CARMEL RESTAURANT IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (CRID)
COMMITTEE MEETING
Sunset Center and via Video Conference
Tuesday, September 15, 2026 at 10 am

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: April Montgomery, Links Club; Gian Pepe, Pepe Int'l; Greg Ahn, 7&D; Monique Black, Chez Noir.

Committee Members Absent: Janet Elarmo, Aubergine; Sunny Shour, Marc + Rose; Anthony Carnazzo, Stationaery ;Ashley Wolff, Jeju Kitchen; Susan Dampier, Marc + Rose.

Also in Attendance: Amy Herzog and Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Marrissa Mallory and Annika Berg, from J/PR (virtual); Ashlee Wright, Lauren Schaub and Nile Estep from Good Roots; Lance Anderson, VIN by the Sea (virtual); Rich Pepe, Pepe International; Lee Morcus, Hog's Breath Inn; Daniel Spilfogel, Flaherty's; Jose Gutierrez.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: April Montgomery, chair called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Public Comment: Pam Sheppard on behalf of Nominating Committee for Visit Carmel spoke to the committee about the three nominees (April Montgomery, Janet Elarmo and Rich Pepe). Deadline is coming in case anyone else wants to nominate. Recommendation will be made to Board at October meeting. Open to feedback from the Committee to help us make informed choices to Board.

April spoke to wanting to ensure that restaurants are actively represented on the Visit Carmel Board. And also wanting to see other industries (wine, retail, etc.) on the board.

Pepe announced that he had requested that the CRID Committee Chair be an advisory member on the Board. Lee thought that that CRID Chair should be a voting member. Monique clarified that the suggestion is that the CRID Committee should be the one that votes in the Board seat, not the Nominations Committee.

Minutes:
There was not a quorum so there was no motion to approve the minutes from June.

Nominations:
There was not a quorum so there was no motion to approve the slate of nominees for the CRID Committee.

Carmel Culinary Week 2027 Discussion:
Conversation started with reviewing the original goals and objectives for Culinary Week. These are:

- Provide a one-of-a-kind, high-quality visitor experience
- Elevate and enhance the overall Carmel-by-the-Sea brand
- Generate overnight hotel stays both during and/or as a result of the event
- Meaningful benefits to restaurants and wineries with various levels of participation opportunities

- Create high-impact marketing opportunities (Halo effect)
- Serve as a benefit to the both the residential and business communities

The planning for Culinary Week 2027 continued with focus on the following items:

- **Signature Events** – Recommended adjustments to dates, location, prices and attendance
- **Additional Event Ideas**
- **Stipends** - research findings, amount, process, payment
- **Ticket Sales**
- **Non-profit partner potential**
- **Sponsorships** – discuss potential for brand or in-kind (food/drink) sponsors
- **Media Plan and Target Markets**

Nile from Good Roots had the following suggestions/recommendations:

Signature Events are supposed to be at more public locations and then we encourage individual restaurants to create events at their own spaces.

Change to **Party at the Park** (from the Plaza). Perhaps coordinate with Carmel Youth Center to offer childcare *offsite* during event. Elevated community cook out event. After more discussion it was decided that a Friday night is too difficult and suggested we move that event to Sunday, June 6. Also, have this take place from 3-6 pm. 400 total guest count – 100 EA and 300 GA. Question about if we need early access. Nile pointed out that the older people really prefer early access. April suggested raising the prices. Change this to $150 and $200.

Boho Bites & Beats – Nile suggests this be a longer duration which only really works on a Sunday. EA 2-8 and GA 4-8. Suggested that Boho move to the closing event on the last Sunday of Culinary Week, June 12. Lance suggested a pre-party in Su Vecino Court.

La Dolce Vita – really needs to stay on Tuesday so we can use his 7&D kitchen. Have more of an appetizer hour and area for wineries for the first hour and then open it up to the table. We might need a coat check. Also better to have less courses during the dinner that way – more apps up front and less at the table so that if one dish is running late it doesn't bog things down too much. Nile prefers to stay at 160 for this year and perhaps explore increasing in future. April suggested going to $250. Going to better balance out the sound from the band as well. Greg suggested having wineries educate at the table or walk around and refill. More discussion about wineries.

Soiree makes the most sense on a Wednesday due to La Playa's use patterns. Pushed to limit so dropping the max guests to 250 with a true elevated experience for early entry. In order to do it there GR needs to donate 50 tickets to hotel guests. Monique asked for much more clear to vendors prior to events – what is being served, what are staffing needs, more maintenance during event.

