



CARMEL HOSPITALITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (CHID)

VISIT CARMEL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING

Sunset Center and on Zoom

Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921

Thursday, October 16, 2025

2:30 PM

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Amy Herzog, Executive Director; Candace Fecteau, Stilwell Hotels; Mark Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; Mark Watson, Inns-by-the-Sea (virtual); Chris Morello, MRY; Tim Twomey, CRA; Rich Pepe, Pepe International (virtual); Pam Sheppard, Horizon Inn.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Suzanne Gravelle, (virtual); Annika Berg Plant, Marissa Mallory and Taryn Rosenbaum, J/PR (all virtual); Richard Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; Nicole Cromwell, Nicole Cromwell Gallery.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Ahn, Folktale; Chip Rerig, City of Carmel, Carrie Theis, Hofsas House; Susan Dampier, Marc + Rose; Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber.

Candace Fecteau, acting Chairperson, called the Meeting to order at 2:30 PM

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comment.

MINUTES

Motion to accept the minutes from September 18, 2025.

Motion to approve Mark Stilwell, Second by Pam Sheppard.

No objections, No Abstentions, Passed unanimously.

BOARD MEMBER VOTE

Amy Herzog presented:

Nominations from previous sessions with no additions:

Regular Board Members

- Carrie Theis
- Mark Watson
- Candace Fecteau

Advisory Board Members

- Chris Morello, MRY
- Tim Twomey, CRA
- Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber

Nominations were closed and a motion to approve the slate was made by Mark Stilwell, seconded by Pam Sheppard. Passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Amy Herzog presented:

- Annual tax return completed.
- Annual report in progress to be completed by month end.
- City Council adopted street number assignment process to begin
 - Plan to eliminate old “no street addresses” from our media
 - J/PR to develop PR messaging about numbers, but still no mail delivery
- Pushing Car week debrief to following meeting as City Council meeting won’t address until Nov 3rd.
- Community Relations Update
 - CRA – 20% local discount code provided
 - Carmel Cares – Meeting with Kelly Burke and asked her to join Destination Stewardship Task Force
 - Donated to Feed the Soul event which benefits Monterey County Food Bank
- Visitor Center: review of visitor numbers showing down. Looking into thoughts on why this is occurring.

Destination Stewardship Update

Committee Members Kati and Rose from the Carmel Chamber, Tim Twomey from CRA, Pam Sheppard from Visit Carmel, and Kelly Burke from Carmel Cares.

Look to Revisiting scope and intentions. Where can Destination Stewardship aid in promoting messaging.

Meet the Makers Recap

- Partnership – Visit Carmel and Local Artist owned galleries (14) wineries (12) crafters (4)– no MCVGA this year was the big difference
- Additional Cost – Contracted with Buzz PR for event logistics, rentals and permits. Liability coverage for \$190. Stipends for wineries \$200/each and restaurants \$400 each
- Participation
 - 14 locally owned artist galleries
 - 13 wineries (12 local tasting rooms)
 - 6 restaurants
 - 2 live artists / 2 live music groups
 - 373 tickets sold (approx. 400 LY) \$50 each
- Very positive feedback from local galleries “Best ever”, “An A+”
- Nicole Cromwell from Nicole Cromwell Gallery provided in person feedback. Indicating significant improvement over last year primarily due to management of event. Including focus on the art.

Survey highlights from 30 respondents:

- 66% first time attendees
- 63% local residents
- 60% dined out at a Carmel Restaurant after event
- 80% would attend again

Stakeholder Communication

- EBlasts

MRY update

- We believe there will be a significant update to be announced soon
- Discussion about marketing efforts when and if we see additional routes

Upcoming Events

November 12 – Innkeeper’s Dinner at Hogs Breath Inn

November 20 – Visit Carmel Regular Board meeting

December 4 – Visit Carmel Board Holiday party

December 3 – Chamber Awards of Excellence

December 18 – Visit Carmel Board Meeting

January 15 – Visit Carmel Annual Meeting

MARKETING UPDATE:

Integrated Marketing Calendar shown:

- Storybook Campaign ongoing
- Always on – Digital (more during off season)
 - October
 - Taste of Carmel
 - Poodle Party
 - Meet the Makers
 - Fall Campaign Harvest Season
 - Pulling from other wine areas to promote region
 - EBlasts – new photography and focus on food and wine
 - Digital
 - Locale Mag – Paid for Southern California
 - NBC CA Live – re-use

New Users to website 203K – +19.1%

- Paid Social up 15.9%
- Organic down 28% - most likely because of AI driven searches
- Paid Search down 19% (Google)
- Display Ads up 185% (Google)
- Cross Network up 579% (MNTN)

Increased Occupancy Strategy

- Driving to landing page to highlight longer stays
- Landing page growth 344%

Expedia Performance

- 9.4 x ROAS

- Generated \$236K
- Majority last minute 0 – 6 days
- 539 room nights
- Only conquering ads
- Average 1.8 nights

Meet the Makers

- Landing page up 152% YOY
- Teaser reel shown

New projects

- New Video and Photo Assets – showed many examples
- Fairytale Cottages Brochure and App
- History of Carmel's Artist Colony - video

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT:

Presented by Marrison Mallory J/PR

Introduction to new team member Taryn Rosenbaum

Highlights efforts for September

- Three Strong media placements
 - 236 K impressions
 - 31% of ownership of shared voice
 - Average Barcelona principals score of 93
 - 1 hosting took place with 3 additional planned (incl one that we had to push off due to Carmel occupancy)

Upcoming:

- San Diego Magazine – wine destinations
- Hillary Eaton Visit – Fine Dining Lovers
 - Possible Food & Wine and LA Times
- Pending -Travel + Leisure
- San Antonio Magazine
- Hollywood Reporter
- GQ

Net Social media growth:

- nearly 2,885 new followers
- 7M impressions
- 17K engagements
- 47 partners featured
 - Instagram 5.6% engagement
 - Facebook 5% engagement

Top performing posts highlighted

- Engagements down but most likely due to viral posts from last summer additionally engagements are on decline overall due to changes in platforms

Driving overnight visitation

- Specific post to hit this objective
- Secret season posts

Best Seat in the House campaign

- Van Gogh table at Casanova first content

PR and Social Media based on AI

- Traditional Search is changing – going toward Large Language model (LLM)
- 70% of Americans using AI for travel planning
 - models are favoring credibility
 - reputable media outlets- earned media
 - owned websites - well-structured showing credibility
- Social Content and reviews
 - Reviews
 - Reddit threads
 - X / Threads
- Rankings and Awards
 - Round ups and lists
- Owned media – FAQs and Blog Posts highly crawlable by LLM

SEPTEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT

Amy Herzog presented the financial report, (in lieu of Mark Watson) noting they are over budget in PR by \$23,000 and media costs by 183% due to higher than anticipated J/PR team immersion costs.

Financials

\$822,212.36 in Total Assets

- YTD revenue up about \$14K over Budget

Current YTD Expenses

- PR - \$23K over budget
- Marketing – \$72K over budget, mostly due to earlier TV schedule
- Sales – \$3K under budget
- ADMIN – \$2400 under budget
- Total spend approx. 90K over budget at the moment

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Candace Fecteau adjourned the meeting at 3:53 PM