



**MARKETING STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY**  
**Wednesday, September 23, 2020**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**MINUTES OF MARKETING STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kelly Sanders (Chair), Fred Atkins, George Kam, Kyoko Kimura, Sherry Menor-McNamara, and Benjamin Rafter

**HTA STAFF PRESENT:**

John De Fries, Keith Regan, Pattie Herman, Marc Togashi, Marisa Yamane, Kalani Ka'anā'anā, Caroline Anderson, and Jennifer Chun

**GUESTS:**

Representative Richard Onishi, Senator Glenn Wakai, John Monahan, Jay Talwar, Eric Takahata, Josh Gershenson, and Tanya Freund

**LEGAL COUNSEL:**

Gregg Kinkley

**1. Call to Order and Pule:**

Keith Regan, HTA Chief Administrative Officer, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Mr. Regan provided instructions to the general public with regard to submitting testimony. He confirmed the attendance of the Committee members by roll call. Mr. Regan turned the floor over to Chair Kelly Sanders. Kalani Ka'anā'anā, HTA Director of Hawaiian Cultural Affairs and Natural Resources, opened the meeting with a pule.

**2. Approval of Minutes of the August 26, 2020 HTA Marketing Standing Committee Meeting:**

Chair Sanders requested a motion to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2020 HTA Marketing Standing Committee meeting. George Kam made a motion, which was seconded by Fred Atkins. The motion was unanimously approved.

**3. Presentation from HVCB Jay Talwar/Sr. VP & CMO on Updates to Marketing Plans for Welcoming Back Visitors:**



Chair Sanders recognized Jay Talwar of HVCB to present an update on market insights and HVCB's marketing plan. Mr. Talwar reported that traveler sentiment remains low, and few are willing to travel before April 2021. He noted however that there are positive indicators as to the level of traveler comfort with a pre-test program. He added that resident sentiment has shifted with the state of the economy and the high levels of unemployment.

Mr. Talwar reported that the purpose of the messaging strategy is to attract visitors who will leave Hawai'i better than when they arrived. He noted that the strategy will maintain brand integrity and avoid pricing down the destination. Mr. Talwar discussed the Reopening Communications Plan flow chart. He highlighted that HVCB needs to develop the strategy to communicate this messaging to residents. He said HVCB will continue its outreach to regional and national media platforms, focus on Over-the-Top media and social media, and make virtual media blitzes. Mr. Talwar said HVCB's hotel and airline partners will be sharing the Kuleana messaging about how to respect Hawai'i's cultures and communities in-room and in-flight. He said the reopening date has received a significant amount of news coverage. Mr. Talwar noted that the messaging will encourage visitors to experience Hawai'i on a deeper level while following safe practices. He added that HVCB's messaging will refrain from using the word "reopening." He played the Kuleana sample video that will be shared in-room and in-flight. He then played the It's Time sample video that will be advertised in the major markets.

Mr. Talwar discussed the Mālama Hawai'i Program. He shared that the purpose of the program is to invite visitors to stay open, connected, mindful, safe, and to perpetuate the beauty of the destination. He noted that HTA and HVCB have worked with an alliance of private industry partners, including major hotels and airlines, and volunteer organizations, to offer an extra night's stay at no additional charge if visitors engage in a voluntourism activity. He added that the vision is for repeat travelers to work shoulder-to-shoulder with residents. Mr. Talwar said HVCB has developed social media messaging and is working with their ambassadors to prepare content. He noted that their industry partners, including national airline carriers and hotel brands, are excited about the opportunity because it will be unique in the marketplace. He explained that HVCB's industry partners will bring in influencers and develop amazing itineraries for them. He noted that their efforts will be supplemented by HVCB's digital media outreach and paid media in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland.

Sherry Menor-McNamara noted that small businesses are hurting and waiting for the visitor industry to resume. She asked if there are efforts or media campaigns to encourage visitors



to support local businesses, local restaurants, and the local economy. Mr. Talwar responded that HVCB does not have a separate strategy plan focusing on that. He noted however that the type of visitor the media campaign attracts will be invested in purchasing goods and services from local establishments. Kyoko Kimura said Maui County has several programs to support local businesses.

Ms. Kimura asked what word HVCB will use if it will not use "reopening." Mr. Talwar responded that they are currently using: "Welcoming visitors back without a 14-day quarantine with a negative pre-test." He noted that is a long phrase, and HVCB's creative team is working on new verbiage. Ms. Kimura asked if HVCB is still providing screening services at the airports. Mr. Talwar responded in the negative and added that screening at the airports has transitioned to a digital platform managed by the State.

John De Fries, HTA President & CEO, asked how the media campaign will address the issue of some places like CVS not pre-testing children under a certain age. Mr. Talwar responded that the State's policy has been evolving over the past few days with alternate testing being developed that may be more appropriate for children. John Monahan of HVCB replied that there has been movement on the minimum age with regard to certain pre-tests.

