



CARMEL HOSPITALITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (CHID)
VISIT CARMEL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
Sunset Center and on Zoom
Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921
Thursday, April 10, 2025
2:30 PM

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pam Sheppard, Horizon Inn and OVL; Carrie Theis, Hofsas House; Rich Pepe, Pepe International; Amy Herzog, Executive Director; Candace Fecteau, Stilwell Hotels (virtual); Greg Ahn, Folktale (virtual).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel, Nicole Dore (virtual), Brittany Bober, Dani Hannah, Ty Whitaker, The Abbi Agency (virtual); Annelise Nussbacher, Sunset Center; Ken Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Hella Rothwell and Debbie Buswell, Carmel Art Fest; Ashlee Wright, City of Carmel; Chris Morello (virtual).

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Chip Rerig, City of Carmel; Mary Crowe, La Playa; Mark Watson, Inns-by-the-Sea; Mark Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; Tim Twomey, CRA; Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber.

Pam Sheppard, Chairperson, called the Meeting to order at 2:31 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Hella Rothwell discussed the Carmel Art Festival and its current status. Currently there are 54 artists planning involvement. Asking for possibilities of support from Visit Carmel. Follow-up will be coming shortly from the board.

Annalise from Sunset Center highlighted current and upcoming events at the Center. Request to push Dis-Enchanted where possible.

Chris Morello introduced herself as representative of MRY.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE:

Dani Hannah presented Public Relations Recap

Overview – March messaging included focus on Big Little Lies and Carmel Culinary Week.

5 media placements in March (3 national – 2 international)
Average domain authority 53 with a 15.2 M reach

New York Times – 36 hours in Carmel
En, Vivia revista
Hotels Above Par
Finance Buzz
US News and World report

FAM recap and upcoming

Social Media Recap

Brittany Bober presented **Social Media Recap**

8 M impressions (38.9% increase).
7.6 % engagement Rate (59.3% Increase)
2360 audience Growth (88.1% Increase)

Audience Growth – trending with net increase throughout the month over all platforms
Impressions 8 M
Engagement rate 7.6 - double average rates

Stakeholders' exposure highlighted

Best Social Content shown with best performing posts

TikTok – 166 follower growth

MINUTES:

Motion to accept the minutes from March 10 made by Carrie Theis, seconded by Pam Sheppard. Passed unanimously.

NOMINATE OFFICERS

Carrie Theis nominated for Chairman,
Mark Watson for Treasurer and
Candace Fecteau for Secretary.

Rich Pepe made a motion to accept the officers as nominated. Seconded by Carrie Thies.
Passed unanimously.

Rich Pepe indicated possible need for additional Board Members based on some changes upcoming.

Carrie Theis took over Chairmanship.

PR and Social Media RFP / Process

Amy Herzog presented update on PR /Social Media agency RFP process
100 proposals responded – narrowed to 5 agencies
Based on all interviews and discussions the following determination was proposed:

Rich Pepe proposed motion to switch to JP/R agency beginning July 1, 2025 upon completion of our agreement with The Abbi Agency.

Pam made the motion to accept
Carrie seconded the motion
Passed unanimously

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Travel Projections

Updated and Revised projections
YOY change:
First time YOY February was down
Visit California downgrading their spend assumptions for travel 2025

Amy presented Visit Carmel's "Agility Strategy"

- Lean into drive markets
- Continue to promote new experiences
- Increase focus on the demographics of travelers
- Continue to highlight what makes Carmel special – Carmel by-the-Sea as a Respite
- Remain educated on and leverage Visit California's and See Monterey's international marketing efforts

Draft FY 25 – 26 Budget – staying the course for the moment.

Administrative update

Insurance Policy renewed
Business package – property and liability
D&O policy
Increase from \$4,291 to \$4,441 annual premium

Community Relations

Amy spoke to Carmel Leadership Class on April 4
Carrie and Amy met with Councilman Buder
Carrie met with Councilman Delves
Carmel Art Festival support – Ad in program, Some digital paid ads, Social media support
AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-AM - Scheduled for Feb 9 – 15 2026

Stakeholder Communications

Eblast
Monthly CRID Meetings in preparation for Culinary Week
Provided digital and printed materials to hotels and restaurants
Connection made with new owners of Carmel Belle

Carmel Chamber Partnership Update

Visitor Center – visits down 10%, calls down 26%, hotels booked down 15%

Monterey Regional Airport Update

JSX relaunching nonstop to Monterey starting June 19

Burbank - BUR

Orange County - SNA

Carlsbad, CA – New – CLD

Meeting with Sam Levy from United will be in market for the Marathon – Scheduled meeting with him on April 25th.

Discussion of whether Visit Carmel ready and willing to support on-going discussions regarding non-stop from Chicago.

Visit California Regional Sustainability Plan - Recap

- Invest in tourism product development
- Improve tourism-related transportation infrastructure
- Support workforce development
- Promote Sustainability and resiliency efforts
- Raise awareness in the inland areas of the Central Coast and develop visitor opportunities

Upcoming Meetings

May 15 – Regular Board Meeting

FY 25-26 Draft to be presented for potential approval

May 30 – Culinary Week Kicks off

June 19 – will be at Stilwell Hotel

July 17 – will be at Stilwell Hotel

MARKETING UPDATE:

Jeff Burghardt Presented marketing update

Transitioning into Summer Creative

2025 Key Performance Indicators

New Users

January 149K - 61% increase

February 162K - 84% increase

March 151K – 42.1% increase

Top Countries

United States 53% increase

UK 1.4K % increase

Canada 101% increase

Mexico 28.7 increase

Regionally – size of traffic

San Fran - 10%

LA - 77.4%

SEA - 153%

PHX 103%

Seeing LA as biggest growth market both phone and IP data
LA seeing much longer LOS 2.2 nights up 22.3% YOY
Seeing indications to move some marketing efforts to LA area as best return opportunities

Audience age

#1 - 55 – 64

#2 - 44 – 54

#3 - 35 – 44

#4 - 25 – 34

2025 Strategy for increased hotel leads
Showing 308% YOY growth

Restaurant Campaign

RID marketing

“Best of” reels being shown in addition to individual reels

New content acquisition continuing

Pushing multi-media outlets for Culinary Week

Culinary Week commercial viewed

Print Advertising shown

Posters, flyers etc.

Credentials design for all Culinary Week event. Pushing “event” vibe for the week

Pub Crawl is separate from full admission.

Discussion of preparedness for event this year over last
Expectations of great attendance

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

No additions

Carrie Theis adjourned the meeting at 3:47 PM.