



RED MOUNTAIN
AVA ALLIANCE

Board Meeting Minutes November 10th, 2022

1. Call to Order 9:01 am
2. Attendance
 - a. Directors: Kristin Adams, Jason Gorski, Cameron James, Maggie Hedges, Richard Holmes, Will Hoppes, Teresa Owen, Jen Porter, Karla Riccobuono
 - b. Executive Director Alicia Brown
 - c. Members & Sponsors: Joe & Michelle Zitello from Ello Vineyards, Ellie Zeron from Zeron Vineyards
 - d. Guests: Kayt Mathers, Play Nice Public Relations, Cassandra Bird, Play Nice Public Relations
 - e. Not in attendance: Vanessa Hadick, Double Tap Marketing
3. Operations Reports
 - a. Financial – Kristin reported that the Financial Report for October 31, 2022, presented in the packet, was a 3-month report, reporting from our break August, September & October. Cash on hand is \$56,754.03. We have spent \$86,665 of our annual budget of \$125, 000.54, 70% spent. By December meeting, the percentage spent will be estimated at 90%
 - b. Digital – Will reported that we have beat our year-end goal for Instagram followers. The goal by end of year was 2800, we are currently at 2878. Success attributed to the popularity and engagement of the giveaway posts. Maggie noted that our top 10 most liked/reacted to posts are all on Instagram and not a lot of engagement on Facebook, except one, which was about the Hightower’s new puppy. Alicia noted that most posts are Instagram focused and that Facebook’s posts are more for articles or news.
 - c. Public Relations – Kayt introduced a new member of the Play Nice PR team, Cassandra Bird. Cassandra replaced Kelsey Hutchinson. She is a certified sommelier, wine writer and all-around wine enthusiast. Play Nice will be on Red Mountain next week with Julia Coney and Michelle Williams. Julia Coney was the moderator of the AVA 5 Pillars Virtual Series last year and was originally scheduled

to visit last May but had to postpone. Michelle Williams is a Dallas writer. Their visit has a focus on hospitality and sustainability. Play Nice will be finalizing their itinerary over the next couple days.

Kayt reported in October, Clive Pursehouse from Decanter Magazine's visited. He is a new editor and specifically requested to visit the wineries during harvest time to write with a harvest focus.

Kayt also reported for upcoming press; Decanter will have an AVA profile story with wine reviews. Sip Northwest is doing a piece focused on multi-generational run wineries, also a terroir focused Riesling piece, and the Virginian Pilot wine column. Thanks to all members who sent samples that have distribution in VA.

For advertising opportunities, Visit Tri-Cities Official Visitor Guide and an editorial option with Taylored Living Magazine were presented. Kayt would like to explore the Taylored Living opportunity and have a focus on wineries with tasting rooms on Red Mountain. Kayt suggested an opt-in model for wineries to be included and ask members to pay a small fee to subsidize. Maggie brought up a question of timeline, to which Kayt said would be a spring or fall focus. Taylored Living offers a mini visionary partnership ad- which is two pages of space. We could fill the space any way we like. \$2500 per issue, minimum 2-year contract which is 4 issues, total price of 10K for 2 years. Alicia mentioned that there are other smaller packages that start at \$500. Kayt believes there is room to negotiate on the price. Maggie asked Kayt to gather more info to present back to the board and to revisit in the future since there could be a lot of potential for featuring multiple wineries, such as 8 in the spring, 8 in the fall but possibly with a 1-year contract due to our budget constraints and being set annually.

- d. Digital Advertising – Vanessa was out with a migraine and not in attendance. Kayt is going to contact her to share her digital report over email and to present at the next board meeting in December.

4. Ongoing Business

- a. American Wine Society Recap – Will reported that the event went very well. The event was located at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Bellevue with over 600 people in attendance. American Wine Society members are a mix of home winemakers, tasters, sommeliers etc. and has chapters all over the country. Will's presentation focused mostly on the 5 Pillars of Red Mountain and had about 80 attendees. Only about half were familiar with Red Mountain. There were a lot of questions and interests. Cameron James and Richard Holmes also poured at the opening reception, representing several member wineries. Overall, it would be beneficial to participate again and there could potentially be opportunities sending wine to chapters across the country.

5. New Business

- a. 2023 Committee Projects & Budget Requests
 - i. Events & Infrastructure – Karla and Maggie are officially co-chairs of the events committee. Maggie reported on the committee's plans for 2023. There has been a pause on infrastructure plans. The sign was completed last year. The committee will be staying on top of all plans regarding the Benton

City Rails to Trails project and trail development. The trail is on a delay until WeatherEye completes construction of their irrigation pond. No expenditures for Infrastructure foreseen in 2023.

The committee would like to host the Kevin Pogue geology presentation early next year for all tasting room staff and local members, in the evening. Will offered that Fidélitas would be willing to host.

Taste WA is back in the spring, the committee suggested that the Alliance should pursue an AVA table, which Alicia will tend, and it could provide sharing opportunities for members.

Taste Red Mountain Events

West: The committee sent out a survey asking members how important a trade and/or consumer event on the west side is now that Taste WA is back. Most members responded with very important. The committee is moving forward with planning Taste Red Mountain back in Woodinville rather than Bellevue due to location difficulties and pricing. Due to budget concerns and event costs, Maggie suggested that members subsidize the event and pay to participate- ~\$130/\$140 so that the event will break even. Ticket price would be around \$120/\$125 per ticket.

