

Buena Park Hotel Marketing Association

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 15, 2023

11:15 AM – 12:50 PM @ Courtyard Marriott

1. Call to Order - Chairman

An adjourned regular meeting of the Buena Park Hotel Marketing Association was called to order on Friday, December 15, 2023 at 11:15 AM at Courtyard Marriott by Chairman of the Board - Don Prescott.

Roll Call

Present: Don Prescott, Javier Solis, Camilo Bruce, and Jecksther Dela Cruz

Advisor Present: Sara Copping, Karina Diez, Michelle Munoz - Visit Buena Park.

2. Approval of Minutes – Chairman

Don made a motion to approve the minutes; Camilo seconded it; approved unanimously.

3. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

4. City Update – Sara Copping, Executive Director, Visit Buena Park

Sara shared the latest status of development initiatives, including:

- Hilton Home2 Suites: 6-story, 140-room hotel plans in final design stages, public hearings expected in 2024.
- Old Pioneer Motel reacquired by the City: They're exploring new investment options post-fire damage at Vacant Barn; no decisions made.
- 8150 La Palma Avenue: City approved 1,302-unit residential project; demolition in early 2024, multi-year timeline.
- Identity Board Shop: Approved for conversion to a dance studio; currently undergoing renovations.
- Beach Boulevard McDonald's: Relocated and redesigned; demolition starts late December, expected 6-month completion for a summer finish. Potential new investor for space in the back under consideration.

Don asked about the Buena Park Grand Hotel & Suites and Sara noted impending closure, supported by City Manager, Council, and departments. Last-minute counterproposal by council suggests a management checklist to avert closure if the Hotel complies with requirements. Javier asks about Springhill Suites by Marriott transition; Sara confirms, emphasizing managerial tasks before the transformation. Sara mentioned off presentation the Days Inn by Wyndham

Buena Park Hotel may be closing. Owners, considering selling, have one more year. Camillo inquired about a land lease, but Sara is unsure.

5. Public Relations/Media Updates – Karina Diez, Marketing Specialist

Karina introduces Michelle Munoz as the new Marketing Aide to the Visit Buena Park team, providing her contact information and December 2023 schedule.

Karina reviewed press coverage since the previous board meeting which includes notable outlets such as The Points Guy, Fox 11 News, Travel Lens, Hungry Huy, India Times, Kidsguide, LAist, VacationIdea, Mental Floss, KFI AM 640, El Tiempo, Trekaroo, Marcie in Mommyland, Patch, and Laughing Place.

Media visits completed since the last board meeting included coverage surrounding family and food travel. Bloggers that visited were Travel Mamas, Roamaroo, Monica Plus Two, Beastly Appetite, Good, Fun Faraway Places, and Our Travel Passport. Upcoming media visits will consist of Getting Stamped, Kali Alexandria, and Local Adventurer in the coming months. Javier asks if influencers' content drives website activity. Karina confirms, explaining influencers are required to link Visit Buena Parks' page, leading to hotel rates and deals. She checks bloggers' audience stats to ensure alignment with the target audience. Sara steps in, mentioning they sometimes host bloggers for their content and visuals only, finding it more cost-effective than hiring photographers, who may charge for commercial rights.

Furthermore, several blog posts have been written lately, which includes: Stay Cozy in Buena Park: Indoor Fun for All Ages, What You Need to Know for Your Corporate Getaway, Top 9 Spec-Taco-Lar Taco Spots, Warm Up with Hot Chocolate at These Buena Park Spots, Where to Ring in 2024 in Buena Park, CA, The Gift of Travel: A Buena Park Getaway, Winter Checklist of Southern California Attractions, Knott's Merry Farm: Know Before You Go, "Stocking" Up on Christmas Cheer in Buena Park -- Karina plays Visit Buena Park's Christmas Commercial, and A Christmas Itinerary in Buena Park That Yule Love.

Karina discussed her recent media event involvement, such as the IFWTWA Conference in October with 60 freelance travel writers and Visit California's Mexico Media Mission in November, attended by over 60 journalists, bloggers, and content creators from across Mexico. She also mentioned upcoming media events, such as IMM North America in New York from January 24th–25th, featuring a media marketplace for appointments with editors, journalists, broadcasters, and influencers. Additionally, Karina highlighted the Visit California Dallas Media Dinner scheduled for February 2024.

