

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

May 8, 2025 – The Landsby, 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and reordered the agenda to move new business under the financial report.

Board Members Present:

Chairman Linda Johansen, Secretary Stormie Strickland, Treasurer Kristopher McLaughlin, Kathleen Cochran, Greer Araujo, Jeff Hartman, Vice Chairman Jonathan Rosenson (by phone)

Board Members Absent:

Will Henry, Jim Flagg

Staff Present:

Shelby Sim, Danielle Laudon Ruse, Cynthia Gonzalez

Public Present:

Monica Rueter, Rebekah Boles, Anna Ferguson, Olivia Uribe-Mutal, Terri Simmons, Paul Huddle, Andrew Messick, Chris Bashforth, Will Adams, Don Conner, and Linda Small

Approval of April 10, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes

Kathleen motioned to approve the minutes. Jeff seconded. All in favor. Minutes approved.

Grant Request – Los Olivos Rotary, Jazz & Olive Festival, June 7, 2025

Requested: \$4,000

Recommended: \$2,500

Chris Bashforth spoke on behalf of the event. Linda recommended a \$3,000 grant.

Kathleen seconded. All in favor. Grant approved for \$3,000.

Financial Report

Kristopher McLaughlin

Review of recent financials.

Old Business & New Business

Paul and Andrew from UTMB (part of the Ironman Group) presented plans for bringing a trail running event to Santa Barbara County. They're seeking a host partner and discussed a potential test event in November 2025. The goal is to bus participants into a private ranch while lodging is based in nearby communities, including the Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Barbara. Communities have contributed up to \$100k in support in similar cases, though no

specific ask was made at this time. They emphasized a long-term relationship and the tourism opportunity for both sides of the mountain.

Staff Report shared by Shelby Sim

- Annual Meeting: Tuesday, June 3, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., SYV Marriott
- California Cup update
- IPW update
- Santa Barbara Vintners Foundation Donation: \$790 benefiting local farmworkers
- Vikings 3-day Car Show Sponsorship: \$1,000
- Elverhøj Annual Fundraiser Sponsorship: \$1,000
- Hosting 2026 One West Tourism Alliance Leadership Summit
- Board Elections update
- Upcoming Travel:
 - IPW, Chicago, June 14–19 (Shelby & Cynthia)
 - Destinations International Annual Conference, Chicago, July 8 (Shelby)
 - Leadership Summit, One West Tourism Alliance, Park City, July 28–30 (Shelby)
- April Activity Report

Marketing Update shared by Danielle Laudon Ruse

- Review of media approach, social channels, website updates, ad campaigns

Sales Update shared by Cynthia Gonzalez

Cynthia shared updates on:

- IPW preparation and asset collection
- Meetings and weddings outreach
- Hotel outreach for special offers and room rates related to *Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley* in October

Board Comments

Jonathan Rosenson:

Appreciated Danielle's marketing report and Datafy insights. Interested in exploring trail or running events to diversify SYV's offerings. Emphasized that while wine will always be dominant, diversity brings growth. Wished everyone a Happy Mother's Day and looks forward to the annual meeting in June.

Stormie Strickland:

Busy weekend ahead with the Wine Country Half Marathon. Corque's Marriott transition is nearly complete—targeting June. Likes the timing of the UTMB event but feels this year may be too soon. Shelby added he'll follow up with Visit Santa Barbara.

Greer Araujo:

May and June look strong for Fess Parker. Still experiencing a short booking window. Exciting events ahead including a music series. Announced she and her husband are expecting in November!

Kathleen Cochran:

Welcoming new guests at Alisal Ranch. Encouraging visitors to explore the broader valley. Completed the ranch's kitchen renovation. Working on sustainability efforts such as reducing plastic use. Pleased with Visit California's focus on Canadian visitors. Anticipating a strong summer.

Kristopher McLaughlin:

Q1 was excellent at The Genevieve. April was softer; May looks better. June is shaping up to be very strong. Weddings and weekend stays are full—midweek is the opportunity. The Victor remains closed on Mondays and Tuesdays for the year. Sold out for Mother's Day brunch.

Jeff Hartman:

Excited about UTMB's potential and their strong following. Adventure Park is soft-opening this week with seven new netted zones for ages 2–12. Liked Datafy's insights: 75% of guests come from LA, mainly women 35–55 with high income and older children.

Cynthia Gonzalez:

Had a productive week planning California Cup with Terry. Receiving strong interest from hotels for *TasteSYV* participation.

Danielle Laudon Ruse:

Encouraged by the board's support for diversifying beyond wine. Shared that upcoming website updates will help better highlight these offerings.

Shelby Sim:

Thanked The Landsby and General Manager Brian McLaughlin. Thanked Danielle for leading the Datafy discussion. Announced the official Chumash Museum opening on May 15 with \$15 general admission. The museum will be featured during *TasteSYV*. Visit California filmed a new accessibility series episode in the Valley last week—despite the rain, it was a success. Visit California has reforecasted a slight decline (-1%) this year.

Linda Johansen:

Thanked Brian and The Landsby. Wished a Happy Mother's Day to all. Congratulated Greer. Thanked staff and the board. Praised the Chumash Museum as a major achievement. Her hotels experienced a slow winter but are picking up for summer. Thanked the public for attending.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., SYV Marriott

*Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse
Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer*

*Approved by Stormie Strickland
Secretary*