Red Mountain: The grand tasting will be on a rotation amongst the larger properties, Hedges was last year, this year will be at Col Solare and next year, hopefully at Kiona. Based on last year, the committee wants to streamline the event and have it more focused on the grand tasting, and plan ancillary events for the weekend. The grand tasting would be earlier in the day, more like 3-5 pm, minimal food such as cheese and crackers/snacks. The committee came up with 5-6 dinner focused events for after the tasting that would be collaborative amongst multiple members and at multiple price points. Each event would be an add-on to the Eventbrite ticket. The ticket price point for the grand tasting would be less than last year, which was \$175, possibly around \$100 or more. Details are still being finalized and the quantity cap will be based on the capacity at Col Solare.

Red Mountain Run: This would be an add on to the Red Mountain event, in the morning on Saturday. Destination runs bring a lot of people to the area. There are currently no other wine country runs in WA, so this could be a great opportunity to cross market a health and wellness lifestyle, showcase vineyard sneak peeks and behind the scenes and would be a great partnership with Runners of the Sage.

Ellie Zeron asked about accessing the AVA sign for media, photo ops and tourism but Maggie reported that it is a very complicated process due to roads and liability. The city is expanding the walking trail on Keene Road to 224 up to Antinori so the committee had a pause on this pursuit, waiting to hear when this would be finalized and if it could be an option, however Alicia noted that is planned for the opposite side of the street. Maggie will ask Christophe Hedges about installing the lights that were previously purchased.

- ii. Hype (Public Relations & Marketing) – Will reported that the AVA maps will be cut to 1 complimentary pad of 100 per member. Survey Monkey form for renewal needs to be updated as it says members receive 2 pads currently. Members can purchase additional if needed. There will be a pickup location both on east and west sides to cut out shipping costs.

The Hype committee recommends cutting the digital marketing advertising from the AVA expenses. Will looked at reports and though there has been some good traction from it to the website and events, it is ultimately not worth \$4500 in the budget. The Alliance should focus more on the contract with Play Nice and push to get more out of them.

Play Nice is requesting a 10% increase in their monthly retainer. They also charged an additional \$1000 cost to come to Red Mountain for the Taste Red Mountain event. The entire board agrees that we need to get more out of them within their 10-month contract. Will recommends that we continue to work with them next year.

Before the board hired Play Nice, the quality of media and writers was less due to the previous PR company. Play Nice has selected higher quality writers and invested more, focused on 4-5 per year. The average price per writer visit is about 2K, so the board recommended focusing on 4 writers due to the budget, 5 if affordable.

Maggie asked about more local outreach versus focusing on out-of-town writers and possibly cutting that number to 3 to reappropriate some money towards local media such as Taylored Living or other publications. Play Nice and the board should investigate all possible and cheaper options, brainstorm local ideas versus jumping straight into Taylored Living right away. Play Nice should be guiding the board on how best to allocate our media budget. Richard brought up that cutting costs for writers and focusing more on local could shift focus away from members that are not on Red Mountain. Maggie responded that because of events and PR, all members benefit regardless. There will always be more value to the members that have tasting rooms located on Red Mountain, which is why the dues structure was changed to increase their dues. The board noted that it was worth looking into to make sure that all member's interests are being covered.

The board should explore some sort of partnership with local realtors, real estate agencies, PNNL, Hanford and larger companies in the area that have employee retention programs. There is a lot of potential for development.

Cameron suggested redirecting some of the media money towards targeting scorers like Jeb Dunnuck, the Advocate or the Wine Enthusiast. He noted that there has been a 27% decrease in the advertising budget that past two years and in order to promote the AVA, we need notoriety. He suggested working with the WWC. Maggie responded that while we want to increase notoriety, budget cuts were necessary given that the organization has been deficit spending in past years, and we are attempting to correct that and put the

Alliance on a sustainable path for the future. Given these constraints, Alicia will make sure to communicate and work with the WWC to bring media up as a focused topic at their next meeting.

- iii. Partner Relations – Jen reported that the committee has signed up a new member- Liberty Lake Wine Cellars. The committee has begun renewals and so far, have received 8 renewal forms and 1 payment. The committee will continue to work on finishing renewals and new member sign ups (multiple new members have verbally confirmed). Member socials have moved to partner relations, and they want to continue to have 4 locally and add 1 to the west side. They are asking for a budget of \$1250. The committee also wants to adjust the sponsor giveback event weekend to a giveback program with discounts or tasting tickets from member wineries. They are recommending reviewal/updates of our sponsorship levels and benefits structure for 2024 and this would need to happen before August.
 - iv. Executive – Maggie reported that the Executive Committee met to draft the new budget and is still in the process of finalizing it. The last item left is the salary for the Executive Director, Alicia. The committee has a scheduled meeting in December to discuss this and will have their recommendation to the board before the December meeting.
- b. 2023 Draft Budget – Kristin reported on the budget and acknowledged the shared concerns regarding operating at a deficit. The Alliance is overspending what it takes in and needs to find a way to do more with what it has. It is not ideal to keep a cash balance however it must in order to cover operational costs for a year. It is possible that the board will need to increase dues again.
6. Other Business- none
7. Questions/Comments- Maggie commented that approving the minutes electronically is ideal and to please respond when Karla sends out the draft, especially when it is fresh in the board's mind in case anything needs to be added/updated.
8. Adjourn at 10:23 am

The next meeting of the Red Mountain AVA Alliance will be held on **Thursday, December 8th, 2022 at 9:00am at Hedges Family Estate**