The Buena Park Taste if Food Awards (TOBPFA) is designed to engage food enthusiasts and enhance interest in the city's culinary scene is in its final steps. In January 2024, the top ten restaurants will be announced sequentially, receiving recognition through a storefront sticker, certificate, press release, blog article, and social media promotions. Don inquires about the award format. Sara proposes a simple award presentation with photography, as well as additional acknowledgment at the State of the City event. Roxane inquires if TOBPFA is annual; Sara clarifies it's the first annual but expresses plans to expand as Buena Park's food scene grows. Sara notes the thorough restaurant selection process involving Yelp reviews and local

residents' input. Don asks about Aaron's involvement; Sara explains the city is stepping back to avoid perceived favoritism but notes Visit Buena Park has more flexibility.

Karina is actively growing the newly launched TikTok account. Top-performing organic content includes "4 Halloween Must-Do's in Buena Park, California," "What to Bring for a Day at Knott's Berry Farm," and "Top 3 Ways to Save at Knott's Berry Farm."

Sara and Karina suggest acquiring an iPad for travel to trade shows and media conferences, replacing the need for print collateral or USBs. Karina prefers either the Pro or the Air for the screen size, but any model will suffice. The board unanimously agrees to proceed with the decision.

6. Executive Director Report – Sara Copping

Sara opens the Executive Director presentation by highlighting the city's recent collaboration with The Autism Project for employee training on autism and neurodivergence. Extended training to hospitality in Buena Park is proposed, suggesting quarterly or yearly sessions. Camillo asks about the content, and Sara explains it involves a PowerPoint lecture with real-world examples that could be tailored towards hospitality. Camillo asks if it's mandatory, and Sara clarifies no, but notes that the Anaheim Convention Center and tourism board certification allows city-based hotels to participate. Don notes the certification trend started with amusement parks. Sara points out the city council has an openly autistic member, Susan Sonne, and her direct feedback on enhancing Knott's Berry Farm's support and training. Camillo supports sending his staff and asks about the cost. Sara states it was \$6,000 for the city's two-day training. Javier clarifies if the board should cover the cost, and Sara suggests either option. The board collectively agrees that, given the current extensive training at each hotel, funding it is not a priority at the moment.

Sara discusses TravPro, the software used by Visit California for travel agent training. She presents the training model to the board, demonstrating the registration and training process for the webpage, with a focus on the Visit Buena Park module and kit. Sara expresses a desire to extend this training to hospitality staff to enhance their understanding of Buena Park's tourism and amusement offerings. This training is beneficial for hotel staff, travel agents, wholesalers, event and meeting planners, and receptive operators. Javier suggests a direct link to the Visit Buena Park Module, and Sara agrees to work on that. Don supports the idea, finding it beneficial for new employees. Sara mentions that the program is available in multiple languages, including Spanish, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese.

Sara presents the 2024 Travel Guide cover featuring Porto's, aligning with the upcoming "Taste of Buena Park" food awards. She mentions that Snoopy will be on next year's cover due to the revamped Camp Snoopy. Orange Coast Magazine is printing only 5,000 copies instead of the usual 30,000, encouraging digital use. Sara proposes unique options, like a QR code linking to VBP Deals, for promoting Buena Park. She notes the partnership with aRes and Discount Ticket-Tours, ensuring hotel guests access the best amusement park deals. Sara aims to tailor

promotions based on individual hotel preferences and explores in-room videos as another promotional idea.

Sara inquires with the board about their video needs, whether for commercial or training purposes, emphasizing the intention to tailor each hotel video to showcase its unique amenities. Javier checks if January still works, considering DoubleTree's ongoing renovation. Sara confirms. The board discusses preferred dates for their hotels.

Sara announces the city's official approval of a designated Koreatown area, spanning from Orangethorpe Ave to Rosecrans Ave, with over 90 restaurants, including The Source. She introduces the Koreatown map, to be included in the travel guide and distributed to hotels. The map will serve as a marketing tool for Visit California's Club California and the tour and travel market. It is available in both English and Korean versions.

Sara presents Expedia Ad results for September with 642 room nights booked, generating \$86,200 in revenue with \$10,000 spent. November's results were estimated at \$780,000 in revenue and over \$150,000 spent. October saw 481 nights booked and \$68,700 in revenue. The Q3 OC Coop from July to September resulted in 1,459 room nights booked and \$588,000 in revenue. The year-over-year report with Expedia shows a 12% increase in bookings for December compared to the previous year, which had slightly lower numbers.

Sara emphasizes the focus on Military publications in Print Ads, adding a military website to the VBP webpage. The Military program reached a circulation of 75k. She presents the two-page guide spread in the Military Publication Guide, featuring a QR code linked to the VBP Military page. Additionally, the ad in the January 2024 Anaheim travel guide will target 250k readers, and our half-page spread in the Visit California Travel Guide, with over 1 million in circulation, will be featured.

