



CARMEL HOSPITALITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (CHID)
VISIT CARMEL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
Sunset Center and on Zoom
Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921
Thursday, November 18, 2025
2:30 PM

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Carrie Theis, Hofsas House; Amy Herzog, Executive Director; Candace Fecteau, Stilwell Hotels; Mark Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; Pam Sheppard, Horizon Inn; Mark Watson, Inns-by-the-Sea; Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber; Rich Pepe, Pepe International (virtual); Chris Morello, MRY; Susan Dampier, Marc + Rose; Tim Twomey, CRA;

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Nicole Dore, Visit Carmel; Suzanne Gravelle, (virtual); Ken Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Annika Berg Plant, Sophia Stewart, J/PR (virtual); Lindsay Stevens, See Monterey; Marissa Mallory, J/PR, Kevin Heffernan, Vanessa Heffernan, Jim Heffernan, Codex Growth; Ashlee Wright, Good Roots, Bob Delves, Carmel City Council; Brandon Swanson, City of Carmel.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Ahn, Folktale; Chip Rerig, City of Carmel

Carrie Theis, Chairperson, called the Meeting to order at 2:30 Pm

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Kevin Heffernan introduced himself and company Codex Growth. They do restaurant digital marketing. Have seen great success in other areas and want to bring that to Carmel. Suggestion of attending the Restaurant Improvement District meeting.

Rich Pepe shared appreciation from a couple who had won a Visit Carmel Sweepstakes.

Introductions around the room.

Announcements from Kati Enea including Awards Dinner coming up and urgency to get tickets if desired.

MINUTES:

Motion to approve November minutes by Pam Sheppard, Second by Candace Fecteau. No objections, Carrie Theis abstained, Passed.

SEE MONTEREY:

Quarterly update.

New staff members Jennifer Chiesa, Director of PR; Erin Burd, Content Manager; Mackenzie Fisher, Marketing Coordinator; Zeke Ramsell, Sr. Business Development Executive.

YTD STR Data through September

- Monterey YTD 70% occupancy – First time since pre-Covid 2020.
- ADR \$270.38
- RevPAR \$190.27

Owned and Social Media

- 5 new Blog Posts
- 55 Total SM posts
- 46.6K Total Engagements

Public Relations

- 43 Articles
- 4 Media Hosted
- LA Times / Paper City / The Quality Edit

Paid Campaigns

Car Week

- 70% of all Q1 Web traffic
- 175K Engagements
- 20% increase YOY

Brand Campaign

- Sept – Nov
- 385% YOY Chicago – with assumed potential of ORD route
- Austin 55.8% YOY with paid campaign – effort to continue into new markets

Looking Ahead – Marketing Communications

Re opening of Highway 1 and Chicago Flight – new on the horizon

Arts and Heritage Tourism

Superbowl 60 and FIFA

Regional Identities

- Vibes for each region – Carmel close to complete
 - Artistic, Whimsical, and Epicurean

Mark Watson asked question asked regarding marketing changes surrounding Car Week. Is there potential for new marketing focus based on potential changes to Car Week. Response was nothing is being planned but this is a good area to open for discussion.

CHICAGO FLIGHT MARKETING

Amy Herzog presented:

- May 23, 2026 through August 15, 2026
- Once per week
- United plans to use \$250K of \$750K of SCASDP grant in year one. Have till 2029 to exhaust
- UA Denver moving to mainline – 76 to 166 seats for at least on plane

Chicago Flight Marketing

Chris Morello discussed proposing to create a coalition to support Chicago flight marketing (pledge 3 years)

Potential partners list

- See Monterey – \$200K
- Visit Carmel – \$50K
- MB Aquarium - \$150K
- Taylor Farms - \$150
- Pebble Beach - \$100K
- Cannery Row - \$50K
- Laguna Seca - \$50K
- MRY - \$50 K

Digital and connected TV campaign

Pre- launch and sustained campaign

Possible Culinary Activation in Chicago

Seeing increased social media and website activity from Chicago Area 750% increase in SEE Monterey YOY. Becoming top out of state market. Visit Carmel showing slight decrease, with Chicago being 9th out of state. Discussion of how paid support behind the effort greatly affects reach and awareness.

