

## Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley April 8, 2021

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley held a board meeting on April 8, 2021 remotely via Zoom. Chairman Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Board members present included Linda Johansen, Chairman, Jonathan Rosenson, Treasurer, Karla Azahar, Secretary, Stormie Strickland, Kimberly Walker, Budi Kazali, and Will Henry. Shelby Sim, President & CEO, and Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President of Marketing, were present. Board Members Sherrie FitzGerald, Vice Chairman and Louise Smith were absent. Members of the public who RSVP'd included Joanne Lodato, Phil Carpenter, Brenda Ball, Xenia Bradford, Jim Flagg, Debra Eagle, Mary Heyden, Will Adams, John Kelliher, Tyler Thomas, Phil Janney, Anna Ferguson Sparks, Correna Moreno, Philip Grant, and Erica Flores.

Mary Heyden and Will Adams provided public comment. Mary shared that the county is working on a farm stay and agricultural tourism ordinance and encourages Visit the Santa Ynez Valley to support them; Shelby thanked Mary for her comments, has attended town halls and BOS meetings pertaining to these ordinances, and noted that Visit the Santa Ynez Valley is primarily a hotel association and must support overnight stays to the hotels within the SYVTBID that fund our organization. Will introduced himself to the board as the new marketing manager for Santa Barbara Wine Country Tours, owned by Santa Barbara Adventure Company.

Will motioned to approve the March 11, 2021 minutes as presented; Karla seconded; All in favor. The March 11, 2021 minutes were approved.

Jonathan Rosenson presented the current financials.

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

- COVID-19 Update: Santa Barbara County is still in Red Tier, but tourism is doing well. Vaccinations are going strong in the county and many appointments are opening this week.
- Midweek Promotion: Staff put this promotion together with feedback and consultation from the board. The promotion launched on March 15<sup>th</sup> and has been a welcome success.
- 2022 Destination Guide: Staff is working with Griffin Publishing on the new contract, as well as the 2022 cover. The cover is being shot early to take advantage of the "green" Spring season.
- Board Elections: elections will take place in May only if there are any new applicants for board positions.
- Annual Meeting: Staff recommends holding the Annual Meeting via Zoom in June and holding an in-person networking reception in the fall that would include a presentation.
- Dissolve 2020 Publication and Budget Committees: These committees were officially dissolved. Shelby expressed sincere gratitude for both committees and all their hard work in an unusual year.
- Form TasteSYV Committee: A subcommittee formed to consult staff on 2021 Taste, to be held November 4-7. Committee members are: Karla, Linda, Jonathan, and Will. Kimberly will be an alternate.
- 2020 Annual Report: The report was submitted to the County, City of Solvang and City of Buellton. The report was shared in person with the City of Solvang with compliments from the council.
- Board Retreat: The retreat is scheduled for Thursday, May 20, 11:30am – 3:30pm, location to be confirmed.
- Activity Report for month of March.

Danielle presented the monthly/Q1 report on VisitSYV.com web trends, ad campaigns with DVA, a Visit Widget update, SEO with Madden Media, and an update on the Midweek Promotion. Based on the growth of our social accounts, Jonathan asked the board to consider bringing on an hourly, part-timer to help engage with consumers across our social channels. Shelby acknowledged that this is something we have been discussing internally and were interested in bringing on board after July when the TBID increases from \$2.50 to \$3.00/night.

In old business/new business, Linda shared that in December, the board agreed that staff salaries would be revisited after the start of the new year, and before May 1<sup>st</sup>. Since then, a new salary structure was unanimously approved by the board and will be shared with Shelby after this meeting.

#### Board Comments:

Jonathan shared an update on behalf of First & Oak and Mirabelle Inn; outdoor dining is still what visitors prefer but they do have a small number of indoor tables; its busy during the week, and they were excited to receive their first midweek promotion card at the restaurant last night. Jonathan appreciates everyone's hard work and sees a lot of great referral traffic and synergy between local businesses. Karla seconded that and shared that she sends referrals to First & Oak regularly. Marriott had a great March and they've increased their hours and offerings from the restaurant; there have been staffing challenges and entry level positions have been difficult to fill; Karla thanked all the restaurant and winery owners for their hard work and offerings – acknowledging they are the reason people are visiting. Budi shared Ballard Inn & The Gathering Table has been very busy; staffing has been an issue for them as well and he'd love to see some kind of solution. Shelby asked whether a workforce committee would be beneficial and will reach out to Budi to discuss options. Will shared that March was a great month for PICO; they had a great Easter weekend and debuted a brunch program; they are equally challenged with staffing right now. On the winery side – Will is pleased to share that he is planting 5 acres of vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley, and they've named the vineyard after his father. Kimberly shared an update on behalf of Hotel Ynez and Skyview; the opening of Hotel Ynez has been consuming but excellent; she echoed the challenges of staffing and the increase in business; they are seeing staffing challenges in SLO as well. Stormie provided an update on all Chumash properties; they are also seeing a big staffing issue; many of their housekeepers are unable to work currently due to having children still in remote learning at home; Stormie hopes to be able to share an update on the former Root 246 restaurant soon. Danielle thanked our local hospitality members who are in the field taking care of the influx of guests to the Santa Ynez Valley; she shared an update about a Visit California opportunity, having attended an onboarding training session. In the coming months, VisitSYV will be able to create "California Now" travel stories to populate on Visit California's website, utilizing both Google AMP travel stories & CrowdRiff; she looks forward to sharing samples of these stories soon. Shelby complimented Danielle and thanked her for keeping VisitSYV on the cusp with travel trends and new technology. Shelby thanked Linda and the board for staying on top of things, for taking care of the staff, and acknowledging the passion and hard work we have executed during the pandemic; we are motivated to continue this great work, and grateful to be in the position we are in. Linda thanked the attending public for being a part of today's meeting and providing suggestions and feedback on the work we do. She expressed gratitude for the board for all their attendance and contributions. Linda recently spent time out in the field experiencing our wineries firsthand and has been blown away by the offerings we have for guests. Last, she thanked staff for being on top of everything and executing at this level. Shelby chimed in before closing the meeting to note how incredibly active this board is, and how grateful we are for the wealth of insights and contributions they provide.

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 am to the meeting of May 13, 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