

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board Meeting Minutes

July 9, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. | The Landsby

Call to Order

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

Board Members Present: Chairman Linda Johansen, Vice Chairman Greer Aurajo, Secretary Stormie Strickland, Treasurer Camden Wirick, Kathleen Cochran, Gretchen Baldwin, Jeff Hartman, Josh Lujan

Board Members Absent: Will Henry

Staff Present: Shelby Sim, Danielle Laudon Ruse, Brenda Ball

Public Attendees: Elizabeth Orona, Candice Libera, James Baldwin, Phil Carpenter, Thomas Larson, Don Conner, Pam Roberts, Yvonne Ploch

ACTION ITEM: Ratification of Gretchen Baldwin to the Board

Camden Wirick motioned to ratify **Gretchen Baldwin** to the board, representing the **Santa Ynez Valley Marriott**, to fill the Buellton hotelier seat on the Board of Directors. Josh Lujan seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEM: Approval of the Board Meeting Minutes of June 11, 2026

Gretchen Baldwin motioned to approve the June 11, 2026 board meeting minutes. Stormie Strickland seconded. All were in favor and the minutes were approved.

Financial Report – Camden Wirick

- Review of recent financials.
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Solvang Cinema Arts Presentation

Elizabeth Orona presented an overview of the newly formed **Solvang Cinema Arts** nonprofit organization and its vision to bring a community cinema back to the Santa Ynez Valley. Liz shared the organization's current plans, sponsorship opportunities, and answered questions from the board. The proposed facility includes two approximately 50-

seat screening rooms, which would make film licensing more attainable while creating an intimate viewing experience. Plans also include a kitchen and concession area to support operations. Linda Johansen thanked Liz for her presentation and for her work on behalf of the project.

Staff Report – Shelby Sim

Shelby presented the staff report, including updates on:

- **Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley** – More than **150 tickets** have already been sold.
 - CEO Summit recap.
 - Annual Meeting scheduled for **Thursday, September 17, 2026**.
 - Recent sponsorships:
 - Danish Days – **\$3,500**
 - Arthritis Foundation Annual Bike Ride – **\$3,000**
 - Solvang Cinema Arts – **\$500**
 - Upcoming travel:
 - **ESTO**, Philadelphia (Danielle)
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Marketing Update – Danielle Laudon Ruse

Danielle reviewed current initiatives, including marketing and public relations efforts, website updates and social media performance

Old Business & New Business

Old Business

Shelby shared that the Buellton billboard proposal has been placed on an upcoming **City of Buellton City Council** agenda, representing an important step forward in the approval process.

New Business

Shelby shared information about an upcoming community event celebrating Norway's participation in the World Cup. A Norwegian ship will be featured in Solvang Park on Saturday at noon, and attendees are encouraged to wear red or Viking-themed attire.

Linda Johansen announced the birth of her newest grandson, Tanner James Johansen, who was ten days old at the time of the meeting.

Board Comments

Jeff Hartman reported that Highline Adventures is seeing an increase in international visitors, which he believes may be related to World Cup travel. The new Skynet attraction has been especially popular with families, and favorable weather has contributed to a strong summer season.

Josh Lujan shared that Ballard Inn is enjoying an excellent summer with frequent sellouts. Strong compression along the coast continues to generate valuable overflow business for the Santa Ynez Valley.

Greer Araujo announced an upcoming Family BBQ at Fess Parker Winery on **Thursday, July 30**, featuring food and cocktails from Nella, family activities, and a dunk tank where attendees will have the opportunity to dunk Shelby Sim.

Stormie Strickland reported that the Chumash properties have had a very successful summer and that business continues to perform well.

Gretchen Baldwin shared that the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott has experienced frequent sellouts, although midweek demand in July has been slightly softer. The property is nearing completion of its search for a new General Manager.

Kathleen Cochran announced that Alisal Ranch is celebrating its **80th anniversary** as a guest ranch, while the property's ranching history spans more than **180 years**. The ranch is operating at approximately **98% occupancy** for the month and continues to welcome many multi-generational families, including one family that has visited for 75 consecutive years. Linda Johansen reflected on her own family's long history of visiting Alisal.

Camden Wirick shared that Highway West properties are experiencing an exceptional summer. Midweek demand has been particularly strong, especially on Mondays and Tuesdays. He noted that corporate booking windows continue to shorten, with many reservations now occurring within one to two months of arrival.

Brenda Ball provided an update on ongoing HubSpot implementation efforts and shared that she recently experienced Highline Adventures' zipline, describing it as an incredible experience.

Danielle Laudon Ruse shared she recently celebrated her birthday and her daughter's birthdays during Solvang's Music in the Park series. She commended the Solvang Chamber for creating a successful event that benefits residents and visitors while supporting midweek visitation. Danielle thanked Brenda Ball for her partnership on HubSpot implementation and expressed appreciation to Shelby Sim for his leadership as the organization prepares for TBID renewal.

Shelby Sim echoed Danielle's appreciation and reflected on how fortunate the organization is to promote the Santa Ynez Valley.

Linda Johansen welcomed Gretchen Baldwin to the board and encouraged members of the public to reach out to any board member with questions or ideas. She congratulated Kathleen and Alisal Ranch on its 80th anniversary, thanked Elizabeth Orona for presenting the Solvang Cinema Arts initiative, and expressed appreciation to The Landsby and the staff for their continued support and dedication to promoting the Santa Ynez Valley.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at **9:55 a.m.**

The next board meeting will be held on August 13, 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