Mr. Atkins noted that resident sentiment is better than a month or two ago. He asked if the survey included non-tourism industry workers. Mr. Talwar responded that the survey sample is representative of the resident population and is not specific to the visitor industry. Mr. Atkins asked what percentage of HVCB's remaining budget has been committed to the reopening. Mr. Talwar responded that HVCB has put together this media plan with the funds they have. He noted that the plan thus far has been all earned media, which is not dollar intensive. He said that when Hawai'i reopens, HVCB will put more money into the market. He added that HVCB does not want to fight the election cycle with their budget. He said HVCB will wait until after the election and see what the market is like. Mr. Monahan added that HVCB is seeking additional avenues of funding. Mr. Atkins asked if the national airline carriers have given any indication when flights will resume to the neighbor islands. Mr. Talwar responded that the airlines have been asking how many rooms will be available. He added that the airlines are saying that demand is picking up post-announcement, but it is sliding into next year.

Pattie Herman, HTA Vice President of Marketing & Product Development, said Costco is taking reservations for Hawai'i effective November 13th, with the highest number of bookings for Maui and the second highest for O'ahu and Hawai'i Island.



Ms. Menor-McNamara asked if there is a communication plan for the specific orders and safety procedures for each county. Mr. Monahan responded that HTA has an extensive list of communications, and HVCB will send it out to its members. He noted that HVCB does not communicate that to the general public. Mr. Talwar replied there is a link on the HVCB website. Mr. Monahan said the HVCB website has a chart with relevant information for each county and in-bound flights will have a list of significant facts. Chair Sanders added that from a hotel perspective, the individual properties can also send this information to guests.

Chair Sanders invited the public to provide testimony, and there was none.

**4. Presentation from HTJ by Eric Takahata/Managing Director on Overall Recovery Updates and Welcoming Back Visitors:**

Chair Sanders recognized Eric Takahata of Hawai'i Tourism Japan (HTJ) to present an update on market insights and HTJ's marketing plan. Mr. Takahata reported that a new traveler sentiment survey will be completed by the end of the month. He noted that the new Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga will succeed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He added that Japan is handling the pandemic well and has the COVID-19 situation mostly under control.

Mr. Takahata reported that the recovery plan is on schedule. He said Phase One was mostly communication. He said Phase Two is engagement, which has also included working with the Japanese media because the Japanese media is tuned in to what is happening in Hawai'i. He noted that the recovery campaign will kick into high gear during Phase Three, but that is dependent on the reopening officially taking place. He added that the State needs to make an official proclamation that it will accept the COVID-19 pre-tests approved by the Japanese government.

Mr. Takahata reported that HTJ continues to translate and provide up-to-date COVID-19 information updates to its partners in Japan. He noted that HTJ continues to engage with the Japanese market, and the Hawai'i at Home platform has been extremely successful. The platform offers coloring books, cooking lessons, and Hawaiian music, and provides the Japanese market with the opportunity to stream Hawai'i content all day. Mr. Takahata said they remain engaged with the travel trade through education programs, and the Aloha Program Webinar continues to thrive. He added that HTJ is engaged with its local partners like the Bishop Museum, 'Iolani Palace, Polynesian Voyaging Society, and Mālama Pono. He noted that HTJ is in the process of creating a COVID-19 microsite for Japanese travelers with



all the necessary information. He added that other destinations have had live websites for a month or two. Mr. Takahata said HTJ's site will hopefully be live by mid-October and will include messages from Governor David Ige and Mr. De Fries. He noted that Japanese people gravitate to messages from heads-of-state. Mr. Takahata said they are almost at the final cut for the safety protocol video, and it will be completed within the next week or so. He noted that the safety protocol video will be edited and cut for different media platforms. He added that HTJ is working with ANA, JAL, and Hawaiian Airlines to have the video shared in-flight. He then shared the full-cut of the safety protocol video. Mr. Takahata reported that HTJ will host the Online Japan Summit and Hawai'i Seminar for the travel trade in early 2021, which will have over 1,000 attendees. He added that HTJ will host the Virtual Hawai'i Expo, which is a consumer event with an anticipated 50,000 attendees. He said the expo will be the first of its kind and free to participate.

Chair Sanders asked how the safety video is being shared with the general public in Japan. Mr. Takahata responded that it will be shared through digital platforms, social media, and HTJ's airline partners. He noted that the video will be played in-flight on JAL, ANA, and Hawaiian Airlines flights and may have a dedicated in-flight channel. He added that the video will be made available to 175 satellite offices across Japan to share with their potential customers.

Ms. Menor-McNamara thanked Mr. Takahata for including small businesses and local companies in the safety protocol video. Mr. Takahata responded that they wanted to include as many local partners as they could.