Question posed to the Board of Directors to determine general support of pledging to the marketing effort. Mark Watson expressed agreement with careful future consideration, Carrie Theis indicated agreement with Mark. Remainder of Board expressed agreement.

CARMEL CULINARY WEEK PROPOSAL

Jeff Burghardt and Amy Herzog presented:

2026 Event Production Discussion

Signature Events included LY, expanding some of the events further. Worked with Good Roots to navigate the first year. Good Roots took a risk and underbid the event to test the waters for moving forward.

Visit Carmel 2025 Investment total - \$60K

Moving forward for 2026 - Proposed investment \$125K – \$154K

- \$75K to \$90K Event Management to Good Roots
- \$41K – \$44.6K Restaurant and winery stipends via Good Roots
- \$8 – \$10K in event materials (lanyards, wristbands, printed signage)

2026 Projected sales \$105K – \$110K

- Visit Camel to guarantee 80% of goal ticket sales
- Plus help seek potential sponsorship of \$13.4K

Total 2026 Good Roots projected revenue = \$222K – \$244K

2026 Reimagined –

Change Dates to June 5 – 13, 2026

Events Schedule:

Party at the Plaza – Friday, June 5

La Dolce Vita – Tuesday, June 9

Soiree by the Sea – Wednesday, June 10

(Culinary Showcase – Previously Showdown – Thursday June 11 – Remove)

Boho Bites and Beats- Move to Thursday, June 11

Pulling the Culinary Showcase still allows for good cadence but brings cost down.

Discussion of CRID investment into Culinary Marketing and the deficit in budgeted funds. Ken Spilfolgel, Chair of RID spoke to value of investing in Culinary Week, offering desire to add to the whole as opposed to marketing funds commitment being a burden on Visit Camel.

Overall sentiment indicates the understanding of importance of this effort to increase identity of Carmel being a culinary destination. Discussion of Halo effect longer marketing runway and investment made to date.

Executive Director asked for general agreement with potential additional investment of approx. \$36K to be put into Carmel Culinary Week Marketing.

Mark Stilwell made a motion to put funds towards Culinary Week, and landing on new proposed reduced event schedule, seconded by Mark Watson

Passed Unanimously, none opposed, no one abstained.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Amy Herzog presented:

Announcements:

- Chip Rerig City Admin and Visit Carmel Board resignation - December 18 last VC Board Meeting
- Lindsey Stevens, VP marketing for SEE Monterey Last day December 5th
- Denny Levett Day Planned for January 15
- Chris Morello is appointed Executive Director of MRY.

Car Week Debrief and Planning Update

- Lots of discussion at the City Level recently
- Brandon provided a re-cap of future of Car Week based on evolving identity of the event
Overall sentiment is that Monterey needs to do a better job of collectively having a single, wide area, organizing, communication set up to work with our resources. Better communication to promote better conduct from attendees.
- Chief Trayer Holding a listening session on Dec 6th at Youth Center at 10AM

Annual Report Published

Distributed to Board Members
Will be distributed in next Visit Carmel eblast

Carmel Innkeepers Dinner / Recap

Well received event at Hogs Breath Inn

Stakeholder Communications / Updates on Website

Holiday hours of operation for restaurants

Two new events on calendar

- Girls on the run 5K January 10
- Putts for Paws invitational – February 10 2026

New Retail Businesses

- Gelato by the Sea
- Bonded Jewelry and Hamilton Hat Lounge
- Sea Shack Candy Company
- Own & the Kittycat
- Earth Cura Apothecary

Stakeholder Communications

Monthly Eblast

Board Member election packet needs to be completed by Board Members

Destination Stewardship

Committee Meeting: Kati Enea and Rose from Chamber, Tim Twomey from CRA and Kelly Burke of Carmel Cares.

