

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2026
The Landsby, 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Shelby Sim called the meeting to order at **9:00 a.m.**

Shelby noted that a **quorum was not present**, therefore the meeting would be informational only and no votes would be taken.

Room Introductions

Led by Shelby Sim.

Board Members Present

Kristopher McLaughlin, Jim Flagg, Jeff Hartmann

Board Members Absent

Kathleen Cochran, Greer Araujo, Stormie Strickland, Camden Wirick, Will Henry, Linda Johansen

Staff Present

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

Public Present

Jen Sanregret, Megan Friend, Candice Libera, Mary Maranville, Karen Steinwachs, Sunshine Stricker, Don Connor, Jennifer Robertson, Anna Ferguson, Gretchen Baldwin

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Mary Maranville provided an overview of her business, *Heritage Farmland Touring*, which offers farm tours throughout the Santa Ynez Valley featuring produce farms, olive farms, and cattle ranches. She invited board and community members to attend an upcoming FAM tour later this month.

Jen Sanregret shared that the *Women's Legacy of Giving Luncheon* will be held on **March 19**, hosted at Star Lane and First Bank, in partnership with People Helping People. She also noted that *PHP Polo* is scheduled for the last weekend of June.

Action Item

Approval of January 8, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

Due to the lack of quorum, the board did not vote on the minutes. Approval will be deferred to the March board meeting.

Financial Report

Kristopher McLaughlin reviewed recent financials. STR reporting reflected that 2025 finished up 2.8% overall.

Grant Request (Informational Only – No Vote Taken)

Women Winemakers & Culinarrians Foundation – 2026 Event Series

Dates: 1/18, 3/6–3/7, 4/11, 8/15

Amount Requested: \$5,000

Amount Recommended: \$3,500

As a quorum was not present, no vote was taken. Shelby will follow up with the board via email.

Karen Steinwachs and Sunshine Stricker presented on behalf of the foundation. Their nonprofit highlights women in the food and wine industry while raising funds to support related community causes. Their Annual Celebration features more than three dozen women winemakers and culinarians. The 2026 beneficiary is **SYV Community Outreach**. Additional events include Sunday Suppers, the Annual Celebration at 27 Vines, a “BroBQ” featuring male chefs supporting the cause, and the *Denim & Diamonds* event at Zaca Creek Tavern.

Staff Report

- **Restaurant Weeks Recap**
- **IMM North America Recap** (January 20–22, New York City)

- **TasteSYV 2026 Update** (October 1–4)
 - **March Board Meeting:** March 19, 2026
 - **Upcoming Travel:**
 - Visit California Outlook Forum, Chula Vista (Shelby, Danielle, Cynthia)
 - GoWest Summit, March 30 – April 3, Las Vegas (Cynthia)
 - **January Activity Report**
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Marketing Update

Danielle Laudon Ruse reviewed current media strategy, social channels, website updates, and advertising campaigns.

Sales Update

Cynthia Gonzalez provided the following updates:

- Sent reminders to hotel partners to promote the **SYV Midweek Promotion**; encouraged broader distribution to member databases.
 - Submitted local venues to Visit California for potential inclusion in **LA 2028 Olympics** opportunities.
 - Preparing for the GoWest Summit and IPW (May).
 - Updating the wedding directory on the VisitSYV website.
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Old Business & New Business

Employee Handbook:

The Employee Handbook has been completed. Staff will sign and maintain it on file.

Board Comments

Jeff Hartmann:

Reported a record-breaking January at Highline Adventures due to favorable weather. Shared challenges with Meta's recent platform updates and the impact of generative AI on

advertising. TikTok traffic has declined; Meta remains primary source. The team is experimenting with Bing advertising.

Jim Flagg:

January was slightly down compared to last year, largely due to base performance. Leisure demand remains steady. Looking ahead to spring and summer.

Kristopher McLaughlin:

January performance was strong, with REVPAR up 25% year-over-year. Transient demand up more than 20%. Group business down compared to last year, which had been up nearly 30%. Anticipating strong compression around Presidents Day and Valentine's Day weekend.

Brenda Ball:

Provided a HubSpot update, noting members no longer need a login to update their page—an online form is now available. Shared a website optimization tip: use properly named image files and include at least 600 words of relevant content for improved Google visibility. Shelby requested this guidance be included in an upcoming newsletter.

Cynthia Gonzalez:

Has been delivering Midweek Promotion materials directly to hotel partners. Looking forward to the Outlook Forum, where AI and global travel trends will be key themes.

Danielle Laudon Ruse:

Shared that members will soon receive outreach regarding Spring Break readiness (dog-friendly, family-friendly, live music offerings).

Shelby Sim:

Thanked staff for their continued technological advancements and thanked the public for attending and participating.

Shelby also thanked The Landsby for hosting.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at **9:45 a.m.**

Next Meeting: March 19, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. | The Landsby

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President & CMO