



# The Chamber

## OF THE SANTA BARBARA REGION

*Helping Business Succeed Since 1899*

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09 March 2015

Paul Casey, City Administrator  
City of Santa Barbara  
735 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**RE: SB Airport Visitor Information Desk**

Mr. Casey:

On behalf of the Chamber of the Santa Barbara Region and all of the staff and volunteers at the Chamber's Visitor Center, I want to thank you and your team at the Santa Barbara Airport for an outstanding first two years of our Airport Visitor Information Center.

These first two years of the concierge desk at the airport have gone very well. The desk has provided direct assistance to over 5,000 individuals since November 2013, with some 4,300 of those being general questions about the area, and 750 being questions about the airport itself, including where to pick up luggage, where the restrooms are, etc.

Overall, we see this partnership with the airport as a valuable one that provides important information to travelers, helps those visiting the area learn more about the region and hopefully extend their stay, and provides another personal touch and smiling face to those traveling through SBA.

The Airport Visitor Information Center requires a volunteer coordinator and a designated team of volunteers to staff the desk during the key hours of incoming flights. The volunteer coordinator, Marcia Pearson, asks volunteers to commit to a minimum of two 2-hour shifts per month. We concentrate staffing at the mid-day and late afternoon hours, but are available throughout the day.

In addition to the staffing, the Chamber also provides all of the materials for the Airport Visitor Information Center, including maps and information on local attractions and lodging. These materials are coordinated through the main Visitors Center on Garden St. and Cabrillo.

At the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the program, staff at the airport informed the Chamber that the funding for the program would be cut due to budget cuts at the airport. Originally, the Chamber was contracted to provide the service for \$14,000 a year, and the proposed cuts for 2014 would have brought the fee down to \$10,000. At the same time, the Chamber reviewed

104 West Anapamu, Ste. A, Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
Telephone: 805-965-3023 | Fax: 805-965-966-5954  
e-mail: [info@sbchamber.org](mailto:info@sbchamber.org) | website: [www.sbchamber.org](http://www.sbchamber.org)

their costs for providing the service, and proposed that a similar level of service in 2014 would cost the Chamber \$20,000 to provide.

The Chamber and the Airport agreed to fund the Airport Visitors Information Center at an appropriate level for 2014, but that the cost of providing the service in the future would have to come from other means. The Chamber offered its support in looking at future funding from the City of Santa Barbara, with the rationale being that funding for the service should be provided from revenues derived from the Transient Occupancy Tax.

It is for this reason that I am writing you today ... to request funding from the City's General Fund for the Chamber in the amount of \$20,000 so that the Chamber can continue to provide the Airport Visitor Information Center service through the next fiscal year. This request would be in addition to the funding the Chamber currently receives to provide Visitor Information services at the Garden Street facility.

Thanks for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Oplinger", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kenneth Oplinger, ACE, President/CEO  
The Chamber of Commerce of the Santa Barbara Region