Ms. Kimura asked for clarification on whether the State will accept Japan-approved COVID-19 pre-tests. Mr. Takahata responded that Japan has approved thirteen different Nucleic Acid (NAT) tests. He anticipated that the Japanese NAT tests will be accepted for the Hawai'i pre-test program and has requested an official proclamation from the Department of Health (DOH). He noted that NAT tests are becoming more readily available in Japan. Mr. Takahata added that JTB and HIS are contracting with Japanese labs to perform testing before the customer comes to Hawai'i.

Mr. De Fries shared that the PGA has done an excellent job with its safety protocols, and Gov. Ige has made the DOH available to support the PGA. As a result, all three golf tournaments in 2021 are preparing to continue as planned with no fans.

Representative Richard Onishi asked about the status of Hawai'i residents traveling to Japan. Mr. Takahata responded that the Japanese government does not believe the United



States has the COVID-19 situation under control. He said Japan is not permitting U.S. residents to enter Japan. He explained that there were discussions this summer about establishing a travel corridor between Hawai'i and Japan. He said the Japanese government understands that Hawai'i is in a better condition than the U.S. Mainland. Mr. Takahata noted that it was a complicated issue carving out a special exemption for Hawai'i and talks have stalled.

Chair Sanders invited the public to provide testimony, and there was none.

**5. Presentation from Travelzoo Josh Gershenson/Head of Business Development and Tanya Freund/Senior Sales Manager on How They Target High-end Travelers:**

Chair Sanders recognized Josh Gershenson and Tanya Freund of Travelzoo to present on how Travelzoo targets high-end travelers. Mr. Gershenson provided a background of Travelzoo. He said Travelzoo is mostly comprised of affluent members with 54% having over \$100,000 in household income. He noted that these affluent travelers are the most resilient and will be the first to resume long-haul travel. He added that Hawai'i has remained a popular destination amongst Travelzoo's affluent membership because of its pristine reputation.

Ms. Freund said most of its members are likely to stay at chain and major hotels in the near term because the safety standards are more defined than in Airbnb's or other short term rentals. She added that their members know what to expect from the brands they love. Ms. Freund said their campaigns are meant to create the intent to travel. She explained that they have discovered that campaigns inspiring luxury travel have been more successful than those for discounted travel because their members feel like they are receiving a special experience. Ms. Freund said Travelzoo members are not put off by high price points and more often upsell themselves. She noted that their members have not been heavily affected by the COVID-19 economic situation and rather have more discretionary income to spend on high-end experiences. Ms. Freund said a Travelzoo campaign would emphasize quality over price and echoed Mr. Talwar's desire to not price down the destination.

Mr. Kam invited the public to provide testimony, and there was none.

**6. Update from Kalani Ka'anā'anā on Surfing & Canoe Paddling Advisory Group Regarding the Discussion of Adding One Board Member on the Advisory Committee:**

Mr. Kam recognized Mr. Ka'anā'anā to provide an update with regard to the Surfing and Canoe Paddling Advisory Group. Mr. Ka'anā'anā said the committee needs to leverage new



technologies, platforms, and organizations to promote surfing and canoe paddling. He noted that the Kahua (foundation) of the committee's work will be environment, culture, community, education, safety, and infrastructure. He added that the committee is in alignment with the 5-Year Strategic plan and HTA's Four Pillars. Mr. Ka'anā'anā explained that the committee's work will promote human and environmental health, celebrate Hawai'i's connection to the sport and the ocean, develop the ability to be an environmentally-aligned economic driver, create development opportunities for established and related industries, emphasize social and economic benefits, make recommendations of support for related initiatives, projects, programs and contracts, and raise public awareness for historical and cultural significance.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā recognized the budgetary limitations and said the committee will leverage partnerships that do not cost money like with Mālama Pono. He added that the committee would work with the USA Surf Team, work to showcase the history of the sports in a museum setting, and support volunteer groups that clean beaches. He noted that activities and sports are statistically the number one reason why avid traveler visit Hawai'i, and Hawai'i visitors are more than twice as likely to engage in water sports.

Mr. Atkins asked about the make-up of the committee given its cross-sectional work. Mr. Ka'anā'anā responded that he has been talking to a number of community leaders, and the committee will have either nine or thirteen seats. He noted that the effort to make it statewide is taking longer than anticipated.

Mr. De Fries encouraged generational representation on the committee because there are youth leaders in the sports.

Mr. Takahata said this is something needed for the Japan market because there is a large community of surfers in Japan and because the Olympics will be hosted in Japan.

Rep. Onishi asked if there are estimated budgets for either nine or thirteen members. Mr. Ka'anā'anā responded in the negative and explained the committee would be comprised of volunteers with no compensation.

Mr. Kam invited the public to provide testimony, and there was none.

## **7. Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



**HAWAII TOURISM™**  
AUTHORITY

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