

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2026
The Landsby, 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at **8:59 a.m.**

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Erica Flores, People Helping People, thanked Alisal Ranch for hosting their leadership team and provided an update on the organization's *Fulfill a Wish* program.

Room Introductions

Led by Linda Johansen.

Board Members Present

Camden Wirick, Kathleen Cochran, Linda Johansen, Jim Flagg, Stormie Strickland, Kristopher McLaughlin

Board Members Absent

Will Henry, Jeff Hartman, Greer Araujo

Staff Present

Shelby Sim, Danielle Laudon Ruse, Cynthia Gonzalez

Public Present

Brian McLaughlin, Alvie Whitaker, Mary Maranville, Gretchen Baldwin, Anna Ferguson, Candice Libera, Erica Flores, Megan Friend, Don Conner, Jennifer Robertson, Sara Romero

Action Item

Approval of December 11, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Jim Flagg motioned to approve the minutes. Kristopher McLaughlin seconded. All in favor. Motion approved.

Financial Report

Kristopher McLaughlin

Kristopher reviewed the **November financials** with the board.

Staff Report

- **Billboard Update:** The billboard’s attorney has recommended a city code change with the City of Buellton to allow the organization to lease the billboard.
 - **Midweek Membership Club:** Cynthia Gonzalez provided an overview of the program launching this Sunday. Guests who book directly with participating hotels Sunday–Thursday for a two-night stay will receive **\$100**.
 - **Restaurant Weeks:** Danielle provided an update and Kathleen asked if we can adjust the pricing tiers for future promotions.
 - **Upcoming Travel:**
 - IMM North America, New York City – January 20–22, 2026 (Danielle)
 - **December Activity Report**
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Marketing Update

Danielle Laudon Ruse

Provided an overview of current media strategy, social channels, website updates, and active ad campaigns.

Sales Update

Cynthia Gonzalez

Cynthia provided a sales update, including the annual tradeshow schedule and participation in **IPW**. She reminded hoteliers and venues to submit venue details to ensure leads are routed appropriately.

- **Cal Coast Sports Ventures:**
 - 94 room nights booked across Buellton and Solvang
 - **Santa Barbara Shootout:**
 - 275 room nights booked, primarily in Buellton with some in Solvang
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Old Business & New Business

Old Business:

Shelby shared that Visit the Santa Ynez Valley will continue covering distribution costs for the **2026 Destination Guide**. Beginning in **2027**, Griffin Publishing will assume these costs.

Shelby also noted that due to attendance at the **Visit California Outlook Forum** during the second week of March, the March board meeting will be moved to the **third week of the month**.

Board Comments

Jim Flagg:

December was their strongest December on record. Q1 is pacing according to plan.

Stormie Strickland:

Her properties experienced an excellent December.

Kathleen Cochran:

Shared that Alisal Ranch experienced a full power and Wi-Fi outage and downed trees during December storms while at full occupancy. Noted this is typically a slower season and offered a discounted rate to meeting attendees. Kristopher commented on the exceptional value.

Kristopher McLaughlin:

Despite storms, reservations were maintained with strong repeat family stays of 3–5 nights. It was the busiest wedding season to date. Landsby achieved a historic December, exceeding **\$1 million** in revenue. Q1 transient business is up, while group business is down following a historic group year in 2025.

Camden Wirick:

Expressed enthusiasm for tournament-driven business and interest in expanding midweek demand. Looking forward to upcoming wine events and the year ahead.

Danielle Laudon Ruse:

Encouraged restaurants to confirm participation and submit menus for Restaurant Weeks.

Cynthia Gonzalez:

Shared excitement for the Midweek Membership Club launch.

Shelby Sim:

Expressed appreciation for staff and board support. Noted Brenda Ball is traveling but continuing to do excellent work. Shelby shared optimism for 2026.

Linda Johansen:

Thanked staff and board members for their time, ideas, and dedication. Thanked Brian and The Landsby for hosting, Candice Libera for Julefest leadership, and Anna Ferguson for earned media coverage. Linda shared she will be absent from the February meeting due to travel to Colombia for a mission trip providing dental services.

Adjournment

Linda Johansen adjourned the meeting at **9:44 a.m.**

Next Meeting: February 12, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. | The Landsby

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President & CMO

Approved by Stormie Strickland, Secretary