Sara provides an IPW update, highlighting a secured double booth booked with DoubleTree and Hilton. Lafleche and Roxanna will attend, with Karina managing media and assisting the booth for over 80 appointments set during the conference. Additionally, there's a partnership with Travel Santa Ana for a dual-hosted Cinco de Mayo Celebration for the Mexico travel trade at Wayfarer Downtown Los Angeles. Sara shares rough drafts of the booth design, assuring the board of updates. Don asks about booth proximity, and Sara confirms the Knott's booth will be next to VBP booths. Merchandise plans include tumblers, small speakers, VBP shirts for the team, and VBP charging cable merchandise, along with "Snoopy Specialists" name tags for staff.

Sara addresses Marketing Adjustments for Ads, noting a current soft international market. Mexico is performing well, but other international markets are hindered by visa and port of entry issues. Simultaneously, the East Coast and Midwest are experiencing a soft market. Adjustments focus on drive-centric markets, highlighting Washington, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and Texas as primary markets. Colorado, Oregon, Illinois, Florida, and New York/New Jersey are seen as growth opportunities and secondary markets. VBP focuses on Greater Los Angeles for potential growth, primarily generating one-night stays that consistently contribute

to Buena Park's tourism economy. Javier inquires if Sara receives airport reports. She confirms receiving reports from Airlift, representing John Wayne and local airports. Additionally, Sara off presentation references her trip to the Visit Anaheim Annual Meeting on 12/14 where the Visit California president highlighted a soft international market. She notes staycations are currently sustaining bookings.

Sara presents the Economic Impact Study, highlighting 3.61 million visitors in 2023, with 96.8% for leisure and 3.2% for business. Day visitors were 81.4%, night visitors 18.6%, with 97% domestic and 3% international travelers. Visitor spending totaled \$310 million, averaging \$850k/day and \$35k/hour. Key regions for overnight visitors included California, Arizona, Nevada, and Texas. The total economic impact was \$426 million, supporting 3,300 jobs. Fiscal impacts show that without tourism, each Buena Park household would need to pay an additional \$1,389 in taxes, an increase of over \$800 compared to the 2016 report. Visitor spending contributed \$71.1 million to government revenues, with food spending making up 27% of the overall visitor spending profile. Javier asks if the food spending by visitors correlates with room sales, questioning if people are leaving after visiting Buena Park's food scene. Sara responds that day visits are crucial for keeping attractions and restaurants open, emphasizing the attraction of both day and night tourists. Javier inquires about the previous lodging numbers, and Sara mentions it increased by about 5 to 6%.

The marketing/ad updates for the quarter include reviews of Google campaign ads, YouTube, TV commercials on Hulu, and ads through Choozle. Jex inquires about Choozle, and Sara explains they advertise on major streaming channels, negotiating better deals. Video ads, especially last month's dabble in Mexico commercials, performed well, generating 45,000 clicks to the Visit Buena Park website from the YouTube TV commercial. Sara emphasizes the potential in exploring the Mexico market further.

Past trade event: Karina attended the Visit Anaheim Canada Sales Mission from November 5th – 10th, 2023, engaging in one-on-one meetings with key tour professionals in Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Sara is scheduled for GoWest Summit from February 26th – 29th, 2024, a B2B tourism convention with over 35 appointments with buyers.

Sara presented the Visit Buena Park's FY 22-23 Annual Report to the board. It covered VBP's vision, mission, and goals, along with the tourism marketing district boundaries. The hotel overview, to be provided to the city council, revealed 2,575 rooms at 22 hotels, with Holiday Inn transitioning into the DoubleTree by Hilton. Hotel revenue exceeded \$75 million, showing a 22% increase YoY. Hotel transient occupancy tax increased by 14.9% YoY, tourism marketing district collections rose by 15.6% YoY, and the average daily rate increased by 8% to \$124. The top 6 hotels, including Knott's Hotel, DoubleTree, Courtyard, Fairfield, Hampton, and The Grand Hotel & Suites, had an average daily rate of \$196, reflecting a 7% increase YoY. Hotel occupancy averaged 70%, a 9% increase YoY, compared to Anaheim's daily rate at \$235 and occupancy rate of 75%. The report covered hotel room inventory and the media mix of earned, paid, and owned media. Leisure traveler personas targeted couponing families, adventure seekers, go-for-it families, and the newly added military community. Javier inquired about the report link, and

