

## Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley September 8, 2016

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley held a board meeting on September 8, 2016 at The Landsby, 1576 Mission Drive, Solvang. The meeting was called to order by President Jessy Osehan at 9:00 a.m. The agenda was reordered to discuss grant requests after reviewing board meeting minutes, followed by a discussion about Booking.com. Board members present included Jessy Osehan, President, Linda Johansen, Vice President, Barry Prescott, Secretary, Jim Rice, Cammy Pinoli, Bob Oswaks and Randolph (Randy) Pace. Shelby Sim, Executive Director, and Danielle Laudon, Marketing & Communications Manager, were present. Members of the public present included Dr. Kenneth Harwood, Taylor Reaume of SearchEngine Pros, Chris Bashforth of the Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum, Juliet Kingston of Grapeline Wine Tours, Steve Meade of Jackrabbit Systems, and Tracy Farhad, Executive Director of the Solvang Conference & Visitors Bureau.

Public comment was made by Dr. Harwood, who presented an economic report.

Linda Johansen made a motion to approve the August 11, 2016 board meeting minutes as presented; Bob seconded; all in favor, except Jessy Osehan, who abstained due to her absence at the August meeting. The August 11, 2016 minutes were approved.

The board reviewed a grant request for Celebration of Harvest presented by Santa Barbara County Vintners, to be held October 7-10, 2016 in Solvang; the requested amount is \$4,000. VisitSYV staff processed the grant, and the recommended amount came out to \$4,000. Linda made a motion to accept the proposed \$4,000 grant; Cammy seconded; all in favor. A \$4,000 grant was approved for Celebration of Harvest.

The board reviewed a grant request for the Annual Vaquero Show & Sale, presented by Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum, to be held November 11-13, 2016; the requested amount is \$4,000. VisitSYV staff processed the grant, and the recommended amount came out to \$3,500. Chris Bashforth presented on behalf of the Historical Museum and thanked the board for the years of support they have given, which has helped them expand the event. Linda made a motion to accept the recommended amount of \$3,500; Bob seconded, all in favor. A \$3,500 grant was approved for the Annual Vaquero Show & Sale.

Morgen McLaughlin, Executive Director of Santa Barbara County Vintners, entered the meeting and expressed thanks to the board for their grant and also presented data on Harvest ticket buyers and where they are staying during the 4 day event; the data suggests that most ticket buyers are from outside Santa Barbara County and will stay in SYV hotels.

Shelby and Danielle have been researching a few different booking engines, and hoteliers have since expressed concern about using Booking.com in particular. Since then, we have asked Steve Meade from Jackrabbit Systems to present Jackrabbit as an alternative. Jackrabbit takes a "lease fee" approach and charges the DMO (VisitSYV) a monthly fee for their services, as opposed to the OTA model which charges the hoteliers directly with a commission fee. Jackrabbit would then "scrape" the hotel websites and list rates, dates and availability on VisitSYV.com. VisitSYV would pay \$500 per month to Jackrabbit for this service. Per Steve Meade, the idea of the Book Direct model is less known than OTAs, but preferred for hoteliers. Shelby asked Steve how VisitSYV would know whether a booking takes place via Jackrabbit on VisitSYV.com. The hoteliers would have to provide that information to VisitSYV, and Jackrabbit would not be able to demonstrate direct bookings, but rather "clickthroughs" which is what the current "Book Your Stay" button on VisitSYV.com does. VisitSYV would pay a \$1,250.00 one-time implementation fee and a \$500 per month fee for Jackrabbit. Steve Meade said Jackrabbit would require a one year contract. After Steve Meade presented and left the meeting, the board discussed the differences between using Booking.com as an OTA versus using a rate-scraping service like Jackrabbit. Linda made a motion that VisitSYV not implement Booking.com; Barry seconded; all in favor. Cammy made a motion to create an ad hoc subcommittee to discuss implementation of Jackrabbit or other alternate solutions made up of Cammy, Jim and Barry, and to dissolve the committee within 25 days to have a recommendation at the next board meeting; Randy seconded. All in favor.

In Bion's absence, the financial report, which will include review of the August financials and projections for the remainder of 2016, will be provided at the October 13<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

Shelby Sim provided the Director Report, which included updates on the following:

- Upcoming Planning Commission Meeting: The next meeting regarding the Santa Barbara Winery Ordinance is scheduled for 9/19/16 at 9am in Santa Barbara; Shelby asked board members to attend and speak if possible, as we would love for additional diverse speakers to attend. Morgen shared that the ordinance in its current draft looks to be very restrictive.
- Fiscal Year End Report 2015/16: The feedback for report has been complimentary. We've had detailed questions come from a Buellton city council member, we're working hard to provide answers, and Shelby will speak at the Buellton City Council meeting on September 23rd at 6:30pm.
- Data Collection Project: The data collection project will happen via an online form. We will incentive visitors to share data via an "Enter to Win a Vacation in the SYV" contest. Shelby would like to have tent cards to distribute in the community. The committee is also entertaining a street team concept. All the info we gather will be shared with any VisitSYV members (excluding contact information).
- Vacation Rentals: After SYVHA merged with SYVVA, SYVVA had vacation rentals as members, and the board voted to allow vacation rentals to remain members; vacation rentals can currently join VisitSYV for \$250 per year. Shelby has recently heard from some of our boutique hotels that they're being infringed on by SYVHA allowing vacation rentals on our website; this is a valid concern. The consensus has always been that they can remain as basic members. It's not on the agenda as an action item, but it's up for discussion. Morgen said to bear in mind that 95% of vacation rentals would become illegal in the county if the BOS vote goes a certain way. Shelby's biggest concern is their prominence on the website. Cammy shares that she understands the concern, as they are not paying the same TBID as the hoteliers are paying, and to be side by side on VisitSYV.com doesn't seem fair. The board will revisit this topic and decide if there's a different place vacation rentals can be displayed on the website at the next meeting.
- Sponsoring Vintners' Harvest Festival glassware: Danielle and Shelby felt glass sponsorship was an excellent opportunity for branding. As a glass sponsor, all attendees at the Vintners Harvest Festival will go home with our logo and URL on their glass.
- Activity report

Shelby presented October 25<sup>th</sup> at the Vincent Residence (by Vincent Vineyards) as the recommended date and location for our Fall VisitSYV Networking reception. Shelby has also invited Santa Barbara County Vintners to join us to get greater attendance and participation. Cammy made a motion to approve the fall networking reception on October 25th at Vincent Residence, Linda seconded. All in favor.

Shelby recommended the next Spirit of the Valley Seminar be scheduled for Tuesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at a location to be determined in Los Olivos, and to have the Spirit of the Valley awards luncheon coincide with our Annual Meeting in June of 2017. Randall Day will be the Los Olivos guest speaker for the September 27<sup>th</sup> seminar. Cammy made a motion to approve the banquet awards to coincide with our June 2017 annual meeting; Bob seconded, all in favor. Cammy made another motion to approve September 27<sup>th</sup> as the date for the next Spirit seminar in Los Olivos; Randy seconded. During further discussion, Shelby added that he is currently polling whether Los Alamos wants to have an additional Spirit of the Valley seminar there, otherwise he'll invite them to Los Olivos. All in favor after no further discussion. The September 27<sup>th</sup> Spirit of the Valley seminar in Los Olivos was approved.

Danielle Laudon presented the Website, DVA, and Marketing Update which included updates on the DVA ad campaign, status of SEO, and review of recent PR successes. Danielle also announced that she will be attending a Visit California Crisis Communications Workshop in L.A. so that VisitSYV can be better prepared to share information with members and visitors alike in the event of an emergency. Danielle cited the recent Rey fire as an example.

Board comments:

Jessy shared that the Executive Review ad-hoc subcommittee has a preliminary review sheet prepared for Shelby for his review in December; VisitSYV also needs to form an ad-hoc committee for our annual budget, which needs to be approved by January 2017. Last year the budget subcommittee was made up of Jessy, Bion, Barry, Shelby and Danielle. Randy, Bion and Barry are interested in being on this year's budget subcommittee. Linda made a motion to create the subcommittee for the 2017 annual budget made up of Randy, Barry, Bion, Shelby and Danielle; Cammy seconded, all in favor. Cammy shared that Petros is leaving the Fess Parker property in January and the Parkers will have the space closed for refurbishment before taking the restaurant over with a new concept. The project is under wraps but Cammy knows everyone will be excited, and Petros will actually be relocating somewhere else. Barry shared that he also believes we need to come up with a more structured way of distributing information related to the fire and other emergencies. Bob cited examples of customers requesting information related to the fire. Danielle will learn the proper protocol at the VisitCA Crisis Workshop and will report on findings and what protocol we can implement regarding fire or other emergencies in the future. Bob shared that Los Alamos Old Days is coming up and he is also looking forward to a strong holiday season. Randy shared that the Rey fire was actually good for Sideways Inn's business and they supported the firefighters with room blocks. In other news, Sideways Inn just bought 6 new flat screen TVs for Sunday football, so guests can watch up to 6 different football games at the same time; they'll start serving food in the bar as well. Linda relayed how significant the traffic was in Solvang over Labor Day weekend; while traffic can be a good indicator of tourism doing well in the valley, sometimes she wonders about how this traffic impacts the quality of the experience for the guest. Linda also expressed her condolences to the Clevenger family after Norm Clevenger's passing this morning; Mr. Clevenger was the former Santa Ynez Valley Union High School principal and did a wonderful job mentoring kids in the valley. Shelby will be going to Sonoma in a couple weeks to research the destination and will also spend some time in Napa. Shelby signed up for the Miracles Happen Golf Tournament on behalf of VisitSYV and bought a team that will consist of Shelby, James Colvin, and Kenny Kahn; they are currently looking for one more player for the team. ForFriends Inn has felt the pressure of vacation rentals operating in the area, and while they are still operating as a hotel, if someone would like to rent out the entire inn, they will operate as a vacation rental; Civitas has confirmed with VisitSYV that when operating as a vacation rental, ForFriends Inn will not be required to pay into the TBID for those particular nights.

Linda made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Cammy seconded. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 10:46 am to the meeting of October 13, 2016, 9:00 a.m., The Landsby.