

Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board Meeting

September 19, 2024, 9:00 a.m. – 9:56 a.m.

Location: Alisal Ranch

Call to Order

Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Introductions

Board members present: Chairman Linda Johansen, Vice Chairman Jonathan Rosenson, Secretary Stormie Strickland, Treasurer Jim Flagg, Kristopher McLaughlin, Kathleen Cochran, Greer Shull, Jeff Hartman. Board member Will Henry was absent. Staff present: President & CEO Shelby Sim, Vice President Danielle Laudon Ruse, Director of Sales Cynthia Gonzalez, and Website & Membership Administrator Brenda Ball via phone. Members of the public present: Don Connor, Phil Carpenter, Anna Ferguson, Candice Libera, Randy Murphy, Calisse Courtney, Erica Flores, Peter Wright, Debra Eagle, and Megan Bravo.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

- Erica Flores introduced new staff member Calisse Courtney to the board and provided updates from People Helping People, sharing that they served 150 households in Solvang with meals, and are now certifying households to serve residents and employees of the Santa Ynez Valley.
- Peter Wright, President of the College School Board in Santa Ynez, introduced a measure going on the ballot.

Approval of Minutes

Jonathan Rosenson motioned to approve the meeting minutes from August 8, 2024; Jeff seconded, all in favor. The August 8, 2024 minutes were approved.

Grant Requests for Consideration

- Los Olivos Day in the Country & Olde Fashioned Christmas, Los Olivos Chamber of Commerce
 - Dates: October 12 and December 7, 2024
 - Requested Amount: \$5,000
 - Recommended Amount Per Grant Matrix: \$3,500.
 - Kathleen motioned to approve the requested \$5,000, Jonathan seconded, all in favor.
 - A \$5,000 grant was approved.
- SYV Holiday Lights, Santa Ynez Valley Botanic Garden
 - Dates: December 6, 7, 13, 15, 20, 22, 20, 24
 - Requested Amount: \$5,000
 - Recommended Amount Per Grant Matrix: \$3,500
 - Kristopher motioned to approve the requested \$5,000, Kathleen seconded, all in favor.
 - A \$5,000 grant was approved.

Financial Report

Jim reviewed the current financials, noting that TBID revenue is tracking on par with last year.

Staff Report

Shelby presented the staff report, which included updates on the following:

- Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley
- CalTravel Recap
- Annual Retreat: Scheduled for October 16, 2024
- Compensation Study
- Destination Guide 2025 Launch: Scheduled for December 5, 2024
- Brand USA Travel Week in London: October 21 - 23, 2024
- Website Proposals
- Activity Report for August

Marketing Update

Danielle reviewed media strategy, social channels, website updates, ad campaigns, SEO efforts, and data tracking.

Old Business

- Billboard Update: Shelby shared that Buellton's regulations currently require the billboard to benefit Buellton specifically. The aim is to amend this to benefit the Santa Ynez Valley.
- Shuttle Update: Shelby reported no new updates on the shuttle service, as the involved family is focusing on their ice cream shop business.
- Solvang Festival Theater: Linda complimented the comedy show held the previous night and commended the volunteers for their efforts in bringing talent to the Santa Ynez Valley.

Board Comments

Jonathan shared First & Oak is catering many events, making positive memories for guests. Jeff shared High Line Adventures had a strong August, though September has slowed with students returning to school. He anticipates strong international travel and looks forward to the holiday season, including Halloween zipline adventures. Stormie shared Chumash hosted 90 rooms for secret service agents during the President's visit. September and October are strong with corporate bookings, weddings, and weekend visitors. Greer noted business is slower in September but gearing up for the holidays at Fess Parker. She shared excitement for the winery's new Napa tasting room introducing people to Santa Barbara County wines. Kathleen shared they had the highest revenue months in Alisal's history this summer and are now focusing on group business. Kristopher shared weekend bookings are strong at The Genevieve, but midweek is a challenge. He is preparing for the fall menu at The Victor and building 2025 budgets. Jim shared August was the best on record at Hampton Inn & Suites, driven by Biden's visit and SpaceX launches. Launch related business continues to fill rooms into Q1. Cynthia is working on site visits at all SYV hotels and is assisting with the lacrosse group event in 2025. She is currently preparing for 45 one on one meetings with operators from the UK and across Europe during the Brand USA mission. Shelby is excited and grateful for the upcoming Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley event. Danielle thanked the staff and partners for their hard work on the Taste event and is working with Griffin Publishing on the 2025 Destination Guide. Linda provided insights into international hospitality trends and emphasized the importance of supporting local events like Danish Days. She thanked the board and staff for their efforts and congratulated everyone on a successful meeting.

Adjournment

Linda Johansen adjourned the meeting at 9:56 a.m. The next board meeting will be held on October 10, 2024, at 9:00 a.m., at Alisal Ranch.

Prepared by:

Danielle Laudon Ruse

Vice President

Approved by:

Stormie Strickland

Secretary