Sara mentioned it awaits council review for distribution to hotels. Online visitor stats included 1.99 million page views (up 85% YoY), with 66% mobile users. Of the visitors, 83.7% were new, with females at 54.1% and males at 45.9%. The top age group was 35-44 years old, and primary marketing channels were 46% paid search, 23% social, and 15% display. Sara provided international market details, with 89% from the US, 4% from Mexico, and 2% from India. Top traffic to landing pages included: Hotel Page, Travel Guide Request, Deals, Knott's Berry Farm Business Listing, Halloween, Christmas Cheer Blog, Things to do in Buena Park, Winter Giveaway, Knott's Ticket Portal and Military Year-Round. The breakdown also featured top cities and the top 5 U.S. states. The public relations pitching timeline and media events outlined VBP's attendance and pitched content. In the blog and content creation segment, 2023 saw over 170,000 page views, and 7 blog posts made the top 25 most visited web pages. The page highlighting hosted journalists, bloggers, YouTubers, and influencers detailed an ad value equivalency of \$2.9 million and 619 million impressions. Media Planner segment: The Leisure Audience breaks down events, holidays, promotions, and ad placements. In the digital marketing report, Google Ads drove 44% of total site traffic and 78% of all hotel link clicks, with a \$420k spend. Notably, click-to-hotel-page conversions increased by 26% YoY, and Travel Guide requests surged by 217%. Expedia results yielded over 11,000 room nights booked, \$4.2M in gross hotel revenue, with a spend of about \$270k. Sara informs the board that TripAdvisor was not renewed due to soft performance, despite over \$35k spent and 7k clicks. TravelZoo, with a click-thru rate of 0.14%, was also not renewed in favor of better-performing programs. Brand USA, a partnered program with Mexico, outperformed Canada results, leading to a temporary shift in focus. Email blasts included Visit California and AAA NorthEast, along with the publication of four newsletters to consumers annually. Three major promotions were conducted this year: The Winter giveaway campaign garnered over 32k entries (December 2022 & January 2023), Military Appreciation Months from October to November 2022 received 10k+ page views, and the Halloween seasonal promotion ranked as the #5 most visited page on the VBP website. Social media remains a strong performer, with YouTube leading in cost-per-click at 3.4M impressions, 862,407 views, and 61,098 clicks from views. Pinterest sees content placement with minimal financial investment. VBP has also ventured into CTV, targeting viewers on Disney+ and Hulu. Sara notes a shift away from traditional print ads, mentioning previous placements in AAA publications, SoCal Life Magazine, Visit California and Visit Anaheim Guides, Holiday with Kids Magazine (Australia's #1 Family Travel Magazine), and three military publications last year. Marketing & Sales Collateral includes the Buena Park Travel Guide, mailed to 37,427 recipients, distributed to hotels (25k), and downloaded over 12k times. Top regions for requests include California, Arizona, Florida, Texas, and New York. This collateral package encompasses marketing materials like sales and media kits, maps, and hotel sheets. Additionally, VBP introduced new international materials for the Mexico and South Korean markets, featuring a media kit, sales kit, 3-minute training video, and a microsite. The Hotel postcard program is ongoing. The Annual Report also includes Sara and Karina's attendance at travel trade conferences and details brand architecture updates like the website skin, new business cards, logo, newsletter skin, tradeshow attire, and Visit Buena Park souvenirs and giveaways.

Sara presented the Financial Report for FY 23/24, aligning with the Management District Plan. The budget, consistent with the plan, reflects standard fluctuations in hotel occupancy and

room rates. Anticipated collections for FY 23/24 amount to \$1,250,000, with an additional \$596,824 in carryover, resulting in a total budget of \$1.84M. Categorical breakdowns fall within the authorized 15% adjustment of the prior year's total budget. The City fee in the table is calculated only on collections, excluding the carryover. While the audit is ongoing, Sara is confident in the report's numbers, and taxes have been submitted and processed by the city.

Off-presentation, Sara raises a concern about Board Insurance. This year, Errors and Omissions Insurance increased by \$5,000 due to higher revenue. Due to limited time during the renewal process, Sara proceeded with the payment but plans to explore better quotes next year.

7. Discuss Finance/Budget Review YTD – Javier Solis

Javier reports that they are four months into the fiscal year. In October, he confirmed that the year-to-date revenue is \$446,584, surpassing the previous best year of \$1,920 plus \$414,000. Knott's Hotel is excelling in revenue, and anticipation is high for the addition of Hilton to the team. Despite expenses, there is money carryover, indicating healthy financials. Sara notes the net revenue is at \$485,000.

8. Public comment on matters on the agenda

There were no public comments.

9. Set Meeting Schedule – Chairman

Don approved scheduling the next board meeting in March 2024 at the Knott's Berry Farm Hotel.

10. Agenda Items for Future Meetings – Board Members

No agenda items for future meetings were discussed.

11. Adjourn

The board meeting ended at 12:50 PM.