stewardship and Resiliency Master Plan, Sonoma County Tourism is working toward identifying the potential for developing a convention center in the County. SCT contracted with HVS, a global leader in the assessment and development of properties for the hospitality industry, provide the results of the first of a two-phase feasibility study. Sonoma County Tourism is working with the HVS Convention, Sports & Entertainment and HVS Consulting & Valuation Groups on this two-phase study. The results of the first phase were provided to the Convention Center Advisory Council at the Dec. 19 meeting. HVS provided insights into five key areas: 1. Market Assessment – Analyzes the economic and demographic data that provides an overview of the local economy in Sonoma County. 2. Meeting Planner Survey Results – HVS surveyed</p> | | | |

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| | <p>meeting planners to determine whether Sonoma County is of interest to them.</p> <p>3. Building Program Recommendations - The building program recommendations describe the floor areas of various types of function spaces as well as other important amenities for the proposed SCCC.</p> <p>4. Comparable and Competitive Venues – HVS analyzed comparable venues to provide a basis for developing program recommendations and forecasts of event demand.</p> <p>5. Hotel Supply and Demand – HVS based the supply and demand metrics on numbers derived from the Smith Travel Report (STR).</p> <p>6. Convention Center Demand Projections – HVS based event demand projections at the Sonoma County Convention Center (“SCCC”) on the following research and analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program recommendations presented previously, • Industry data and trends reports, • Key market and economic indicators, • Comparable venue program and demand data, and • A survey of event planners that have previously contacted Sonoma County Tourism about hosting events. <p>Site Analysis - Working with Sonoma County Tourism, HVS identified more than ten sites that could potentially accommodate the proposed SCCC. HVS prioritized proximity to the 101 freeway, which connects Sonoma County to the Bay Area in the south. The largest cities in Sonoma are along the 101 and attendees and suppliers prefer ease of access from the freeway to reach their events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Barn • Santa Rosa Mall • Shiloh Lot | | | |

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| <p>Committee Items Requiring Board ACTION:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonoma County Fairgrounds • State Farm Lot • Airport Site • Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds (Petaluma) <p>HVS toured these potential sites and narrowed the list down to seven potential sites. HVS then rated each potential site on 27 evaluation criteria. The rating of each site combined with the relative importance of each criteria results in a weighted score for each potential site. This process identified the three highest scoring sites which are the most suitable sites for the proposed event venues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa Rosa Mall (Santa Rosa) • State Farm Site (Rohnert Park) • Round Barn (Santa Rosa) <p>Sonoma County Tourism will now connect with the municipalities and entities identified as top contender sites to determine viability. Phase two will begin in January 2024. This will determine more detail around the center design and functionality.</p> <p>Finance & Legal: FY23-24 Reforecast. L. Angstadt presents the FY23-24 Budget Reforecast (see minutes from Finance and Legal Committee) as presented to Finance and Legal Committee.</p> <p>Motion: J. Bartolomei, S: T. Buttaro to approve the FY23-24 Budget Reforecast as accepted by the Finance & Legal Committee.</p> <p>Ayes-12 Nays-0 Abstain-0 <i>K. Lok has joined the meeting and B. Sommers is sworn in</i></p> | | | |

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| | <p><i>and can vote now</i></p> <p>Governance Committee:</p> <p>Motion: J Bartolomei, S: J. Buffo to approve Kirstyne Lange to join the Governance Committee</p> <p>Ayes-12 Nays-0 Abstain-0</p> <p>Community Engagement Committee: Visitor Center Infrastructure grants. T. Buttarro and K. Bass Seibel present- Sonoma County Tourism has agreed to fund \$500,000 in operational grant funds for County visitor centers with an additional \$100,000 set aside for infrastructure funds. The operational funds were awarded in June 2023 for this fiscal year. A visitor center study was conducted with the thought that needs from that study would help inform the committee on what is needed most for infrastructure funding. In addition to grant funding support, SCT hired Tanya Rainey as the Community Development Manager to work directly with the visitor centers as a staff liaison, bringing support and best practices to the County visitor centers.</p> <p>Through this informed process, it was clear that several visitor centers had needs in the areas of technology and/or signage and wayfinding. SCT also wanted to make sure that the visitor centers could apply for funding for other infrastructure needs that didn't fall into those 2 categories. Visitor Centers were invited to apply for funding of up to \$10,000 in one, two or all three categories. SCT also invited</p> | | | |