Ultimate Culinary Masterpiece Pass – Nile wants to ensure that with higher prices that they will also be elevating the events even more. Ultimate Pass sold out last year and was majority from out of town.

Added bathrooms for all four events.

This new schedule might enhance overnight stays and allows restaurants to take advantage of down days. Lance brought up wanting to increase stipends and bring people to individual restaurants.

Monique recommended again that there needs to be more education prior to the events to discuss the vision and the expectation to ensure a higher quality event and visitor experience. Restaurant Wrangler should help. And Nicole suggested a shared Google Doc. Also possible event captain for each event.

Stipends:

Amy did some research about other events in area to compare the stipends amount offered. In some cases (PBF&W) wineries have to pay to be there.

Agree that Visit Carmel can pay stipends directly and right away, have that limited to CRID stakeholder restaurants and Monterey County wineries only. GR would still have some stipends to pay for outside food and drink that might be hired to fill in some gaps. We don't want participation to be a financial burden.

Definite consensus that stipends should be at least doubled per restaurant – if not more. Average of 2.5 bites per person.

Create clear written policy of what is expected from participating restaurants/wineries. Also create some type of credentials for vendors and a policy for what/when they can eat/drink at the event they are working.

Ticket Sales:

Reviewed the financial structure for tickets sales, The ticket-sales arrangement is about maintaining the financial structure and shared incentives that made the partnership viable in the first place.

Recommendation: Ticket sales management and gross revenue remain with GR.

- IP ownership: Visit Carmel retains all event intellectual property.
- Financial model: Ticket revenue reduces VC's upfront exposure and gives GR a vested financial interest in the event's success.
- Board-approved structure: This model was transparent, vetted, and approved by the Board; changing it would materially alter the economics of the agreement.
- Sustainability: GR assumes significant upfront costs and has been investing in building the signature events – ticket revenue helps make that investment sustainable while the event builds toward profitability.

Launch Ticket Sales in January - Eblast to past ticket holders for early purchase of Ultimate Pass. (Past ticket holders are our primary audience for selling CCW tickets in 2027.) Open up to the public some time later.

Upgrade Mobile Phone Ticket Purchase & Check-In software to streamline the purchase- to-event experience, guest communication, and speed up guest entry to reduce lines.

Gian and Rich Pepe have concerns about this unusual structure of GR selling and keeping gross sales, and Rich can't find another example like this. Rich believes GR has no downside potential here. Nile disagreed in that they have taken a loss for the past two years and could be putting time and energy elsewhere. GR took a risk and built success. Monique agrees that it's a lot of money but also that GR has created something great. Part of this for GR is the potential for growth.

Additional Event Ideas:

Events that occurred last year included:

Even better is that the restaurants can do events on site, especially on the Fridays and Saturdays.

Rich asked that what if the Carmel wine tasting rooms wanted to do an event, would Visit Carmel be able to fund it? Greg reminded all that the wine tasting rooms aren't contributing to the budget in any way. Rich is pushing that others should be paid as well.

Ashlee clarified that it seems his proposal would be a budget point of order. Does Visit Carmel or the CRID want to create a budget to support that? And it is important to think about what is doable for the week.

Jeff explained that he doesn't feel we are in a place to support multiple events, but we can support it with marketing.

Bring this to the Visit Carmel Board, as a budget item to adjust for this year or propose for next fiscal year.

Non-Profit Partner Ideas:
Recommend that we may not be prepared to pick a non-profit org to partner with. Perhaps in future we can pair with one of the events. Also, it maybe easier for VC or individual restaurants to receive donation of product if there is a non-profit.

Sponsorships:
Right now, encourage individual restaurants to find sponsors for their events or dinners. Monique mentioned that Open Table might be a good option to explore in future.

Media Buy:
Jeff proposed a slight increase to digital media, maintain MNTN for national exposure, local KSBW and KRML are small buys for locals, Edible. Jeff recs dropping MC Weekly, with exception of the "Eat & Drink" issue. Sunset Mag has cache and recs keeping that. Also, they are a sponsor and provide discount and in-kind space in also San Diego mag. Recommends an $18K cut YOY.

Explaining MNTN which is connected TV. 289,449 commercials aired with 16,145 verified visits to our site. Here is TV contributing to our web traffic. You can see the geographic breakdown is LA, Sacramento, Chicago, Southern CA, Dallas, Phoenix and Seattle. Mostly these air on Peacock, NBC, HBO Max, Paramount, Hulu.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

Next meeting scheduled for October 13, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.