

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
November 13, 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* to the top.

Room Introductions

Led by Linda Johansen.

Board Members Present

Camden Wirick, Kristopher McLaughlin, Jim Flagg, Linda Johansen, Stormie Strickland, Will Henry, Jeff Hartman

Board Members Absent

Greer Araujo, Kathleen Cochran

Staff Present

Shelby Sim, Danielle Laudon Ruse, Cynthia Gonzalez, Brenda Ball

Public Present

Brian McLaughlin, David Modelo, Lisa Palmer, Randy Murphy, Alexis Adler, Michael Carle, Gretchen Baldwin, Candice Libera, Anna Ferguson

New Business

Board Ratification – Camden Wirick

Linda requested a motion to ratify **Camden Wirick** to the board. Jeff Hartman motioned, Will Henry seconded, all in favor. Motion approved.

Camden introduced himself as Area Sales Manager with **Highway West Vacations**, representing a Solvang hotelier seat on the board. He noted that his company owns *The Winston* and *The Vinland* hotels and expressed enthusiasm for collaborating with the board and contributing to VisitSYV's success.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Randy Murphy (City of Solvang): Announced that City Council approved exploring the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Solvang. It would operate independently of the city, allowing the business community to decide how funds are spent. Shared updates on *Julefest*—tree lighting on **Friday, December 5** (5:00–6:45 p.m.), parade on **Saturday, December 6**, and Copenhagen Drive closure (Alisal to 1st Street) beginning **November 26** for the month-long celebration. Requested volunteers for parade traffic control.

Action Items

Approval of October 16, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Will Henry motioned to approve the minutes. Jim Flagg seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Grant Request – City of Solvang, Julefest (November 28, 2025 – January 4, 2026)

Requested: \$5,000 | Recommended: \$5,000

Linda motioned to approve the grant. Stormie seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Financial Report

Kristopher McLaughlin

Reviewed recent financials.

SYV Community Aquatics Presentation

Linda Palmer and Randy Murphy presented on behalf of the **SYV Community Aquatics Project**.

Staff Report

Presented by Shelby Sim

- **BrandUSA Travel Week Recap:** Largest event to date, generating major traction for the Santa Ynez Valley.

- **Destination Guide Launch:**
 - *Reception:* Thursday, December 4, 2025 | 5:00–7:00 p.m. at Sunstone Winery
 - Invitations sent today.
 - **Billboard Update:** Owner agreed to refurbish the board; awaiting city verbiage and specs from a local vendor.
 - **Budget Committee Formed:** Kristopher, Linda, and Jim to work with Shelby and Danielle. Meeting scheduled next week.
 - **Planning Meeting:** Tentatively scheduled for the final week of January 2026.
 - **Staff Update:** VisitSYV parted ways with FirstStreet Creative for website maintenance; Brenda Ball retained for HubSpot and website management.
 - **October Activity Report**
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Marketing Update

Danielle Laudon Ruse

Reviewed media approach, social channels, ad campaigns, and website updates.

Sales Update

Cynthia Gonzalez

- Provided recap of recent travel shows and follow-up with independent and corporate buyers.
 - Reported strong interest for 2026–2027 meetings.
 - Submitted assets for Visit California’s meeting website, set to go live next week.
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Old Business & Additional New Business

Los Alamos Theater Group Support

Will Henry shared that he and Shelby are performing in LATG’s *Christmas Dinner Theater* at Pico.

- Linda motioned to support the play with \$500.

- Kristopher motioned to increase to \$750.
- Jeff seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

SYV Holiday Lights at the Botanic Garden

Shelby shared that the grant request arrived late but recommended supporting the major community event.

- Linda motioned to approve \$4,000.
- Will seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Board Comments

Danielle: Announced a new member photo collector tool.

Cynthia: Shared plans to email members about submitting information on meetings, weddings, and event capabilities.

Jeff: Reported a strong October for Highline Adventures. TikTok remains a top traffic source; *Turkey Trek* community event planned for Thanksgiving morning (8–10 a.m.).

Will: Shared success at Pico and Los Alamos Theater Group; *Know Thy Farmer* series closing soon. Harvest completed—strong year despite slow-ripening Cabernet.

Stormie: Busy with RFP season. Corque and Hadsten performing well heading into the holidays.

Jim: Hampton Inn remains strong and tracking close to last year's numbers. Optimistic for 2026.

Kristopher: The Genevieve's group and catering business performed well in October. Midweek transient demand strong. National STR forecast predicts 1% growth; locally, 2025 has been an excellent year.

Camden: Hotel portfolio performing well overall, with strong weddings and events. Confident heading into 2026–2027.

Brenda: Shared updates on HubSpot integration—centralizing marketing, sales, and membership activity to automate tasks and track leads efficiently.

Shelby: Thanked the board for support; will be traveling during Thanksgiving. Looking forward to speaking at the Economic Alliance luncheon. Praised Danielle's leadership

since returning from leave and commended the success of the *SYV Makers* series. Thanked Anna Ferguson for her ongoing marketing collaboration.

Jeff: Announced that *Farmer Wants a Wife* filmed a date on the Highline zipline—set to air next summer.

Linda: Shared experiences from her mission trip to Nicaragua, where her group provided food, medical, and dental aid to families. Encouraged charitable giving this holiday season. Welcomed Camden to the board, thanked the City of Solvang team, and expressed appreciation for staff.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Linda Johansen at 10:12 a.m.

Next Meeting: December 11, 2025 | 9:00 a.m. | The Landsby

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President & CMO

Approved by Stormie Strickland, Secretary