

# BURBANK HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING

Minutes for the Meeting of January 24, 2024, at 3:00PM  
Location: Coast Anabelle Hotel I Studio B Conference Room  
2011 W. Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91506

- Members Present: Nerissa Sugars, Hollywood Burbank Airport, **Chair**  
Peter Kolla, Hotel Amarano, **Vice-Chair**  
Jamie Keyser, Burbank Chamber of Commerce, **Secretary**  
Fatima Achhal, SpringHill Suites by Marriott  
Aly Bubbins, Hotel Burbank  
Stacey Meyer, Residence Inn by Marriott  
Ali Schmidt, Universal Studios Hollywood  
Tony Garibian, Coast Anabelle Hotel and Safari Inn
- Members Absent: Danny Kahn, Warner Bros. Studio Tours, **Treasurer**  
Alan Tate, Burbank Airport Marriott  
One (1) Board Vacancy  
Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director (ex-officio)
- Members of the Public: One (1) Member of the Public was present.
- Admin/Marketing Key Staff: Mary Hamzoian, Economic Development Manager  
Odette Zakarian, Economic Development Analyst  
Robin Faulk, Marketing Consultant
- Bookkeeping Staff: Teresa Mackey, Bookkeeping
- Legal Counsel: Aleks R. Giragosian, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

The Burbank Hospitality Association (BHA) Board Meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m. on Wednesday, January 24, 2024.

## A. Roll Call

There was a quorum with seven (7) members present the start of the meeting, three (3) members absent, and one (1) vacancy. With the addition of Fatima Achhal after agenda item H, the quorum reached (8) members with (2) members absent and (1) vacancy.

## B. Announcements

Staff announced the following items:

- **Board Vacancy** – Edgar Rivera is no longer at the Hilton Garden Inn and has resigned from the BHA Board.
- **Now Open:**
  - Café Grano – 100 N. San Fernando Blvd.

- Gear Locker – 201 E. Magnolia Blvd., Ste. 246
- Dog Haus – 3019 N. Hollywood Way
- Elena’s Estiatorio Bar & Lounge – 1333 N. Hollywood Way
- Cambria Hotel Burbank Airport – 3501 N. San Fernando Blvd.
- Extension of Cultural Market to Friday through Sunday

**C. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**D. Board Member Comments**

Aly Bubbins introduced Hotel Burbank’s new Director of Operations, Vladimir Rodriguez.

Tony Garibian welcomed the Board members to the Coast Anabelle Hotel, and pointed out that the hotel is undergoing some renovations.

Ali Schmidt announced that Universal Studios Hollywood wrapped up 2023 with record attendance numbers. Ms. Schmidt recently traveled with Visit California on their Canada mission with 300 different agents. On this trip she learned that there is more access from Canada than ever before, and the three main things Canadians are looking for are family road tripping, outdoor adventure, and luxury. Data shows that Canadians are booking summer travel in February and winter travel in August and September. She also learned that WestJet airline carrier is getting aggressive in competing with Air Canada for ownership of the West.

**E. Legal Counsel Update**

There was no Legal Counsel update.

**F. Approval of Minutes**

**ACTION ITEM**

The minutes for the BHA Board meeting of November 15, 2023, were presented for approval.

Jamie Keyser made a motion for approval of the minutes as presented, seconded by Ali Schmidt; motion carried 7-0.

**G. Treasurer’s Report**

BHA Bookkeeper, Teresa Mackey, presented the profit and loss report for November 2023, the BHA currently collected \$98,225.28 in income with expenses totaling \$93,583.59. The Board’s total assets equal \$1,365,427.68 as of November 30, 2023.

**H. New Board Member Appointment**

**ACTION ITEM**

Fatima Achhal arrived, raising the quorum to eight (8) Board members.

The Board considered an application from Rosanna Harrison, the Area Director of Sales for Cambria Hotel Burbank Airport for the vacant position currently on the Board. The vacant position is a result of Edgar Rivera resigning from the Hilton Garden Inn

Burbank Downtown. Ms. Harrison introduced herself as a 25+ year hotel industry veteran, the former Director of Catering at the Warner Center Marriott Woodland Hills, Board Chair of San Diego's Asian Business Association, and one of the committee members who spearheaded the first fireworks show for San Diego's large-scale New Year's Eve party called "Big Night San Diego."

Aly Bubbins made a motion to appoint Rosanna Harrison to the BHA Board, seconded by Tony Garibian; motion carried 8-0.

