



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

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Carrie Theis, Hofsas House; Amy Herzog, Executive Director; Candace Fecteau, Stilwell Hotels (virtual); Mark Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; 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; Suzanne Gravelle, (virtual); Ken Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Annika Berg Plant, J/PR, Marissa Mallory, J/PR

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:

Lee Marcus wanted to introduce himself and announce re-opening of Hog's Breath Inn and offer thanks to Visit Carmel for the community effort.

Announcing Taste of Carmel October 2nd

MINUTES:

Motion to accept the minutes from August
Motion to approve Mark Stilwell, Second by Mark Watson
No objections, No Abstentions, Passed unanimously

OPEN BOARD MEMBER NOMINATIONS

Carrie Theis presented:

Susan Dampier and Carrie Theis on nominating committee.

Results:

- All returning Board Members agreed to accept nomination for new term
 - Carrie Theis
 - Candace Fecteau
 - Mark Watson
- Other Advisory member nominees agreed to accept nominations:
 - Chris Morello, MRY
 - Tim Twomey, CRA
 - Katie Enea, Carmel Chamber
- Motion from Pam Sheppard to accept nominations as listed. Mark Stilwell Second.
Approved unanimously

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT:

Presented by Annika Plant and Marrissa Mallory J/PR

Highlights efforts to date:

- Strong media placements (History Channel, San Diego Magazine, KTVU).
- Media visits by key writers.
 - Dine Dining Lovers
 - Prior
 - KTLA
 - UPROXX
 - Travel and Leisure
- Social media growth: nearly 5,000 new followers, 15M impressions, 43,000 engagements.
- 11 posts with 1K+ organic engagements in first two months
- Facilitated Car Week social coverage with +195% engagement and +49% impression YoY increases
- Executed Content Mission
- Elevated Story visuals to align with Visit Carmel brand
- Shared tips & tricks for stakeholders looking for social amplification on our channels

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA FY25 – 26 STRATEGIES:

PR Goals:

- 1 billion PR impressions,
- 148 placements
- 15% share of voice over competitive set (Napa, Santa Barbara, Dana Point, SLO, Laguna Beach)
- 20 journalist visits.
- 90 Barcelona Principles Score

Social Media Goals:

- 99M impressions

- 1.3M TikTok views
- 4-5% Instagram engagement
- 10% audience growth to 212K follows
- 1% Share to reach increase
- Strategy includes proactive editorial calendar, awards, and equitable stakeholder representation.

Key Objectives & Initiatives

- Support & Explore New Avenues to Promote Key Destination Events & Initiatives
- Penetrate New Media Outlets & Drive Destination Awareness in KPI Publications
- Generate Creative Opportunities to Introduce New, Viable Audiences to the Destination
- Elevate Storytelling and Establish Cohesive, Unique Visual Identity

PR Side – Shared Detailed Editorial Pitch Calendar through the year

Award Targets

- Submission Based
- Reader Choice Awards

Telling our Story Initiative

- elevate our positioning through authentic storytelling
- through new video content, imagery content
- utilize that positioning to ultimately drive longer group nights.

Stay and Seek

Individual Story telling highlight stakeholders in a rotating basis

Trying to reach readers bucket list travel opportunities i.e.:

Art Curator
Romantic Getaway
Dog Traveler

Content Mission – Behind the Scenes

Annika reported on the experience and previewed some of the pics

New Social Media Brand Voice:

value unique experiences

- tone is inspiring, communication is vibrant and energizing, not excessive or forced.

we value destination stewardship

- tone is refined, communication is intentional, knowledgeable, and passionate. not preachy, not complicated.

value authenticity

- tone is welcoming, communication is engaging and charming, not stiff or overly casual.

value community

- tone is warm. communication is personalized, in touch, not exclusive or generic.

Key Events

- Secret Season: media visits and group FAM planned.
- Meet the Makers: focus on influencers and regional creators.
- Culinary Week: expanded influencer and media strategy for next year.
- Car Week: continued focus on destination stewardship and partner engagement.

Trends & Insights

- Discussion of AI's impact on PR/social and travel planning.
- Importance of alt text and content optimization for AI and social discovery. AI favors creditability over owned.
 - 75% influenced by Social
 - 50% Millennials look at social as search engine
 - Nearly half of Gen Z have completely abandoned traditional search for tik Tok and Instagram
 - Importance of Alt-Text and keywords
- Noted trends: cortisol cocktails, non-alcoholic cocktails, nostalgia in food/drink (70's, 80's & 90's), experiential dining, find dining over fine dining, tiny takeovers, hi/low pairings, Quick Serve food.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Amy Herzog presented:

- Annual tax return draft received,
- Annual report in progress for next meeting.
- Car Week debrief: Visit Carmel to support communications and marketing solutions for peninsula-wide issues.
- Community relations: ongoing partnerships, event support, and increased city engagement.
 - CRA – Feast in the Forest
 - See Monterey – Annual Meeting
 - Carmel Cares – Meeting with Kelly Burke
 - City Council – Will attend Oct to make public comment on meet the makers
- Visitor Center: review of visitor numbers and plans to enhance visibility and retail program.

