
REQUESTED BOARD ACTION: Resolution approving and confirming the Annual Report for 2011 & 2012 Marketing Plan prepared by the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area Advisory Board, contingent upon presentation and concurrence on January 24, 2012; and Levy of the Annual Assessment for the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area.

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT - None.

Explanation (if required): None.


Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: If the Board wishes to make changes to the Annual Report, it may do so following a noticed public hearing and direction to staff. None approval of the assessment levy would result in loss of revenue to the S.C.T.B.
**Background:** On November 2, 2004, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted the ordinance creating the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area (S.C.T.B.I.A.). Under the ordinance, lodging establishments generating annual room revenue of $350,000 or more must pay an assessment equal to 2% of such revenue. Proceeds from assessments are used to pay for marketing and other efforts to increase overnight visitors to the county.

In January 2005, the Board appointed five members to the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area Advisory Board which is charged with advising the Board of Supervisors on the amount of the Area’s Assessments and on the services, programs, and activities to be funded by the Assessments, and in February 2005 appointed eight (8) of the 22-member body to the Sonoma County Tourism Bureau (S.C.T.B.) Board of Directors.

In June 2005, the Board executed an agreement with the S.C.T.B. to carry out services, activities, and programs promoting tourism to Sonoma County funded by assessments from within the S.C.T.B.I.A.

In accordance with the ordinance and state law, the S.C.T.B.I.A. Advisory Board has submitted to the Board an Annual Report for 2011. The report contains information on the activities carried out in 2011 and those activities to be carried out by the S.C.T.B.I.A. during 2012. The report also contains a budget showing that the revenues from assessments and from all other sources to be paid to S.C.T.B. are sufficient to carry out the services, programs, and activities set forth in the plan. Staff finds the S.C.T.B. in compliance with all the requirements of the ordinance and agreement. The following are highlights from the report as provided by S.C.T.B.:

**Accomplishments and Objectives:**

2011 Accomplishments

1. Distributed leads up 83 percent over previous year with potential economic impact of $23.5 million.
2. Leads turned definite showed a 21 percent increase over 2009-10; economic impact of these leads was $4.2 million.
3. Growth in leads from the weddings, small groups and international markets.
4. Board of directors invested in human resources. The sales team has begun organizational development to yield a more effective workforce. The public relations, marketing, and partnership team has begun organizational development to yield a more effective workforce.
5. Media relations yielded 936 journalist assists and 48 visits from qualified media. More than 52 press releases, pitches and advertorial were created and distributed.
6. $9.5 million in destination spending was directly attributable to S.C.T.B.’s online marketing channels per return-on-investment analyses.
7. Visitors guide requests increased 17 percent over the previous year; organic web traffic increased 20 percent in the same period.
8. Stakeholder communications strategy included more effective, unified messaging as well as S.C.T.B. staff involvement in all county chambers and visitors bureaus.

2012 Initiatives

1. Increased goals for existing programs.
3. Event impact calculator to better gauge economic impact of meetings and events.
4. New geographic markets will include Australia and New Zealand in 2012.
5. Gain market share with technology among those deciding on a travel destination.
6. Certified tourism ambassador program that will train and inspire front-line hospitality employees and volunteers to work together to turn every visitor encounter into a positive experience.

The Board is requested to conditionally approve the resolution approving and confirming the Annual Report for 2011 & 2012 Marketing Plan and levy of the Annual Assessment for the Sonoma County Tourism Business Improvement Area, for the Annual Assessment to remain effective through the upcoming calendar year, 2012. A formal presentation and discussion on this Annual Report and Marketing Plan as well as other S.C.T.B. initiatives will occur at the January 24, 2012 Board meeting for final approval.
**Attachments:** Resolution.

**On File With Clerk:** Business Improvement Area Ordinance No. 5525 and Sonoma County Tourism Bureau Annual Report 2011 and 2012 Marketing Plan.

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**Template revised:** 12/15/2010