

## Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley November 12, 2020

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley held a board meeting on November 12, 2020 remotely via Zoom, and in person for board members and staff at Chumash Casino Resort. Chairman Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Board members present included Linda Johansen, Chairman, Sherrie FitzGerald, Vice Chairman, Jonathan Rosenson, Treasurer, Budi Kazali, Will Henry, Louise Smith and Kimberly Walker. Board members absent included Karla Azahar and Stormie Strickland. Shelby Sim, President & CEO, and Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President of Marketing, were present. Members of the public who RSVP'd included Dr. Harwood, Brenda Ball, Mark Infanti, Debra Eagle, Channing Jones, Xenia Bradford, Jim Flagg, Anna Ferguson Sparks, and Phil Carpenter.

Brenda Ball and Dr. Harwood provided public comment. Brenda Ball provided an update on behalf of the Solvang Visitors Center; Dr. Harwood shared an economic report.

Kimberly motioned to approve the October 8, 2020 minutes as presented; Jonathan seconded. All in favor. The October 8, 2020 minutes were approved.

Jonathan Rosenson presented the current financials.

Shelby Sim provided the staff report, which included updates on the following:

- TBID Renewal update: 93% of the hotels within the Santa Ynez Valley Tourism Business Improvement District have signed the petition to renew which exceeds the number required.
- IPW, September 2021 update
- COVID-19 and recovery
- Solvang Festival Theater donation: VisitSYV will donate \$5k, in the amount of \$1k per year for the next five years; this donation goes toward their improvement project.
- Form Budget Committee: Linda, Jonathan and Will formed the budget committee and will work with staff on the 2021 budget.
- Publication Update: Under the guidance of the publication committee, staff will work with Griffin Publishing on the cover shoot over the weekend.
- Solvang Chamber donation
- Activity Report for month of October

Staff presented the opportunity to feature the Santa Ynez Valley in a print co-op in Westways Magazine's Discover Spring 2021 issue. This would be a partnership with the Buellton Visitors Bureau and IDK on behalf of the City of Solvang. The \$6,667 print ad buy would be paid in 2021. Jonathan motioned to approve the ad buy; Kimberly seconded. The Westways ad buy was approved.

Danielle presented the monthly report on VisitSYV.com web trends, ad campaigns with DVA and Madden Media, and phased marketing efforts.

In Old Business, Linda addressed the great work many community organizations are doing to serve locally during the pandemic. VisitSYV previously donated \$3,000 to assist with food distribution within the community. Local foundations and volunteers, including the Los Alamos Foundation, Solvang Lutheran Church, Buellton Senior Center, the Solvang Senior Center, the Santa Ynez Valley Foundation, and rotary foundations are still distributing to those in need within the Santa Ynez Valley, and Linda encourages individuals to assist where they can.

In new business, Shelby shared that Airbnb approached VisitSYV with interest in promoting the Santa Ynez Valley to their users. Airbnb understands that we are a hotel association, but they still see a partnership

opportunity which would be of no cost to our organization. Staff sees this as an opportunity to get in front of an audience we do not otherwise have access to. Linda would like this to be an action item. Jonathan had questions about what the rules are for vacation rentals in the Santa Ynez Valley. Because there are still questions regarding the rules and restrictions on vacation rentals in the area, Linda has asked staff to explore and report back for this to be a future action item.

#### Board Comments:

Jonathan is excited to enter the holiday season and is interested in how everything will unfold as we move into colder weather; he appreciates everyone's hard work during this time. Kimberly announced that they're finishing up on the redevelopment of the Meadowlark, which will be rebranded as Hotel Ynez; they're slated to open early December; Skyview is performing well and they're seeing about a two week booking window from guests. Sherrie congratulated Brenda Ball on her son's recent win for a seat on Lompoc's City Council; Alisal is doing well and they are sold out for Thanksgiving; they are, however, seeing some cancellations for the Christmas holiday; larger business that was booked for Q1 is moving further down the road; they are concerned with the spike that's taking place in Los Angeles; Alisal will be closed the first two weeks of January; in exciting news, non-guests will be able to sign up for horseback riding at Alisal starting next week. Will shared that Los Alamos continues to perform well as a getaway destination for larger cities; they are starting to see weekend numbers midweek at Pico; Will agrees with Kimberly's observation that the booking window is short; cold weather will be an opportunity for them going into the winter. Louise shared she continues to offer weekend takeout; she is also receiving inquiries for catering for next year; Louise is grateful to be a part of this organization and is hopeful we will all be together again soon. Danielle shared she will be capturing new photo assets with our photographer this afternoon to promote holiday and seasonal offerings in December. Danielle also shared she has done outreach for restaurants, wineries and tasting rooms who are open on Thanksgiving; she has only received 4 "open" responses so far and will work with other Valley DMOs to source information. Shelby added that they are asking whether restaurants are taking guests by reservation only or walk-ins, and are encouraging visitors via social media to contact restaurants directly before showing up to restaurants as walk-ins. Budi shared that The Gathering Table is doing well but there is a need for more heaters for outdoor dining; they are gearing up for Thanksgiving and are getting local reservations; their hours will be from 3-8pm; they are seeing fewer hotel guests for Thanksgiving. Shelby thanked the board members and community for their support, noting we can only go off the present moment, and as far as the present, there are no active COVID-19 cases in the Valley. The winter will be an opportunity for us, we are hopeful there will still be road-trippers. We're looking forward to Julefest bringing people to the valley; Shelby thanked Danielle for her idea to decorate the windmill on Alisal this year, noting it will be the first time in its history that it is lit up for the holiday. Linda is proud that VisitSYV is donating \$5,000 to Solvang Festival Theater, it's a great project and such an asset to our community; she was also able to secure a \$50,000 donation for the theater from Montecito Bank & Trust; Linda congratulated Holly Sierra on her third term as Buellton Mayor and thanked outgoing council member Art Mercado for his service; she congratulated new Solvang Mayor Charlie Uhrig and the new city council members; she looks forward to working with them in the future. Linda encouraged hoteliers to have their staff remind guests to secure their dining reservations when they book. Linda encouraged everyone to watch the new Solvang Lifetime movie which heavily features the destination. Last, she thanked Shelby and Danielle for all their efforts, as well as the board. Linda closed the meeting to the public at 10:01 am, and announced that a closed executive session would follow.

The meeting adjourned at 10:01 am to the meeting of December 10, 2020, 9:00 a.m.. Due to COVID safety precautions, the meeting is tentatively scheduled remotely via Zoom.

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse,  
Vice President of Marketing

Approved by Sherrie FitzGerald,  
Vice Chairman