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| | <p>visitor centers to apply even if they weren't currently receiving an operational grant.</p> <p>SCT received 13 applications, including two applications from centers who are not current grantees. To receive funds those grantees had to agree to abide with the same scope of services that all current grantees have agreed to.</p> <p>Kristen Madsen consulted on the grantmaking process and is here today in her capacity as a consultant, and will not be weighing in or voting as a committee member.</p> <p>Staff has gone through all grant applications to ensure that the items requested meet the scope of the grant. Additionally, committee members have rated the applications in the areas of need, impact, capacity and clarity.</p> <p>SCT Staff T. Rainey and K. Bass Seibel review grant criteria, areas that are not covered but would fall under operations funding and items that were ineligible. Robust discussion on SCT assisting with bulk purchasing and the priority to get improvements to our visitor centers.</p> <p>Committee Recommendations for funding:</p> <p>Cloverdale Visitors Center: \$4,000</p> | | | |

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| | <p>Technology: \$4,000</p> <p>Fort Ross Visitors Center: \$7,185</p> <p>Technology: \$800, Signage/Wayfinding: \$2,000, Individualized: \$4,385</p> <p>Geyserville Visitors Center: \$7,400</p> <p>Individualized: \$7,400</p> <p>Mark West Visitors Center: \$6,000</p> <p>Signage/Wayfinding: \$3,000, Individualized: \$3,000</p> <p>Petaluma Visitors Center: \$10,000</p> <p>Individualized: \$10,000</p> <p>Redwood Coast Visitors Center*: \$5,000</p> <p>Individualized: \$5,000</p> <p>Russian River Visitors Center: \$10,000</p> <p>Individualized: \$10,000</p> <p>Santa Rosa Welcome Center: \$7,530</p> <p>Technology: \$4,000, Signage/Wayfinding: \$1,400,</p> | | | |

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| | <p>Individualized: \$2,130</p> <p>Sebastopol Visitors Center: \$8,000</p> <p>Individualized: \$8,000</p> <p>Sonoma Valley Visitors Center: \$3,200</p> <p>Technology: \$1,2000, Signage/Wayfinding: \$2,000</p> <p>Stewards of the Coast & Redwoods Armstrong Woods & Jenner Visitors Centers:</p> <p>\$10,000</p> <p>Individualized: \$10,000</p> <p>Windsor Visitors Center: \$9,900</p> <p>Technology: \$2,300, Signage/Wayfinding: \$3,000, Individualized: \$4,600</p> <p>*Redwood Coast Visitors Center is contingent upon a matching grant from Visit</p> <p>Mendocino and a business plan agreed upon by Sonoma County Tourism, Visit</p> <p>Mendocino and the Redwood Coast Visitors Center by April 1, 2024.</p> | | | |

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| <p>Strategic Plan 6-Month Update:</p> | <p>Total= \$98,215</p> <p>Motion: K. Lange. S: T. Buttaro to approve Visitor Center Infrastructure funding to as accepted by the Community Engagement Committee</p> <p>Aye-12 Nays-0 Abstentions-0</p> <p>It is noted that visitor centers must be following scope of services and that SCT is working with them to keep them compliant. This has been a challenge since the pandemic shut down.</p> <p>C. Vecchio provided an overview of the teams accomplishments against the strategic plan.</p> | | | |
| <p>What's New and Noteworthy?</p> | <p>Lots of rain in the forecast!</p> | | | |
| <p>Next Meeting</p> | <p>February 28, 2024 at 3pm at the SCT Board Room</p> | <p>RSVP in BoardEffect</p> | <p>Members</p> | <p>3 days prior in BE; or 1 week prior if virtual for posting requirements</p> |

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| Adjourn | Meeting Adjourned 4:51pm | | | |