

# COCI PRESIDENTS' REPORT Q1 2015



COCI Board gets an audience with the Minister of TEATT  
honorable Mr. C. Connor

March 31, 2015  
By: Peggy Ann M. Brandon

# Presidents Report Q1- 2015

## Introduction

This report contains an elucidation of the undertakings of the President of and the COCI Board of Directors in the first quarter of 2015. This elucidation provides an in-depth look into all undertakings, the status of same, benefits attained and/or concerns addressed. A preview is also provided on the undertakings scheduled for Q2 and the targets to be achieved.

## **Q1-2015**

The main undertakings in the first quarter are categorized as follows:

I] Internal Undertakings

II] External Undertakings

III] COCI and third parties

Ad I] BOARD related and Operations related.

## **I. Internal Undertakings:**

Internal Matters Board Related:

*New Board:*

During the first Board meeting of 2015, elections were held and the members of the Executive Board were elected. The Executive Board is now strengthened with a Treasurer and an assistant Treasurer. Newly elected members to the Board after review of credentials, were officially welcomed.

*COCI Budget:*

The Board appointed an audit committee tasked to review the draft budget of COCI and present same to the Board for review and approval. After lengthy presentation and deliberations the COCI 2015 budget was approved unanimously. The Treasurer, with input from the Board, was requested to prepare for presentation the COCI board budget. This budget drawn up based on an

allocation made in the COCI budget to the Board, to facilitate the undertakings by the Board in execution of its projects. In the 2014 caucus the COCI board formulated 4 projects to execute its theme: "Better Business in Sint Maarten" to be executed throughout 2015. A status update on the execution of the projects will be provided hereinafter.

Attaining Better Business requires a better product and better service offering by COCI. The afore are solely attained with a data registry that is functional, easy to use and efficient. Staff training and proper staff placement with reassignment of tasks also deemed required to ensure proper handling of any new system. In line hereof many internal related undertakings were executed, to ensure an optimized and full use of the new registry.

COCI Policies designed and adopted:

In Q1 the COCI Board reviewed several policies and after deliberations approved the following policies and the publication of same;

- Donations policy (Board and operations)
- Suggestion and Complaint Policy (Board and operations)
- Rules of Order (Board. Publication pending confirmation by Minister of TEATT)

Internal matters Operations related Undertakings:

*1] Staff interviews, restructuring and new corporate structure*

The introduction of a new registry would result in staff functions and tasks executions to be altered. Given the requirement to appoint system coordinators to facilitate the migration, oversight and training of other personnel it became evident that the staff within their functions needed to be reassessed. New tasks would be required as some of the old tasks would be obsolete due to the new system capabilities. To ensure a proper approach was undertaken one on one staff interviews were conducted by the President. In these interviews the staff was asked to elaborate on their tenure at COCI, their educational background, work experience, the tasks they liked or disliked, their future desires and their vision of their growth potential.

Considering the functioning of the new system, COCI tasks required the interview findings were shared and discussed with the Operations Manager. Through a detailed exchange of findings, knowledge of staff, capabilities, performance and dedication a re-division of tasks was drawn up. The new division the expressed desires of the staff were considered and taken up. The corporate structure as a result of this exercise was updated at is attached hereunto.

The one-on one interviews also brought to light the deficiencies in the salary structure and a much needed review of said structure. Little attention had been given in the past to salary adjustments of the staff, which became evident in the expressed displeasure by the staff. This matter will be addressed in the Board and measures to redress this situation shall be proposed, so with growth no one is left behind. The staff is fundamental to the quality of service and must be appreciated duly for their dedication. It is unacceptable that staff compensation is not adjusted timely and duly. The further success of COCI and its growth is dependent on task execution by a happy and appreciated staff. This must be our priority. Training must be undertaken, processes must be enhanced to support efficiency and higher ratio of revenue generation. The staff incentives are recommended, as the nature of the tasks executed does not support a continuous change in staff at COCI. Information is confidential and secure handling of data is required.

