

Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley February 9, 2023

Visit the Santa Ynez Valley held a board meeting on February 9, 2023 at Alisal Ranch. Vice Chairman Johansen Rosenson called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Board members present included Vice Chairman Jonathan Rosenson, Treasurer Jim Flagg, Secretary Stormie Strickland, Kathleen Cochran, Will Henry, and Greer Shull. Chairman Linda Johansen 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 included Cheryl Shallenberger, Anna Ferguson Sparks, Phil Carpenter, Teisha Wheaton, Richard Barca, Debbie Holmes, Josh Lujan, Will Adams, Tracy Beard, Debra Eagle, Dave Elcon and Erica Jane Flores.

Jonathan made room introductions.

During public comment, Erica Jane Flores shared an update on behalf of People Helping People, noting two of their major events are coming up (Vino de Suenos and the Santa Ynez Valley Polo Classic). Danielle provided an economic report on behalf of Dr. Ken Harwood.

Jonathan made a motion to ratify Dave Elcon to the Board of Directors as an Unincorporated Hotelier representing The Inn at Mattei's Tavern. Greer seconded. All in favor. Dave Elcon now officially serves on the Board of Directors.

Kathleen motioned to approve the December 8, 2022 and January 12, 2023 minutes as presented; Will seconded, all in favor. The December 8, 2022 and January 12, 2023 minutes were approved.

Jim Flagg presented the current financials.

The following grant was reviewed and processed:

- Santa Ynez Valley Rotary, 4th of July Fireworks Show & Festival, Tuesday, July 4, 2023, requested amount: \$4,000, recommended amount: \$3,250
- Jim made a motion to approve the requested \$4,000 grant amount; Kathleen seconded, all in favor. A \$4,000 grant was approved.

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

- Updated Grant Application & Matrix – staff recommends incorporating a resident sentiment element to the scoring process.
- Restaurant Weeks 2023 Recap
- First and Second Quarter Travel
 - Visit California Outlook Forum, Sacramento, March 6 – 9th
 - USA Travel, Media & Travel Trade Buyer Mission, Copenhagen, March 20 – 24th
 - CA Golf Cup Media & Travel Trade Buyer Mission, Huntington Beach, April 17 – 21st
 - Visit California Media Mission, Toronto, April 24 – 26th
 - IPW, San Antonio, May 20 – 24th
- Wine & Chili Festival Glass sponsorship, \$4,000
- Valley Shuttle update – Solvang City Council Member Clau Orona's family business used to run a shuttle around the entire Santa Ynez Valley. She has expressed interest in bringing this back and Shelby is waiting for additional information from Clau on this.
- Footprint in Santa Barbara Funk Zone update – we have our Destination Guides in 5 tasting rooms in the Funk Zone now.
- STR and Zartico Visitor Data
- Active Shooter update – City of Buellton Mayor, Dave King, is going to work with Shelby on an active shooter training opportunity for the community.

- Activity Report for month of January

Shelby presented the following action item:

Approve Midweek Membership Club Budget

- Approve 100 \$100 gift cards for Q1 Sunday – Thursday midweek promotion, running February 12 – April 6th (or until 100 cards are redeemed). The cost for the promotion would be \$10,595 including processing fees. Marketing costs for the promotion are accounted for in 2023 DVA Marketing budget. Will made a motion to approve, Jonathan seconded, all in favor. The \$10,595 budget for the midweek membership club promotion was approved.

Danielle presented reports on VisitSYV.com website trends and updates, the status of DVA ad campaigns, Verdin Marketing, and a recap of the 2023 Santa Ynez Valley Restaurant Weeks promotion.

In New Business, Shelby shared that the Garagiste Festival will take place this weekend and as a sponsor we have tickets available to the board if any would like to attend. We have an opportunity to sponsor the Spring and Summer Season of the Solvang Festival Theater’s concert series; since we will not have a board meeting in March, Shelby will email the board with an action item regarding this sponsorship, with results announced at the next meeting in April.

Board Comments:

Shelby thanked Kathleen for having us out at Alisal Ranch and for the board attending. SBIFF began last night and will run for the next 10 days with our full screen ad playing before each tribute and screening at the Arlington Theater. Shelby will send the board an email offering tickets to the festival. Shelby thanked Danielle and Brenda for their hard work. Stormie shared January was a good month at Hotel Corque and they still had group business regardless of the weather. April 12th is the new tentative open date for The Hadsten but that could change. Greer shared January was interesting at Fess Parker Wine Country Inn, but she’s optimistic things are going to pick up for the year; they’re in renovations right now. Dave shared The Inn at Mattei’s Tavern is opening with about half their inventory before launching all rooms. They’ve excited to welcome everyone and be fully open. Kathleen thanked those that reached out during the storm, noting the damage was extensive. The rooms along the entrance are being stripped. Their team is working incredibly hard to rebuild. They’re also doing renovations at the same time. USAToday has announced their latest Top 10 competition and Alisal is in the running for best dude ranch. Jim shared January was disappointing due to weather; though Hampton Inn & Suites did do better than last year, it wasn’t a great improvement. He is hopeful we are turning a corner now, and with beautiful days like this it won’t take long. Will shared things are good at PICO and there has been an uptick of business in the last couple weeks. Their “Know thy Farmer” series will be having some announcements soon. Jonathan thanked everyone for coming out and thanked Alisal for their hospitality. With Valentine’s Day and Presidents Weekend coming up, they’re seeing stronger numbers. First & Oak has a special 5 course menu planned for Valentine’s Day. They’re also going to launch some fun wine initiatives coming up. Brenda shared a web tip for the day, noting historically most people looked at websites via desktop, but numbers have switched, and more people are looking at websites via mobile. She encouraged businesses to make sure their websites are mobile friendly. Danielle shared that we’re working with Verdin Marketing on producing “Localhood” stories, a collaboration between Visit California and Crowdriff which will allow us to see some of our content populate on Visit California’s website as well as in Google’s travel related search results, with visual storytelling elements.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55am to the meeting of April 13, 2023.

Prepared by Danielle Laudon Ruse,
Vice President of Marketing

Approved by Stormie Strickland,
Secretary