

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board Meeting Minutes

Date: December 12, 2024

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Alisal Ranch

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Linda Johansen.

Attendance

Board Members Present:

Kristopher McLaughlin, Kathleen Cochran, Greer Araujo, Linda Johansen, Jeff Hartman

Board Members Absent:

Jim Flagg, Stormie Strickland, Jonathan Rosenson, Will Henry

Staff Present:

Shelby Sim, Danielle Laudon Ruse, Brenda Ball

Public Present:

Anna Ferguson, Michelle Olsen, Debra Eagle, Candice Libera, Randy Murphy, Don Conner, Matthew Negrete, and Erica Flores.

Public Comment

Debra Eagle: Thanked the board for their support of Alma Rosa Winery and their annual mental health walk. Announced her retirement and gifted the board a bottle of wine.

Candice Libera: Provided updates on Solvang holiday festivities, including a New Year's Eve event featuring Whiskey N Rye (2–4 p.m.) and the Tree Burn, rescheduled for January 3.

Action Items

1. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes (November 14, 2024)

- Motion to approve by Kathleen Cochran, seconded by Jeff Hartman. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Ratification of Kristopher McLaughlin as Treasurer (Effective January 1, 2025)

- Motion to ratify by Linda Johansen, seconded by Kathleen Cochran. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Budget Committee's Proposed 2025 Budget

- Shelby Sim presented the 2025 budget. Motion to approve by Jeff Hartman, seconded by Kristopher McLaughlin. Motion passed unanimously.
- Linda Johansen and staff thanked the Budget Committee for their efforts.

4. Grant Consideration: Garagiste Festival (February 7–9, 2025)

- Requested amount: \$7,500. Recommended amount: \$3,250.
- Motion to approve \$3,250 by Kathleen Cochran, seconded by Jeff Hartman. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Financial Report

Presented by Kristopher McLaughlin:

- Reviewed current financials.
- Linda Johansen thanked Jim Flagg for his contributions as Treasurer.

Staff Report

Presented by Shelby Sim:

- **Destination Guide 2025 Launch Recap**
- **Restaurant Weeks 2025:** January 19 – February 1
- **Midweek Membership Club Promotion:** January 12 – April 30
- **Website Update**
- **New Board Meeting Location:** The Landsby, starting in February 2025
- **Upcoming Travel:**
 - Go West Summit (January 6–9, Cynthia)
 - IMM New York (January 21–24, Shelby & Danielle)
 - VisitCA Reverse Canada Mission (February 10–12, Cynthia)
 - VisitCA Outlook Forum (March 2–5, Shelby, Danielle, Cynthia)
- **Activity Report for November**

Marketing Update

Presented by Danielle Laudon Ruse:

- Review of media approach, social channels, website updates, ad campaigns, SEO, and data tracking.

Old Business

Shelby addressed the Buellton billboard project. Discussion included costs (\$4k/month plus maintenance; \$50k annually), tagline options (“Buellton: Gateway to the Santa Ynez Valley”), and potential graphic updates (\$10k per change).

New Business

- **Spring 2025 Opening of Chumash Cultural Center:** Targeted for March or April.
- **Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley 2025:** Scheduled for October 2 - 5, 2025.
- **Wildling Museum Update:** Shelby shared excitement about the troll conceptual art project.

Board Comments

- **Kristopher McLaughlin:** Highlighted increased November occupancy and ADR; noted Solvang's success in December.
- **Kathleen Cochran:** Shared updates about the River Grill's Christmas decor and upgraded after-hours menu.
- **Greer Araujo:** Thanked VisitSYV for supporting Los Olivos Olde Fashioned Christmas.
- **Jeff Hartman:** Praised Solvang's Christmas parade and noted holiday events boosted business.
- **Brenda Ball:** Expressed excitement for the new website and CRM system.
- **Danielle Laudon Ruse:** Thanked the staff, and budget and executive committees for all their efforts.
- **Shelby Sim:** Recognized staff and thanked Danielle for her contributions.
- **Linda Johansen:** Reflected on the organization's successes and expressed gratitude to the staff and board.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Linda Johansen at 10:01 a.m.

Next Meeting: January 9, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., Alisal Ranch.

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President, Visit the Santa Ynez Valley

Approved by Linda Johansen, Chairman, Visit the Santa Ynez Valley