## *2] Board meets Staff*

An informal gathering was organized in an effort for the COCI Board to meet the COCI staff. This meeting was a great success and staff members as well as board members welcomed the informal setting and the chance to get to know one another. An understanding of what the staff does and why their contribution is vital was obtained by board members. Concerns and development visions of board members were shared with staff allowing the latter to understand the direction of COCI and what is expected of them.

## *3] Migration to COCI register commenced*

Last year the purchase and system design for a new registry were concluded. The initial transfer of data from Gamma to the new system commenced, whilst new registrations were entered into the new system. The actual use of the registry by COCI staff had yet to commence and this is now underway. In the month of

March the training of system coordinator commenced. Training will continue in the month of April to expand to the other employees. A general staff training will be executed to attain a better understanding by all staff members of what COCI is and What COCI is supposed to do. The migration to the new system goes hand in hand with the billing migrated to Quick books. In the past the restrictions in the Gamma system prevented proper reporting on outstanding invoices making collection percentages poor.

#### *4] Migration to Quick books commenced*

Quick books has been upgraded and billing through quick books has commenced. The administration is confident that by the end of April all 2015 invoices will have been issued and collections on outstanding will be undertaken. A report will be presented to the Board on the number of invoices issued and the collection progress by the end of Q2. A better tracking of services and efficient billing is attained with this migration to Quick books.

#### *5] Staff training in COCI register and Quick books*

The Month of March marked training of registry coordinators and Quick books AR clerk training. A new process for cash transactions was introduced as well as a direct recording system for the multiple requests commonly filed by notaries and/or trust offices. The new tasks assignments has already resulted in an upgraded service to the public. Quick books training was conducted and completed. An oversight is now conducted on the use of the program.

#### *6] HR committee review applications economist position*

An HR review committee was created for the review of the applications for the economist position. This committee received the applications without name and personal information and selected 3 candidates out of the group of applicants. The selection was made known. Given that this is an operational appointment the Application committee was established comprising of one member appointed by the Government with a policy background, one member with legal background, the chairman of the HR committee, HR manager and operations manager. This committee is set to invite the applicants for interviews in the month of April 2015.

#### *7] Installation and activation of selection committee*

The automation project resulted in a Board decision to extend an invitation to bid for the design and implementation of a solution permitting online COCI services later this year. The incoming bids will be reviewed by a committee known as the bid selection committee comprising of the VP Mr. Lint who's project is being executed, the operations manager and the Treasurer. Bids will officially be opened in the first week of April with a review to be conducted subsequently and with an awarding of the project as a conclusion. The expectation is that before the end of April this process will be concluded. The ultimate aim is to have the launch of COCI online services by Q4.

## **II. External Undertakings:**

The following external undertakings were executed in Q1.

### 1] Automation project:

Invitations to bid issued

Bid review committee established

Bid process closed.

### 2] Information center: developing Business survey

In establishing the information center (a centralized unit for information in support of an investor conducive environment) letters were issued to the Minister seeking the sharing of data and a synchronized approach towards data gathering and storing by Government entities and quasi government entities. Whilst the collaboration is awaited a business survey was developed with representatives of the Ministry of TEATT to gather crucial information on the business sector for analysis and formulation of measures to better support the business community and redress its concerns.

### 3] Toll free number acquired and activated

In an effort to enhance access to COCI and offer better service to the general public COCI obtained a toll free number through which the general public free of charge can call COCI.

### 4] Business Center launch preparations

Creating a platform to enhance business development and encourage young entrepreneurs COI commenced the execution of required activities for the launch of its business center. The concept is to provide a possibility to those desirous of undertaking a business on a shoe string budget. The Business Center launch is scheduled for April 2015.

#### 5] Installation complaint box

Enhancing transparency and integrity at COCI, but also permitting the public to file complaints on businesses COCI reinstated a complaint/suggestion box. A policy containing the procedure to handle complaints and suggestions was designed to ensure an optimized functioning of this complaint/suggestion provision.

