

Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley February 11, 2021

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley held a board meeting on February 11, 2021 remotely via Zoom. 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, Karla Azahar, Secretary, Stormie Strickland, Budi Kazali, Will Henry, Kimberly Walker, and Louise Smith. 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, Phil Carpenter, Dave Elcon, Erica Flores, Philip Grant, Anna Ferguson Sparks, Correna Moreno, and Phil Janney.

Dr. Harwood, Phil Carpenter, Erica Flores, Brenda Ball and Dave Elcon provided public comment. Dr. Harwood shared an economic report. Phil Carpenter shared an update on behalf of Santa Barbara County Vintners. Erica Flores provided an update on behalf of People Helping People, sharing stats on their community food distribution and announcing the date for their annual Polo Classic fundraiser: Saturday, October 2nd. Brenda provided an update on behalf of the Solvang Visitor Center, which is currently open Friday – Monday. Dave Elcon provided an update on behalf of the Inn at Matteis Tavern; the property is anticipating a fall opening.

Sherrie motioned to approve the January 14, 2021 minutes as presented; Will seconded; All in favor. The January 14, 2021 minutes were approved.

Jonathan Rosenson presented the current financials.

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

- Publication Guide Update: Distribution has been reinstated and we have released the 2021 issue.
- Restaurant Weeks 2021: The Takeout Edition of SYV Restaurant Weeks was a great success.
- COVID-19 Update: COVID numbers are down, and leisure travel has resumed.
- App update: Staff has investigated the viability of a new destination app and has found a solution to present at the March meeting.
- Board Retreat: VisitSYV staff and board reviewed dates in May and June to have an annual retreat. Shelby will follow-up via email with proposed dates for the first week of June.
- Activity Report for month of January.

Danielle presented the monthly report on VisitSYV.com web trends, ad campaigns with DVA, SEO with Madden Media, Media Hub with CrowdRiff, and a complete recap of Restaurant Weeks.

In New Business, Shelby addressed the promotions our neighboring DMOs in San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria and Santa Barbara have executed to increase overnight stays, incentivizing visitors with free night stays and gift cards. Jonathan suggested creating a campaign that specifically incentivizes midweek travel, which fellow board members agreed would be most beneficial. Staff will draft a proposed incentive to increase midweek travel and share at the next meeting.

Board Comments:

Linda thanked Shelby and Danielle for executing the takeout edition of our annual SYV Restaurant Weeks promotion and thanked all the restaurants and wineries who stepped up and participated; Linda thanked all who attended the call and encouraged attending public to reach out with any questions; Linda has been keeping a pulse on flight travel and will continue to share information as she receives it. Sherrie thanked Shelby and Danielle for the great reporting today; Alisal will reopen on the 26th and their weekends are looking extremely strong moving forward; they have almost completed all room renovations around the property.

Louise thanked Shelby and Danielle for their work; Restaurant Weeks was a great success for her; Louise commended Karla and the staff at Marriott for their service during the promotion as well; Louise thanked Shelby for the great Restaurant Weeks exposure and getting her a radio interview with Drew Wakefield of Santa Barbara. Budi is very excited about the midweek incentive concept discussed today and would love to see something put in place as soon as possible; Budi suggested the incentive involve wineries; Restaurant Weeks was a great boost for The Gathering Table, and he loved the revised format where a set price was not mandated. Karla shared that she has been putting on her concierge hat as many of the Marriott's recent guests are first timers to the region; she has been using the Destination Guide to assist them; ADR is down but traffic in the hotel has been picking up nicely; Karla is in favor of a midweek promotion before we hit the summer months. Jonathan echoed Karla's sentiments, noting it's exciting to see new visitors to the Santa Ynez Valley; Jonathan also seconded Budi's comments regarding the flexibility in price of this year's Restaurant Weeks promotion; he would love to set a Restaurant Weeks committee for next year to come up with a format that provides great value to both restaurants and guests; First & Oak has been picking back up quite nicely, and the restaurant is currently serving Thursday – Monday but will likely return to 7 days a week in March. Stormie shared how businesses has picked up for both Hadsten House and Hotel Corque; Hotel Corque has been undergoing renovations which should be complete end of March; they are starting to see the return of group sales. Will shared an update on behalf of Pico; they returned to outdoor dining and he is proud of the staff and how quickly they were able to pivot. They put together a special Valentine's Day menu and have almost sold out; in other news, he is in the process of planting a vineyard in Santa Maria Valley and is excited to have a new project in the works. Kimberly provided an update on behalf of Skyview; their restaurant reopened for outdoor dining and they have soft-opened their new property, Hotel Ynez. Danielle shared that while she and Shelby will be meeting to discuss a structured incentive, she would be happy to put together a content forward ad campaign which could highlight the individual incentives the hotels are already offering midweek; she asked board members to reach out via email and share their thoughts if this is of interest; Danielle is thrilled that Jonathan has interest in forming a committee for the next Restaurant Weeks and looks forward to collaborating. Shelby thanked the board for weathering the storm that is COVID-19 together; he believes we are positioned to come out of this stronger, having learned from each obstacle we have been faced with. Shelby thanked Danielle for her partnership, and Linda for her leadership.

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 am to the meeting of March 11, 2021, 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 Karla Azahar,
Secretary