

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board Meeting Minutes

June 11, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. | The Landsby

Call to Order

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

Room Introductions

Board Members Present

Chairman Linda Johansen, Treasurer Camden Wirick, Jeff Hartman, Kathleen Cochran, Stormie Strickland, Greer Araujo, Will Henry

Board Members Absent

Jim Flagg, Josh Lujan

Staff Present

Shelby Sim, Danielle Laudon Ruse

Public Attendees

Jamie Chang, Kristin Deweber, Candice Libera, Gretchen Baldwin, Anna Ferguson, Emily Byram, Don Conner

ACTION ITEM: Approval of the Board Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2026

Kathleen Cochran motioned to approve the May 14, 2026 board meeting minutes. Will Henry seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were approved.

Financial Report – Camden Wirick

Review of recent financials

ACTION ITEM: Grant Request for Consideration

Santa Barbara Vintners – Santa Barbara Vintners Festival (October 2026)

- Amount Requested: \$5,000
- Amount Recommended: \$3,500

Emily Byram attended on behalf of the Santa Barbara Vintners and shared that Folded Hills will serve as the new venue for this year's festival.

Linda Johansen motioned to approve the recommended \$3,500 grant, noting it is the maximum grant amount available this year. Stormie Strickland seconded the motion. All were in favor and the grant was approved.

Staff Report – Shelby Sim

Shelby provided the staff report, including updates on:

- Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley 2026 (October 1–4) – Tickets are now live.
- Board elections
- Proposed Annual Meeting date of September 17, 2026, with the regular board meeting to be held via Zoom that morning
- IPW recap
- Additional event sponsorships provided to:
 - Santa Ynez Chamber of Commerce
 - Santa Ynez Rodeo
 - Fourth of July Celebration
 - Solvang Music in the Park
 - Solvang Festival Theater Music Program
- Upcoming travel:
 - ESTO, Philadelphia (Danielle)
- Activity Report for May.

Marketing Update – Danielle Laudon Ruse

Danielle reviewed current marketing initiatives, including marketing and public relations efforts, Website updates, Social media performance.

Old Business & New Business

Shelby shared that Visit the Santa Ynez Valley will begin its TBID renewal process in August with the goal of completing renewals before the scheduled 2027 renewal period.

Historically, renewal support has ranged between 94–96%. Shelby noted that staff will prepare a one-sheet highlighting the organization's accomplishments and benefits of the TBID, and may hold a town hall meeting if additional outreach is needed. Staff will also coordinate with neighboring Central Coast destinations throughout the process.

Board Comments

Will Henry shared that he recently attended a regenerative agriculture conference in Santa Barbara County. He discussed the growing importance of regenerative farming and how it aligns with the work being done at Lumen and Pico.

Greer Araujo announced an upcoming mini music festival at Fess Parker Winery featuring three bands, Third Window smashburgers, and a fundraiser benefiting Care for Paws.

Stormie Strickland reported that Hotel Corque has been selling out on Mondays and Tuesdays, and summer bookings look excellent.

Kathleen Cochran shared that Alisal Ranch is focused on the busy summer season through Labor Day. She clarified recent media reports, explaining that she has been promoted rather than retiring. An Assistant General Manager who has been with the property for three years will assume day-to-day operations while Kathleen works more closely with ownership. Linda Johansen congratulated Kathleen on the many improvements she has overseen at Alisal Ranch.

Jeff Hartman reported that Highline Adventures is experiencing a very strong summer. Digital marketing continues to perform well, particularly through social media. User-generated content has been especially successful, while TikTok remains less predictable but continues to generate business. Jeff expressed interest in collaborating on additional social media partnerships with local hotels.

Camden Wirick shared that Highway West properties are seeing increased demand and higher ADRs. Flying Flags continues to perform well, while The Winston remains strongest on weekends. The team is closely monitoring fourth-quarter forecasting.

Danielle Laudon Ruse encouraged members to continue submitting events to the Visit the Santa Ynez Valley events calendar. She also shared that DVA is beta testing advertising on ChatGPT, which will provide valuable insights into emerging AI marketing opportunities.

Shelby Sim shared that his son, Aiden, will be graduating from Cal Poly with a master's degree in mechanical engineering.

Linda Johansen thanked the board for their continued leadership and engagement, thanked attendees for participating in the meeting, and expressed appreciation to The Landsby for hosting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

The next board meeting will be held on July 9, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at The Landsby.

Minutes prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer

Approved by Stormie Strickland, Secretary