#### 6] Newsletter

COCI revamped its newsletter and under the lead of the COCI board project team of Ms. Lake newsletters will be issued on a schedule. The newsletters are a means to inform the public on the undertakings of COCI and to profile new business initiatives.

#### 7] Better Business in a safer and secure environment

COCI project team under lead of Mr. Baker issued letters last year to the Government regarding: enhancing security in Philipsburg, opening hours of businesses and a shopping evening, developing Caribbean tourism. This team has received a response on its initiative developing Caribbean Tourism from the Ministry of Justice introducing the carpet program with similar aim. The official launch of this program has not commenced and team Baker will undertake to promote the launch of this program in collaboration with COCI. Team Baker in Q2 will continue on the execution of its project ensuring the official publication of business extended opening hours, the affirmation of the shopping evening and the CCTV security project.

### **III. COCI and Third parties:**

#### **The audience with the Minister of TEATT**

The Minister of TEATT meets the COCI Board and exchanges views with the Board. Confirming a close working relationship between the Ministry and COCI.

### **Dominican Republic trade mission:**

This trade mission was attended by COCI. A report on this Trade mission has been filed, containing recommendations and action listing to be undertaken. Follow up will continue in Q2.

### **The Integrity chamber:**

The quarter maker for the Integrity Chamber visited COCI outlining the manner in which the integrity chamber will be established. COCI confirmed its support with the note that the proper set-up is deemed crucial for the proper functioning of such a chamber, within the parameters of the law and with respect for protection of privacy and legal remedies. Functioning based on duly verified information, supported by documentation independently validated would constitute an integrity chamber that could serve the entire community in St. Maarten. A gossip driven entity, not supervised in any form, not bound by law to respect rights by treaty would not serve any form of integrity. An entity not respecting confidential and sensitive business information would also not find support within the business community.

### **Q1 statistics:**

Number of Board meetings: 4

Number of Executive Board meetings: 4

Overall attendance percentage of meetings: 80%

Individual attendance of meetings:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Meetings attended</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Lint</b>	3 (1 excused)	$\frac{3}{4} * 100 = 75\%$
<b>Rawtani</b>	3 (1 excused)	$\frac{3}{4} * 100 = 75\%$
<b>Bijlani</b>	4	100%
<b>Illis-Friday</b>	4	100%
<b>Lake</b>	4	100%
<b>Bute</b>	4	100%
<b>Baker</b>	3 (1 excused)	$\frac{3}{4} * 100 = 75\%$
<b>Philips</b>	3 (1 excused)	$\frac{3}{4} * 100 = 75\%$
<b>Brandon</b>	4	100%
<b>Total:</b>		80%

## Meeting participation- outside meeting participation

Name	Meeting	Outside of meeting
Lint	<b>Very active</b>	<b>Very active</b>
Baker	<b>Very active</b>	<b>Very active</b>
Lake	<b>Active</b>	<b>Active</b>
Illis- Friday	<b>Very active</b>	<b>Active</b>
Bute	<b>Good participation</b>	<b>Good participation</b>
Bijlani	<b>Good participation</b>	<b>Participation</b>
Rawtani	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Minimal participation</b>
Philips	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Minimal participation</b>

## TEAM performance:

Team	Performance
Lint	<b>Very good – on target</b>
Baker	<b>Very good- on target</b>
Lake	<b>Good- reaching targets</b>
Rawtani	<b>Poor- no targets</b>

## Q2 Projections:

- Launch Business Center
- Completion migration Registry and Quick Books
- Continued execution: Project automation- Project safety and security/tourism development
- Launch of seminars and schedule: Project team entrepreneurs
- Collaboration with Art Saves Lives: Project team entrepreneurs
- Launch of Business forum
- Panama Trade Mission
- Puerto Rico Trade Mission
- Staff training and support
- Continued review of staff benefits plan
- Telephone and credit card policy
- Project development- plan of approach: Project team compliance and business certification
- Board Caucus