**I. BHA Draft Tax Returns FYE 06-30-23 ACTION ITEM**

The Board considered approval of the BHA draft tax returns for FYE 06-30-23. The draft tax returns have been reviewed by BHA's Bookkeeper, Teresa Mackey, Staff and Treasurer, Danny Kahn. Staff verified that the names included on the tax returns are limited to Board members that served during Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Peter Kolla made a motion to approve the draft tax returns as is, seconded by Jamie Keyser; motion carried 8-0.

**J. Destination Development Subcommittee Recommendation ACTION ITEM**

The Destination Development subcommittee convened on January 18<sup>th</sup> to review Solé Bicycles, a potential bicycle program for Burbank hotels. With this program, BHA would purchase the bikes and distribute them to participating hotels. The cost of 50 bikes and 50 helmets would be \$27,250, with an estimated annual maintenance cost of \$24,000. The initial cost of participating in the program would be \$51,250. The bikes would be dual branded with the Visit Burbank logo as well as the hotel logo.

Solé Bicycles supplies a waiver to each hotel that releases the hotel from liability when a guest checks out a bike. The following are steps BHA can take to ensure similar liability. The first would be to add BHA to Solé Bicycles existing waiver with the hotels. The second would be for BHA's Legal Counsel, Alek's Giragosian, to draft an agreement releasing BHA and the hotels from liability if anything happens to a guest while a bike is checked out.

Jamie Keyser, who participated in the Destination Development subcommittee meeting, expressed her support for this program. Ms. Keyser believes the BHA cannot determine how successful these bicycle programs can be until they are tested out. She suggests assessing how effective the program is after six months of participation to determine if BHA should invest further.

Tony Garibian suggested purchasing new bikes each year given the cost of maintenance is so high. Mary Hamzoian explained that the new bikes would have to be branded again, and it would be in BHA's best interest to have maintenance services available.

Peter Kolla discussed his experience with Solé Bicycles, as Hotel Amarano currently partners with them. Hotel Amarano offers the bikes to guests for free, and has built

different packages around them, such as picnic packages. There may be an opportunity to curb back maintenance to bi-monthly or quarterly and see how that works. Mr. Kolla highly recommends the program and feels that the company is very easy to work with. He suggested that four bikes are perfect for a hotel the size of Hotel Amarano. Ms. Hamzoian suggested looking at the cost for quarterly maintenance. Mr. Kolla requested that the BHA allocate funding of combination locks as well.

Peter Kolla made a motion to approve up to \$51,250 for Solé Bicycles, seconded by Tony Garibian; motion carried 8-0.

**K. Destination Development Subcommittee Recommendation**                      **ACTION ITEM**

The Destination Development subcommittee convened on January 18<sup>th</sup> to review Elephant Parade, a traveling art exhibit. In attendance to answer questions for the Board were Parade Director Dana Yarger, and Parade Administrator Kayla Carlson. The original idea was to house the elephants in different locations throughout the city, including the hotels. One of the goals of this program would be to bring in more travel and tourism by raising more awareness of Burbank.

Staff provided a brief overview of the organization which is the world's largest art exhibition of hand-crafted elephant sculptures created by local artists, celebrities including Katy Perry, Lily Tomlin, Khloe Kardashian and Tiesto, notable brands, and more. Staff presented a case study on Dana Point's TBID which presented Elephant Parade for three months at three resorts. That campaign generated over 200 million media impressions with a media marketing value of \$20 million dollars and 100,000 visitors were estimated for the Elephant Parade.

The cost of renting 25 elephants for six weeks, transportation and marketing will be \$107,500. We would engage our Strausberg group for marketing 1-2 months in advance to begin promoting the exhibit and get the word out that it is coming to Burbank.

Tony Garibian wanted to confirm that the elephant statues stay in one location once placed in that location. Staff confirmed that they may stay or can be moved around. Mr. Garibian also asked about hotel participation. Staff confirmed hotels that want to participate can participate.

Staff introduced the option of ordering a blank elephant and creating an event around painting the blank canvas. Jamie Keyser brought up the idea of engaging the Burbank Arts Commission for the blank elephants.

Dana Yarger provided more background on the organization explaining how the program began with an incident where a 7-month-old elephant stepped on a landmine. Funds were raised to get the baby elephant a prosthetic leg. In the process of raising awareness for these elephants, the statues began popping up in different cities throughout Europe. The Elephant Family organization was developed by the brother

of Camilla Parker Bowles to raise awareness for the Asian elephant. Elephant Parade has contributed more than one million euros to Elephant Family, the world's largest NGO dedicated to Asian elephant welfare.

June through July is the timeframe Staff is suggesting for the exhibit. It would take an artist 1-2 months to create a custom elephant. Mr. Yarger stressed that the real marketing PR comes in the months leading up to the event, and the organization could help recruit celebrities to participate.

