



CARMEL HOSPITALITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (CHID)
VISIT CARMEL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
Sunset Center and on Zoom
Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA 93921
Thursday, February 19, 2026
2:30 PM

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Carrie Theis, Hofsas House; Amy Herzog, Executive Director; Brandon Swanson, City of Carmel; Candace Fecteau, Stilwell Hotels; Mark Stilwell, Stilwell Hotels; Pam Sheppard, Horizon Inn; Mark Watson, Inns-by-the-Sea; 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 (virtual); Sophia Stewart, J/PR (virtual); Jenna Greer, J/PR (virtual); Joseph Violi, Cypress Inn; Graeme Robertson, CRA; Suzanne Gravell, CARS (virtual).

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Ahn, Folktale; Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber.

Carrie Theis, Chairperson, called the Meeting to order at 2:32 pm

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mark Watson discussed the issue of the TOT increase that Carmel City Council is considering and the potential negative impacts it would have on hotels as well as the visitor-serving businesses.

MINUTES:

Motion to approve December 18, 2025, minutes by Mark Stilwell. Pam Sheppard Seconded.
No objections. Passed.

REPORT OUT FROM CLOSED SESSION:

Carrie reported out from Closed Session, which was 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. After much discussion, the board voted to offer a 3-year contract on a straight retainer basis, which will cover all work by both parties. This is all subject to retroactive approval of the contract in Open Session at our February Board Meeting. Mark Watson made a motion to approve; Candace Fecteau seconded. Passed unanimously.

NOMINATE OFFICERS

Nominations for the officer positions of Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary were opened, with the board planning to close nominations in the March meeting and conduct the vote then.

Mark Watson was nominated for Treasurer by Pam Sheppard. Susan Dampier was nominated for Secretary by Candace Fecteau and Carrie Thies was nominated for Chair by Rich Pepe. All nominations were accepted. Nominations remain open.

JANUARY FINANCIAL REPORT: Presented by Mark Watson

Mark Watson presented the financial report, noting that revenues were \$88,000 ahead of budget, while expenses were \$29,000 under budget, resulting in a net cash flow of \$118,000 above budget through January.

The board also reviewed hotel performance data, with Monterey Peninsula showing a 4% increase in RevPAR compared to other jurisdictions, despite a challenging December.

Comp Set

The Board reviewed the most recent comp set report, which showed Carmel leading the way in YOY increase in RevPAR for the Nov-Dec period with a 4% increase. Monterey slightly beat out Carmel in Occupancy increase (4% over 3%). Also discussed statistics for Santa Cruz and determined that Buellton data was less relevant and perhaps adding Santa Cruz moving forward would work as a good comp set.

The Board also reviewed the RevPar vs ~~CIP~~ ^{CPI} historical chart which demonstrates that the formation of the HID has created results way beyond the CPI. ~~impacted~~ A graph showed the dramatic negative impact of COVID, and the subsequent recovery was discussed.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT: Amy Herzog presented

Administrative Updates

- The signed letter of intent for Culinary Week with Good Roots was signed
- Liability insurance certificates for the city and subcontractors provided
- Working with city on streamlining payments from restaurants for the RID

Community Relations

- Annual meeting and reception
 - 100+ in attendance
 - Open to Stakeholders and community
 - Intro to the J/PR team
- Social media workshop that was open to the entire community
 - 35 + in attendance
 - Led by J/PR
 - Well received
- Recent communications efforts, including a power outage response and estimated revenue losses during outage:
 - Hotels estimated \$860K to ~~\$510K~~ ^{\$910K} loss in room revenue
 - \$86 K to \$91K in lost TOT ^{\$3.4M}
 - Restaurants estimate \$2M to ~~3.4M~~ ^{\$3.4M} in food and business loss
- Updates on Highway 1 communications including
 - Carmel by the Sea as Gateway to the Best of Big Sur
 - Monterey's HOW2HWY1

RID Marketing - New RID board

- April Montgomery – Links Club – Chair
- Greg Ahn (or rep) – Folktale
- Monique Black - Chez Noir

- Lorena Chaarani - Grill on Ocean Ave
- Sunny Shour - Bud's and Brophy's
- Janet Elarmo - Aubergine
- Gian Pepe - Pepe International
- Alyssa Ross - Il Fornaio
- Ken Spilfogel – Flaherty's
- Ashley Wolff - Jeju Kitchen

Stakeholder Updates

- New GM at Pine Inn and Tally Ho
- Domaine Messier – New tasting room joined Wine Walk
- Chalone Vineyard's facilities closing, their tasting room remains open
- Wayside's planned renovation opening in late May
- Bashar's plans to open a steakhouse in the former Cantinetta Luca space also taking over Sade's space. - High-end lounge planned, though challenges with liquor licenses noted.
- Carmel Art Festival's new format for 2026, which will no longer include live sculpting in the park.