**Conclusion:**

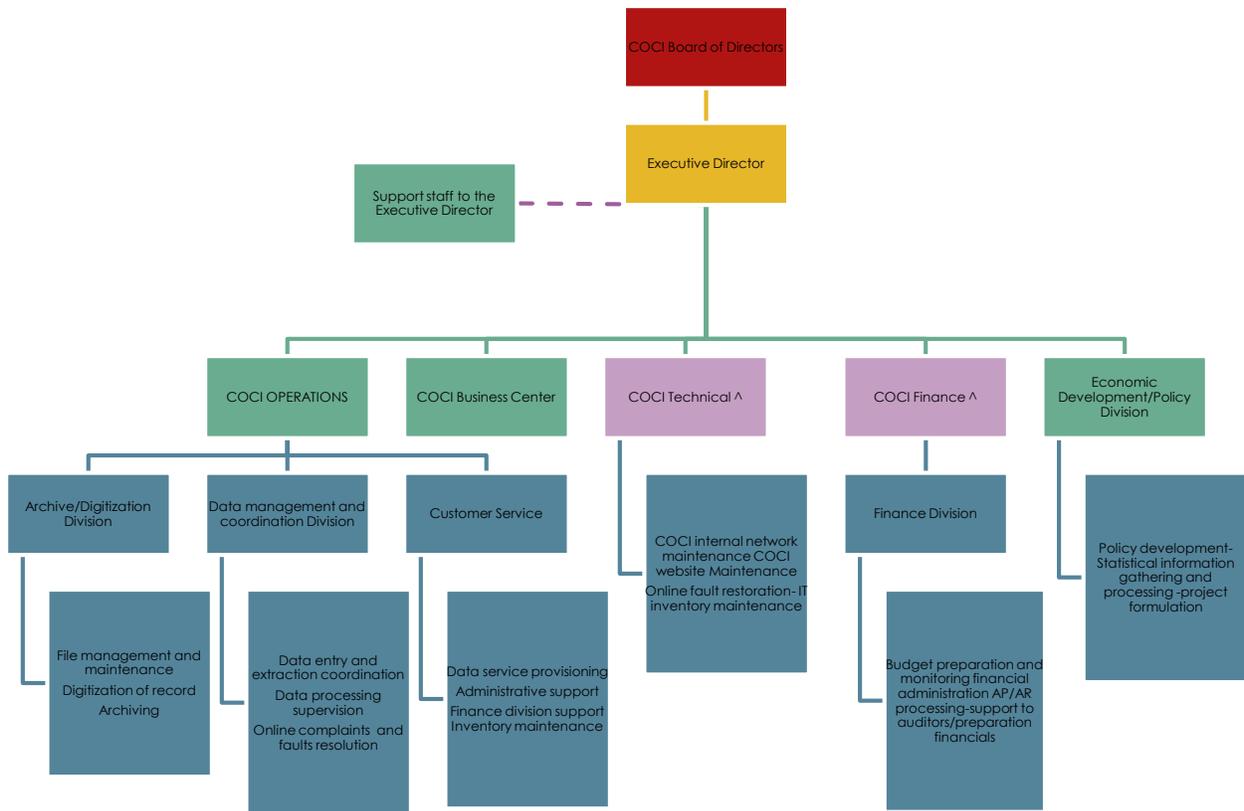
**The COCI Board and Staff have in the first quarter of 2015 undertaken the execution of planned projects and have with great dedication and diligence collaborated to achieve goals set. The members of the COCI board for the majority have contributed actively towards the achievements in this quarter. Members who have not contributed or contributed below expectation will be prompted to increase their participation and contribution. COCI undertakings are a joint effort of all, no one excluded.**

Questions pertaining to this report may be filed with the President of the COCI Board.

Peggy Ann M. Brandon

COCI- Cannegieterstreet 11, Philipsburg St. Maarten.