Meet the Makers

- Partnership – Visit Carmel and Local Artist owned galleries (14) wineries (12) food crafters (4) – no MCVGA this year
- Additional Cost – Contracted with Buzz PR for event logistics, rentals and permits
- Ticket Sales – 400 – 450 (LY 400) \$50
- Centralized starting location
- Branding – Signage in Park, branded glasses and wristbands, printed and digital marketing using assets from last year

CRID updates

Culinary Week

- Proposal for Good Roots for consideration

CRID Compliance

- City implementing more consistent compliance
- Seeking payments with penalties for chronic non-payers
- Friendly reminders
- Working with city on accurate and updated list

Stakeholder Communication

Calendar of events

New Restaurants

- Hogs Breath
- Noras
- Vin-by-the Sea

MRY update

- No significant update on Chicago Flight
- Orange County
- Air Carrier incentive Policy – allows offer of fee waivers for two years for new routes, new airlines and/or additional capacity
- In the running for USA today “10 Best” for Woodies and Best Resort AirPort

Upcoming Events

2026

- June 5 – 15 Carmel Culinary Week
- June and July FIFA
- Sept 4 – 6 Indy races at Laguna Seca
- Big Little Les Season 3

2027

- June 17 – 20 127th U.S. Open Championship at Pebble Beach

2028

- July 14- 30 Summer Olympics in LA
- August 13 Pebble Beach Concours

Upcoming Meetings

Oct 2 - Taste of Carmel

Oct 11 - Meet the Makers

Oct 14 - CRID committee meeting

Oct 16 - Visit Carmel Board Meeting

November

- Innkeeper dinner proposed
- Nov 20 - Visit Carmel Board Meeting

MARKETING UPDATE:

Jeff reported:

- New Hero Shot (edited)
- Storybook Campaign
- Running display adds as standard also suing Google Max
- San Diego full page add along with editorial from J/PR
- New Eblasts with focus on Food and wine during harvest Season

New Users to website 1.3 M up 40%

- Paid Social up 68%
- Organic down 16%
- Paid Search up 80% (google)
- Display Adds up 248% (google)
- Cross Network up 721%
- Email down 13%

Continued focus on Quality over Quantity

- Moving away from Click focused campaigns to Conversion focused – more engaged
- Engaged Sessions Strategy – less numbers but more engaged
- LA / SF/ SAC showing high visit rate – focused commercial aired

Increased Occupancy Strategy

- Driving to landing page to highlight longer stays
- IP data overnight growth YOY change 7.4%
- City occupancy growth up 6.86 % over LY (May – June) 75.7%

Fly Market Campaign

Growth to landing page 22K verified visits

- PHX up 630%
- Denver – up 500%
- Dallas – up 682%
- Seattle – up 602%
- San Diego – up 373%

Restaurant marketing

- 1.55% CTR (meta benchmark of 1.0%) - social video adds
- Dining guide update well received
- Updated web listings

Meet the makers running adds, eblasts, social

Wine Walk

- Updated brochure
- Updated mobile From LY

New Projects

- Fairytale cottages brochure - updating
- Brand Standards. Completed – accessible for all through website
- New Video and Photo asset collection scheduled
- History of Carmel's Artist Colony video in production
- New Sizzle Reels for hotels

AUGUST FINANCIAL REPORT

Comp Set

March April - Increasing revenue at 2x the CPI rate organically

Current

- May- June this year YOY change in rev par 15% only area showing increase in comp set
- Occupancy highest of any comp set at 76% - up 7%
- Rate 359 to 386 – YOY change in ADR up 7%
- Now increasing RevPAR 8.1% (CPI 3.8%) delta change of 113%

Financials

\$1.074M Total Assets

August

- CHID \$348K over \$322K budgeted
- CRID \$91K over \$74K Budgeted
- YTD revenue up \$41K over Budget

Current YTD Expenses

- PR - \$8K over budget
- Marketing – \$36K over budget
- Sales – \$4.1K over budget (meet the makers)
- Admin – \$1K down to budget
- Total spend approx. \$19K up

Showing total net cash flow YTD \$151,124 to Budget of \$158,346

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Car week update in future meeting proposed

Carrie Theis adjourned the meeting at 4:36 PM