See Monterey

- See Monterey's successful social media campaign featuring 49ers' wives discussed, along with the strategy to optimize existing events and develop new ones to fill the 1,000 new hotel rooms.
- Chicago Flight – marketing including
 - Posts every few weeks on social
 - Timing March – May
 - MBA collaboration with Shedd and See Monterey with Chicago – giveaway swap
 - Stakeholder tool kit under production

Monterey Regional Airport update

- United introducing mainline service via LAX with an April 30 start, through September as of now.
 - Adds 78 in and 78 out daily seats to the LAX market
 - Will Evaluate in Fall to determine continuation
- United up gauge to mainline from DEN, begins on May 20th
 - should expect that to continue indefinitely.
 - Adds 78 in and 78 out daily seats to the DEN market
- ORD Saturday service begins May 23rd, as an early-afternoon turn,
 - operates through August 15th.
 - Adds 156 seats to the Saturday market in and out

Upcoming info & Meetings

- March 10-12 - Visit California Outlook Summit in Chula Vista
- March 19 - Regular Board Meeting
 - Elect Officers for one-year term
- March 26 - CCTC Spring Retreat in Paso
- April 16 - Regular Board Meeting
 - FY 26/27 Draft Budget Presentation
- May 21 - Regular Board Meeting
 - FY26/27 Budget presented for potential vote approval

MARKETING UPDATE: Jeff Burghardt presented

Update on Storybook Campaign

- NBC Segment and promotion
- Meta and Google Digital ads shown

- Prospecting / remarketing / video / AI digital
- Eblasts

Expedia Conquesting ads FY 26 results

- Generated \$640,000 in revenue from a \$60,000 ad spend, achieving an 11x ROI.
- Average LOS 1.7 with 33% of bookings coming in at a 0 – 6 day booking window

Fly Market Campaign

Video Ad focusing on fly markets - Mountain TV

- 1.2 M completed videos
- 306K households reached
- 4.1 frequency
- 3,078 verified visits to website

Page Growth YOY

- Phoenix up 247%
- Denver up 214%
- Dallas up 255%
- Seattle up 235%
- San Diego up 175%

Chicago Flight Co-op

- See Monterey “Find Your Way Here” Campaign
- Direct flights on United Airlines to Monterey/Carmel Airport—Begins May 23
 - Custom TV & CTV Commercial showcasing partners
 - Digital Ads & Paid Social
 - Digital Billboards TBD

Carmel Culinary Week

- Increasing Advertising, PR and Social
- Ticket Sales Growing
- Good Roots securing restaurants, wineries and other participants
- Print Advertising – Sunset & Edible
- Email Marketing
- New Graphics shown
- Tool kit being finalized

Reviewed two TV commercial options for Carmel Culinary Week, ultimately showing preference for second, and discussed the progress of ticket sales and event participation.

Best of Big Sur campaign

- 10,582 link clicks
- 90 comments (100% positive)
- 3,090 post reactions
- 366 post saves
- 766 post shares

Fairytale cottages - Brochure updated, printed and distributed

AT&T Pro-Am - KMBY radio campaign – great coverage

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT:

Jenna presented earned media results:

December and January numbers at a glance.

- 105M reach
- 40 Earned placements
- 28% share of voice
- 100% Barcelona Score
- 11 Influencer visits and hostings.

Press highlights:

- Dossier – Few of our Favorite Things
- Sunset – Health & Wellness
- Travel + Leisure – Favorite Road Trip

Regional coverage:

- Eater SF
- Fabulous California
- Arizona Foothills

Sophia presented Social Results:**December & January at a glance:**

- 5,146 Follower growth
- 1.6 M impressions (68% increase on IG – Decreased on FB)
- 42.6 K Engagements (82% increase on Facebook - decreased on IG)
- 65 partners featured
- 6% increase in Instagram engagement rate
- 4.5% increase in Facebook engagement rate – (21% increase YOY)

Viewed top performing posts:

- 2 days in Carmel
- Highway reopening
- Christmas Dining
- Holiday Wish List
- Christmas in Carmel

Campaigns:

- Best Seat in the House – 1K engagements on IG
- Stay & Seek – 601 engagements
 - Effort to increase length of stays

Upcoming:

Girlfriend Getaways

Carmel Culinary

Social Media Giveaway comments shared.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

Adjourned

Carrie Theis adjourned the meeting at 4:29 PM