Attachment 1:



**REPORT DR TRADE MISSION: by Mr. Baker and Mr. Lint**

Ms. Peggy Ann Brandon

President of the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce and Industry

March 18, 2015

**Subject: Report on Dominican Republic trade Mission**

Dear Madam President,

On February 22, 2015, VP Mr. Stanley Lint and Treasure Anastacio Baker went to the Dominican Republic (DR) on a trade mission.

The objective of this trip was to explore the possibilities on opening regular trade between the Dominican Republic and St. Maarten. The trade mission and match making seminar was organized by the Dutch Dominican Chamber of commerce in Santo Domingo and headed by the Minister of Economic Affairs in Curacao, The Honorable Mr. Stanley Palm.

It must be noted that seminar was well attended and supported with approximately 200 to 300 persons in attendance. There were many merchants from Santo Domingo, Curacao, Aruba, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. The Curacao delegation came out with a large delegation and used this opportunity to promote Curacao as a tourist destination.

We understand that Curacao as well as Aruba has been doing business with Santo Domingo for a few years and used this opportunity to build on the relationship. There are weekly cargo sailings from Santo Domingo to Aruba and Curacao which takes a total of 4 days.

Minister of Regional Integration the honorable Mr. Miguel Mejia mentioned during his opening speech that the government of Santo Domingo does not plant or grow any products, however, they are there to support and promote a stronger trade relationship between DR and the Dutch Caribbean. He made it clear that DR export many products to the USA, which St. Maarten merchants buy from to USA. It makes more sense to buy directly from each other. Aruba took the lead on this and started buying direct from DR. Aruba purchase approximately \$1 million worth of product monthly via private entrepreneurs. The DR export market is approximately \$25 Million of which only 1% of these products are shipped to the Dutch Caribbean. We can fill the demand and the government is committed to providing this service to all the Dutch Caribbean islands. We are willing and ready to sign a MOU to get this started.

Mr. Antonio Vargas (Director General of DIGECO) added that they have seen an increase in the numbers of items being exported to the US and Europe and stress that we are the Caribbean and should work closer together, so let us start working.

Many farmers and/or manufactures are part of an association that oversee quality control and continuity of products. Namely, CEI-RD (Dominican Exporta).

All of these companies are ISO certified and offer Grade A products for US and EU markets.

**The benefits of doing business with DR**

- 1) Commitment from DR Government
- 2) ISO certified products
- 3) Direct buying meaning lower cost
- 4) 4 days shipping time

During the seminar we also meet with two shipping lines that have shown commitment to providing the service to St Maarten.

On February 25, Mr. Lint visited the two larger shipping ports while Mr. Baker visited 2 large factory that manufacture furniture for various US brands.

**Action points taken thus far:**

- St Maarten Government to facilitate the trade with easier travel for DR businesses in regards to Visa requirements.
- Ministry of TEAT sent a proposal to Ministry of Justice in regards to this, allowing DR businesses to travel to St Maarten with approval from COCI (see attached letter from Minister of Justice)
- Delegation of local businesses to a follow-up trade mission to see the various facilities, products and control systems.
- Department to provide control of products and also determine product grades to the island (Grade "A" and "B").

**Recommendation**

We recommended that COCI play a vital role in the implementation of the Carpet Program in order to boost the Caribbean tourism year round.

It was once mentioned that COCI should undertake and /or co-brand in the public launch of this Carpet program and we second this suggestion. In order to keep the momentum of this project going, we would like to recommend drafting a letter to this effect to commence this project.

Respectfully,

Mr. Anastacio Baker  
Treasurer COCI

Mr. Stanley Lint  
Vice President COCI

CC: Board of Directors of St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce and Industry

**Pictures**



VP Lint and Tresuere Baker



**Panel of Ministers. Minister Palm during opening speech**



Some of the brands that were manufactures at the factory



Show room of furniture made in DR.

Meeting Quarter maker Integrity chamber: President with Mr. Begina and Mr, Arnold.