Ali Schmidt expressed that while she likes the idea of the program, she does not understand its connection to Burbank. She suggested tying this into something like CTN. Peter Kolla expressed a similar concern. His biggest concern is that he has never heard of the program before. Mr. Yarger said it is famous all over the world, but it is new to America. He also addressed Ms. Schmidt's concern about the connection to Burbank, proposing Elephant Parade offers international connections and publicity outside the community. This helps grow economic development which in turn helps grow the community. He also suggested celebrating something beyond Burbank's border such as Earth Day would be a good marketing strategy. It gives the program an important purpose.

Ms. Hamzoian stressed that Elephant Parade is something new and brings a new perspective to Burbank. The idea of moving the dates to September for National Elephant Recognition Day or August for World Elephant Day was suggested. Ms. Hamzoian is fine with moving the dates but wants to host this event during a time when the hotels need the extra business.

Nerissa Sugars requested that the Board take some time to do more research on Elephant Parade before voting on it. No vote was made, and the agenda item will be revisited at the next BHA meeting.

The Board returned to the topic of Elephant Parade towards the end of the meeting. Peter Kolla is concerned that hosting the event in June or July is too soon and not enough time to gain the right kind of marketing momentum. He would like to take more time to research the program. Ms. Hamzoian reiterated that BHA's growing funds are becoming a concern and the money needs to be spent for destination development projects. The Elephant Parade would be an ideal project for destination development.

Ali Schmidt used the PR stunt example that candle company Nest pulled off in New York City. During shopping season, they spread their sent in trees along Fifth Ave and it got huge media impressions.

The Board encouraged getting Burbank centered celebrities like Jay Leno or Tim Burton involved with the program. Tony Garibian expressed wanting to get studio buy in, which in turn could make it a permanent art exhibition.

Ms. Hamzoian explained that because Elephant Parade is a non-profit, it has meaning and purpose behind it. It can be tied into initiatives that Burbank cares about such as sustainability. The Board agreed that it is not necessarily a negative point that Elephant Parade is less well known because it will make it unique to Burbank. It will spark curiosity. Peter Kolla believes hiring a PR firm to push Elephant Parade out might be worth the investment.

#### **L. Destination Development Subcommittee Updates**

Staff provided updates on the Green Lantern statue and the Airline Incentives Program. Discussions are moving forward between DC and BHA. The statue will be located in the common area of the Empire Center near Olive Garden and Outback Steakhouse. Updated images of the statue and its location were shared. BHA has signed the License Agreement and is now waiting for DC's signatures. The Custom Comic Reprint Agreement is underway. BHA Legal Counsel has created a draft of the Public Art Installation and Maintenance Agreement between BHA and Empire Center. The digital files that McFarlane is creating for the statue still need a lot of work so they will have those files ready by the end of February. It is now looking like September versus July for an installation date. A Superman statue was briefly discussed with DC. Staff also discussed the logistics of the lantern being lit.

The Destination Development subcommittee would like to bring back the Airline Incentive program. We spoke to Mr. Giragosian about changing the language of the existing documents and will reconvene with the subcommittee before bringing the item back to the Board for full discussion.

Tony Garibian asked if we could work into the incentive program some sort of monetary boost if the airlines were to house their crew in Burbank hotels. This brings up the question of how we verify the crew business of where they are staying or how much they are getting paid. It is likely confidential information. Ms. Hamzoian said that one of the items the subcommittee discussed was that the airlines need to verify the route is actually bringing business into the City, and Nerissa Sugars confirmed that is not something the airlines would disclose.

Board Chair, Nerissa Sugars, left the meeting at 4:01pm. Vice-Chair, Peter Kolla took over. The quorum was decreased to seven (7) Board members.

#### **M. Board Approved Expenditures**

#### **ACTION ITEM**

Staff requested transferring \$197,250 from the holding account to cover:

- The following pre-approved expenses from the last two months: consultant expenses of \$34,000, legal fees of \$20,000, marketing fees of \$56,000, and ongoing administrative expenses in the amount of \$36,000.
- Destination Development Project: Up to \$51,250 for Solé Bicycles.

Tony Garibian made a motion to approve the Board Expenditures by making it an even \$200,000, seconded by Jamie Keyser; motion carried 7-0.

**N. Future Agenda Items**

- Strausberg 6-month update and budgets discussion in February.
- Engage Strausberg about Elephant Parade.
- Rebrand discussion.
- Elephant Parade
- Airline Incentive Program

**O. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m. The next tentative meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 21, 2024.