

Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley September 8, 2022

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley held a board meeting on September 8, 2022 via Zoom. Chairman Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Board members present included Chairman Linda Johansen, Vice Chairman Jonathan Rosenson, Treasurer Jim Flagg, Secretary Stormie Strickland, Will Henry, Kathleen Cochran, Greer Shull, and Dave Moser. Kimberly Walker was absent. Shelby Sim, President & CEO, Danielle Laudon Ruse, Vice President of Marketing, and Brenda Ball, Website & Membership Administrator, were present. Members of the public who RSVP'd included Cheryl Shallenberger, Mary Nash, Xenia Bradford, Jody Williams, Anna Ferguson Sparks, and Simonne Mitchelson.

Linda made room introductions. Shelby introduced Cheryl Shallenberger as the City of Solvang's new tourism manager and welcomed her to the meeting.

Linda announced the Executive committee approved staff cost of living increases.

Will motioned to approve the July 14, 2022 minutes as presented; Linda seconded, all in favor. The July 14, 2022 minutes were approved.

Jim motioned to approve the August 18, 2022 minutes as presented; Will seconded, all in favor. The August 18, 2022 minutes were approved.

The board reviewed the following grant for consideration:

- Los Olivos Chamber & Business Organization, Day in the Country, Saturday, October 15, 2022, requested amount: \$3,500, recommended amount: \$3,250

Mary Nash spoke on behalf of the event. After discussion, Kathleen made a motion to approve the recommended amount of \$3,250; Greer seconded, all in favor. A \$3,250 grant was approved.

Jim Flagg presented the current financials.

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

- Board retreat recap, August 25th, The Inn at Mattei's Tavern, 11:30am – 3:30pm
- Annual meeting, 9/8, Alisal Ranch, 5:00pm – 7:30pm
- R&D trip to Bend, OR with DVA staff, 9/12 – 9/15
- SYV Botanic Garden Enchanted Garden Holiday Lights sponsorship, \$5,000
- Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley update
- Create 2023 Destination Guide Committee: The committee consists of Jonathan Rosenson, Linda Johansen, Will Henry, and Kathleen Cochran. Shelby and Danielle will meet with the committee along with publisher Phil Janney to discuss the 2023 cover. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 20th at Alisal Ranch.
- Review Mission Statement: The board reviewed the mission statement. Jim made a motion to change the words "all people" to "everyone" in the mission statement. Jonathan seconded, all in favor. The revised mission statement now reads: Visit the Santa Ynez Valley (VisitSYV) promotes the Santa Ynez Valley region as a diverse destination for everyone to experience, which creates prosperous and sustainable outcomes and overnight stays for businesses in Buellton, Ballard, Los Alamos, Los Olivos, Santa Ynez, and Solvang.
- Activity Report for month of August

Shelby presented the board with the opportunity to bid on and purchase the 2023 Central Coast Tourism

Council map cover. CCTC's map committee will decide by 9/15 who can purchase the cover; if VisitSYV is selected as the buyer, the cost for the cover is \$10,000. Both Shelby and Danielle spoke to the benefits of the cover opportunity. Dave and Jonathan asked questions about distribution and the ability to measure ROI. The reach is 200,000 visitors/year. Staff shared this is strictly a brand awareness opportunity. Linda thinks it's well worth the brand awareness and made a motion to approve the \$10,000 ask; Jim seconded; all in favor except Jonathan and Dave who abstained. The \$10,000 buy was approved pending that CCTC approves VisitSYV for the purchase.

Danielle presented reports on VisitSYV.com website trends, updates, and SEO, the progress of our ad campaigns with DVA, Verdin Marketing, and Visit Widget for the month of August.

Board Comments:

Jim shared business continues to improve at Hampton Inn & Suites. They are up year over year and midweek has also picked up. Jonathan shared a positive update for Mirabelle Inn and First & Oak. They hired a few new people including a new restaurant manager and a new culinary director. The hotel has also been steady. Will shared on behalf of PICO they continue to have a great summer. The heatwave was tough but if you haven't tried brunch yet, he highly recommends it. They're hosting a drag brunch during Los Alamos Old Days. The event will raise money for the Rainbow House which benefits LGBTQ+ youth in the community. Dave shared an update on overall tasting room traffic across the valley. While traffic is slightly down from last year, it's above pre-pandemic levels. Harvest is taking center stage for most wineries right now. It started early due in part to the heat. At Sunstone, on September 25th they have an opera event with world class performers. Greer echoed earlier sentiments that the heatwave was a challenge for business during Labor Day weekend. Otherwise, business has been good at Fess Parker Winery and Fess Parker Wine Country Inn. They're focused on November and December numbers as October is already looking good. Kathleen shared an update for Alisal Ranch. She's recently hired for a few key positions including a new assistant general manager and a new executive chef. They're focused on December, January, and February business. They'll have some rooms out of inventory so may be pushing business to other Santa Ynez Valley hotels. All guest rooms will have completed renovations by March 2023. Stormie provided an update on behalf of Hotel Corque; they're doing really well and deep in Hadsten renovations. They're looking to open Hadsten in December. Brenda provided a website tip of the day and suggested looking at your website from a basic perspective. She suggested everyone review their navigation and see if they can find the most important links within no more than 3 clicks. Danielle shared her enthusiasm for visiting DVA in Bend later this month. She shared that she and Shelby will be meeting with Visit Bend and Oregon State University (OSU). OSU has a sustainable tourism lab and will share their current studies and how they may be applicable to the Santa Ynez Valley. Shelby shared how blessed he feels to be working with the board and staff. He's pleased with the current discussions and where we are headed in the future. He's looking forward to hosting everyone at the Annual Meeting this evening at Alisal Ranch. Linda thanked the staff and board for their time and energy. The retreat was perfect. King Frederik Inn and Pea Soup Andersen's Inn have both been performing extremely well. Linda thanked Shelby and Danielle on their efforts on Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley. She understands it's a challenge to work on this event in addition to our daily responsibilities. She looks forward to seeing everyone this evening at Alisal. It's a great opportunity to reach out to members. She encouraged the board to introduce themselves to members and welcome their input.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00am to the meeting of October 13, 2022.

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse,
Vice President of Marketing

Approved by Stormie Strickland,
Secretary