

## **Minutes of the Board of Directors of Visit the Santa Ynez Valley Board Meeting,**

April 11, 2024 Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:06 a.m.

Location: Alisal Ranch

Linda Johansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

### **Introductions**

Board members present: Chairman Linda Johansen, Vice Chairman Jonathan Rosenson, Secretary Stormie Strickland, Treasurer Jim Flagg, Michael Brughelli, Kristopher McLaughlin, and Greer Shull. Kathleen Cochran and Will Henry were absent.

Staff present: President & CEO Shelby Sim, Vice President Danielle Laudon Ruse, and Director of Sales Cynthia Conzalez. Website & Membership Administrator Brenda Ball was absent.

Members of the public present: Philip Grant, Erica Flores, Brian Applegarth, Julie Hayek, Candice Libra, Phil Carpenter, Anna Ferguson, Peter Wright, Pam Roberts, Julie Holland, and Randy Murphy.

Linda introduced Cynthia Gonzalez, our new Director of Sales. Cynthia provided a quick self introduction with her background and described her new role at VisitSYV.

### **Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

Members of the public were given the opportunity to provide comments, limited to three minutes. The following public comments were made:

- Randy Murphy, Solvang's City Manager, shared a survey regarding the city's budget priorities.
- Brian Applegarth introduced himself as a new team member at Sunstone and expressed intentions to expand Sunstone's relationships within the tourism sector in the SYV.
- Erica Flores spoke on behalf of People Helping People, expressing gratitude for VisitSYV's coordination of active shooter training and providing updates on the Polo Classic event.

### **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes (February 8, 2024)**

Approval motioned by Michael Brughelli, seconded by Jonathan Rosenson. Approved unanimously.

### **Financial Report**

Jim Flagg presented a review of the current financials.

### **Staff Report**

Shelby Sim provided updates on various topics, including:

- Midweek Promotion complete
- 2024 Q1 Travel recaps
  - Copenhagen/Berlin, February 27 – March 9
  - Outlook Forum, March 10 – 13
- Safety Seminars recap: approximately 70 people attended the 5 training seminars and now additional schools and organizations are holding their own trainings as a result.
- IPW 24 Activation
- CA Cup 2025, Visit California & International Tour Operators
- Viking 3-day Classic Car Show, October 18-20, \$1,000
- Old Santa Ynez Day, June 22, \$3,500

- Santa Barbara Vintners Foundation Golf Classic, June 10, \$2,000
- OutWest Digital VisitSYV production, new video and photo assets, April 29 – May 1<sup>st</sup>
- Proposed Networking Reception, Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Activity Report for February & March

### **Marketing Update**

Danielle provided a review of VisitSYV's current media approach, social channels, website updates, ad campaigns, SEO, data tracking, and 2024 Midweek Promotion.

### **Old Business**

Shelby shared we are planning to have tickets for Taste of the Santa Ynez Valley (TasteSYV) up in May. TasteSYV will include Sideways-themed events this year for the film's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **New Business**

Solvang is having an economic forum at Craft House at Corque next Friday, from 8am -12:30pm; we have a table of 8, Shelby asked the board to let staff know if they'd like to join us at the table. Kristopher, Stormie, Shelby, Danielle, Cynthia, and Jonathan plan to attend.

Shelby announced Danielle's new title is Vice President.

### **Board Comments**

Board Members and Staff provided the following updates and insights on various topics. Cynthia shared her first couple of days have been great and she's excited for what's to come. Jim shared Hampton Inn & Suites had a disappointing first quarter, noting one of the lacrosse tournaments was cancelled; April looks better than last year. Stormie noted March was much better for Chumash owned properties and April was very strong; they budgeted for a slow period and did better than anticipated. Kristopher shared coming off Q1 last year was a historic quarter for them; this year we had one of the wettest winters in history. In Q2 they're pacing ahead. Mountain destinations were prioritized over our location in Q1. The Victor has a few promotions going on. Group attribution will move the needle in Q1. Greer shared Fess Parker Winery has exciting programming coming up and they have a dinner scheduled with Na Na Thai and an anniversary tasting in June. Michael shared all is well at Folded Hills with visitation down slightly. They were impacted by the weather as well; their rose launch is being pushed to next weekend. They'll have an exhibition polo event on June 23rd at the property. Jonathan shared it's nice to be back here in person. He has a new restaurant and new baby all at once! Jonathan thanked staff for traveling and sharing the destination with the world. Weekends have been down at Mirabelle Inn, not selling out months or weeks in advance. The booking window is much shorter. First & Oak has 3 and 5 course tasting menus and is booking offsite catering. Jim requested the STR report go out in the board packet going forward. Danielle thanked the board for all their direction and vision. She's elated to work with Shelby and Cynthia this year and sees big things for the organization. Shelby gave props to Danielle for the 15-day travel blitz they did in Q1, noting they attended 3 back-to-back tradeshows in Copenhagen and Berlin before going straight to Visit California's Outlook Forum in Palm Springs. Linda welcomed Cynthia and thanked Shelby and Danielle for their consistency and professionalism. In Linda's wildest imagination she'd never imagined the organization would be where it is today. Linda expressed that the board and staff are all approachable and share the community's concerns.

**Public Comment**

Vashti Wilson arrived towards the end of the meeting and Shelby gave her the opportunity to speak regarding the upcoming Juneteenth event. There will be an adults-only Juneteenth celebration on June 7<sup>th</sup> at the SYV Historical Museum and Carriage House and a children's event in Buellton on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting closed at 10:06 a.m. The next board meeting will be held July 11, 2024, 9:00 a.m., Zoom

Prepared by Danielle Ruse  
Vice President