Goals for meeting

- Assess / re-evaluate the Destination Stewardship Vision
- Reaffirm both the goals and limitations for the program
- Update strategy and create a 2026 plan

Next Steps

- Additional signage in market about how to love Carmel like a local
- Fresh Swag available at Visitor Center and online – beanie/caps/flashlights
- Flesh out Voluntourism program
- More community relations/engagement opportunities

Upcoming Meetings

Early December - Visit Carmel Holiday Party

December 3 – Chamber Awards of Excellence

December 18 – Visit Carmel Regular Board Meeting

January 15 – Visit Carmel Annual Meeting at La Playa Hotel

MARKETING UPDATE: Jeff Burghardt presented

Integrated Marketing Calendar

Winter/Spring Brand Campaign - beginning

- Fall Performance up 11.7% with 196K new users
- YTD - up 35.7% with 1.6M new Users

Most traffic coming in through hotel offer page

Targeting high intent more qualified visitors using key events to increase booking.
Using this data to drive paid media spend.

Conquesting – through Expedia

- \$334 K in revenue – showing a 9.6 on ROAS
- Can get exact property date from the effort

Food Wine Romance Q1

Showing new content – leaning heavier on romance

Storybook Campaign

- TV and CTV - new assets
- Drive and Fly market

Print Ad

- Conde Nast
- San Francisco Chronicle

YTD Fly Market

Increases to landing pages:

- Phoenix - 280%
- Denver - 556%
- Dallas - 624K %
- Seattle 483%
- San Diego 356%

Annual report showing record breaking performance reports

Refocus of Structured data

SEO optimization

Moving to easier accessibility of data from Bots – more user friendly to AI

New Projects

- Fairytale cottages brochure - updating
- New Sizzle Reels for hotels
- Visitor Guide Update – Winter adding back in courtyards
- Dining Guide update
- History of Carmel Artist Colony - Video

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT:

Presented by Sophia Stewart and Marrissa Mallory J/PR

October performance

- 33.7M impressions
- 3 placements
- 20% share of voice over competitive set (third highest in October)
- 1 Key Hosting
- 87 Barcelona Principles Score

Press Highlights:

- The Independent – Euro trip
- Secret San Francisco – Most Beautiful small town
- Parade – fall getaway perfect for your personality type
- Secret Los Angeles – Christmas
- Hello Magazine - Christmas
- @wellnesstravelled

- Arizona Foothills Magazine
- San Francisco Chronicle

Chicago to Monterey United Route Announcement

Working with See Monterey

Used as a hook for a variety of trend pitches focused on what's new in 2026

October Social

- 2.2 K new followers
- 5.8 M Impressions
- 28.6K engagements
- 77 Partners Featured
- 4.4 % increase in engagement rate
- 4.1% increase in engagement rate

Instagram, Facebook and TikTok performance

Posts highlighted

- Storybook Village
- Best Seat in the House
- Morning in Carmel
- Love Carmel like a Local
- Halloween Activities

Monitoring Pickleball Ban - Look at strategy if needed

NOVEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT - Presented by Mark Watson

Comp Set

We do not have current numbers due to delay in processing TOT from City

Financials

\$581K on Balance Sheet

Operating Statement

Revenue – behind \$41K – city check has not come in yet. Potential loss of \$1.5K in interest due to delay.

Marketing – \$209K versus \$211K budgeted

PR – \$23K versus \$27K budgeted

Sales – \$10K vs \$9K budgeted

Admin – \$21.4K vs \$28K Budgeted

Month - \$4.5K under in expenses

YTD over about 10% due to fluctuations

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - Carrie Theis adjourned the meeting at 4:58 PM