



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

MINUTES

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Nicole Dore, Visit Carmel; Ken Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Sophia Stewart, J/PR (virtual); Marissa Mallory, J/PR (virtual), Brandon Swanson, City of Carmel.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Ahn, Folktale.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

MINUTES:

Motion to approve November 20, 2025 minutes by Chip Rerig. Pam Sheppard, Seconded.
No objections. Passed.

APPOINT BOARD MEMBER:

With Chip's retirement there was a motion to appoint Interim City Administrator Brandon Swanson to assume Chip's term on the board, expiring November 2027. Motion made by Chip Rerig. Mark Watson seconded. Chip spoke in glowing terms about Brandon as well as his time served on the board. Approved unanimously.

DECEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT - Presented by Mark Watson

Balance sheet currently at \$922K

Operating report:

Revenues

- TOT Nov \$478K– YTD \$827K vs \$811K budgeted
- Carmel Funding YTD 3\$0K against \$60 K budgeted b/c payment is later than budgeted
- RID revenues at \$105K
- Showing \$72K down but this is due to timing. With recent deposits we are up to date brings us to \$60K up from budget

Expenses are approx. \$35K ahead of where we were budgeted but also due to timing.

Net Cash Flow \$60K up with recent deposits

Comp Set

July/August

- Up 8% in RevPAR highest of all comps – Monterey closest at 4%
- ADR at \$477 up from \$450 – 6% up highest in Comp Set closest Monterey at 4%
- Occupancy up 1% at 83% - same as Monterey- (with Calistoga leading comp set at 3% increase at 61%)

MIDYEAR BUDGET REVIEW

Amy Herzog presented:

International Travel continues to lag

Domestic Travel still holding strong

Luxury bubble may swell – this can benefit Carmel Leisure Travel

Visit California revised predictions – Currently predicting modest growth in domestic travel spend. Small increase for 2026 over previous predictions.

Visit Carmel Spend

- Upcoming Carmel Culinary Week - request to increase spending to approximately \$130K, up from \$80K – new opportunity for marketing discussed in previous meetings
- Chicago Flight Marketing – request to put \$50K towards this effort in co-op with Monterey

With both changes only looking at approx. \$65K increase to 25/26 Budget with marketing efforts being adjusted. This covers the \$50K delta for Culinary Week and \$50K for Chicago Flight marketing.

Richard Pepe motion to accept budget adjustment – Mark Stilwell Second.

Motion passed unanimously

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Amy Herzog presented:

Chicago Flight Marketing

- Committed partners – See Monterey, Monterey Aquarium, Monterey Regional Airport
- And Visit Carmel
- Push for in kind marketing from stakeholders – tool kit will be created
- Possible culinary activation in Chicago

Data analysis provided by Mark Watson –

Showing potential increase in room night sales of a couple of \$100K – justifies \$50K investment by VC. Approximate 1% of revenue comes from Chicago and surrounding area

Community Relations

- Chip Rerig honored at December 2 City Council meeting
- Met with Council member Delves to discuss City of Carmel involvement in destination marketing
- Will attend City Council Priorities meeting Jan 22
- Holidays in the park tree lighting
- Sponsored “Feed the Soul” at the pocket with 4 tickets to Culinary Week
- Carmel Chamber Holiday Mixer at La Playa

- Annual Meeting – in lieu of January meeting on January 15 at La Playa. Discussed prep by the team and Asked Mayor Byrne to issue welcome statement at annual meeting

Social Media Workshop Friday January 16 at Stilwell Hotel – led by J/PR group - Free

Stakeholder updates

- Domaine Messier – new tasting room – joining wine walk
- Austern Cohen Gallery – new local artist owned – joined Art Walk
- New Retailers – Lucy Michel Potter, Halore, Cozy Den, looking for better way to track and communicate with new openings
- Holiday operating hours for restaurants (Christmas openings) – updates to be provided
- November E-Blasts

Visitor Center updates provided

Upcoming meetings and information through March listed

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT:

Presented by Sophia Stewart and Marrisona Mallory J/PR

Marrisona provided PR and Social update

- 46.M national and regional exposure in key markets
- 13 Earned print, digital, and social hits
- 53% share of voice over comp set (pickle ball coverage assist)

- 86 average Barcelona Principles Score
- 2 Key hostings

Press placements

- SF Gate
- Sunset
- Sunset (Facebook post)
- Yahoo! Life
- Observer
- So Scottsdale!

Social

- 1,497 audience growth
- 4.3 impressions decreased 47% (primarily Facebook /increased 21% on IG YOY)
- 21.9 engagements
- 40 partners featured – All partners feel free to reach out for any coverage of special initiatives
- 5.4% increase in Instagram engagement rate
- 5% increase in Facebook engagement rate

Highlights of Instagram Facebook and TikTok shared – showing wide variety in order to highlight Carmel through different lenses for visitors

Video – Authentic Visitor Storytelling shared

MARKETING UPDATE: Jeff Burghardt presented

Jeff shared marketing calendar overview

Fall campaign – 302K new users up 17.7 % YOY

- Organic is decreasing
- Paid digital driving increases
- Hotel offers page up 58% YOY
- Expedia conquering adds showing 440 K in revenue ROAS 10.2 – generally 0 – 6 day booking window

Winter Storybook Campaign

Commercial shared for winter campaign

- Airing on Today NBC/ABC Good Morning America/Golf/CNN/HGTV/Food/Hallmark

Older ads refreshed and airing

Carousel ads refreshed

Eblasts open rate of 34.8%

NBC segment – *One of the Most Awarded Small Towns of the World* running around Olympics
NBC live in town for this shoot

Culinary Week

- Settled on events down to 4
- Week Following last year's dates
- Updated on VC website
- Sunset Advertising

Other marketing efforts

- Visitor Guide Update – map and annual events extended
- Fairytale Cottages Brochure and App updated - shared actual
- Shop Carmel – Merchandise on site (store for purchase will be added)
 - Visitor Center partner in sales and fulfillment
- Hotel Sizzle Reels still under construction
- Artist Colony under construction

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA –

Carrie issued welcome to Brandon, also highlighting his previous Hospitality experience.

Carrie Theis adjourned the meeting at 4:58 PM

CLOSED SESSION

Closed session held to negotiate renewal of Burghardt + Dore contract. In past years, Jeff was contracted on a monthly retainer and Nicole was paid on a per project basis. Jeff reviewed his accomplishments and uniquely diverse skill set. He is asking for a Cost of Living Adjustment of 2.5% based on CPI Index.

There was lots of feedback from the board and questions.

When Jeff was excused from room, it was brought up that perhaps both Jeff and Nicole should be on retainer for budget planning purposes. There could be an inherent conflict with Jeff assigning work to Nicole on the project basis. And Nicole brings valuable expertise to meetings. We'd rather not be paying hourly for her involvement.

Chip made a motion was made to offer a 3-year contract on a straight retainer basis of \$250,000 annually, which will cover all work by both parties, subject to annual COLA adjustment based on CPI in Bay Area and Annual Performance Reviews. Pepe seconded it.

This is all subject to retroactive approval of the contract in Open Session at our February Board Meeting.