



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

MINUTES

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Burghardt, Visit Carmel; Nicole Dore, Visit Carmel (virtual); Sophia Stewart, J/PR (virtual); Annika Berg, J/PR (virtual); Graeme Robertson, CRA; Suzanne Gravell, CARS (virtual); Janine Chicoraut, CRA; Dawn Mathes-Park, See Monterey; Chief Todd Trayer, City of Carmel; Ashlee Wright, Good Roots.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Kati Enea, Carmel Chamber.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Carrie brought up that the Visit Carmel board will stay neutral on the TOT issue since we also get funding from the City. The active association taking a position is the Carmel Innkeepers Association. Clarification of Visit Carmel's role.

Janine brought up that we were all at Visit California Outlook Forum with 5 shots to win a Poppy Award and went zero for five. But was "an honor to be nominated."

Brandon announced that agenda will go out for April 7 Council Meeting. TOT ballot measure item will be on agenda.

MINUTES:

Mark Stilwell had two minor corrections to minutes that were made in real time. Motion to approve February 19, 2026 minutes. Mark S then moved to approve with the corrections. Seconded by Mark Watson. No objections. Passed.

REPORT FROM CHIEF TRAYER:

Chief Trayer updated the board on the evacuation drill scheduled for May 30th, 2026. This has been studied for the last six months.

That morning, the sirens were going to be tested, but based upon current situations with geopolitical concerns, sirens will not be audibly sounded. Our phone notification systems will be put in place

indicating where to go and procedures to follow. The campaign will be shared with all businesses in advance of the drill.

People will be directed on the morning of, where to go, and where safe zones are located.

Goal is not to scare any visitors or residents it is simply an opportunity to collaborate with local businesses and residents to coordinate in advance of any evacuation needs.

One other town in the state of CA has performed such a drill. This notification will not be geofenced. This is a reverse 911 system so will go out anyone who has paid a PGE bill or signed up for the alert system.

Security Camera

If you have a security camera and want to register it with the police department it is helpful in solving crimes and is appreciated. Simply visit the website or the police department to register your cameras. Brochures are being sent out as well as email notifications.

Car Week Updates

Looking at 2026 Car Week. Looking toward safety for this coming year's events. Listening sessions have been on-going.

Options to close town completely or to find a solution to traffic issues in the evening 6 PM – 9:30 pm during Car Week.

Chief Trayer shared potential solutions still under discussion although Good Roots has proposed a solution which is the most likely to be put in to action for this coming year. Details are still being solidified but would include paid parking in prime areas during the prime evening hours, as well as directed traffic flows to eliminate drive throughs in town allowing for safer pedestrian traffic. Additional lighting and monitoring to support the effort.

One main effort is to avoid "side shows" and their inherent dangers in town as well as surrounding noise pollution.

Further updates will be provided as the plan matures and is approved.

It was stated that it is not the role of Visit Carmel to determine the method used for this control. However, Visit Carmel will use its marketing expertise to communicate that information to visitors and residents once the plan is fully developed and approved.

SEE MONTEREY UPDATE

Dawn Mathes-Park provided a mid-year update on See Monterey.

Visit California Outlook Forum for 2027 will be held in Monterey in March of 2027. Hoping to launch a stay longer campaign along with the forum coming to Monterey.

Three main campaigns running for See Monterey.

- Seek and Find
- Luxury Link – Podcast
- Inspiration Meets Here

Highway 1 Campaign

Highway 1 is open!

- World Cup aligned initiatives
- Responsible Travel messaging
- VW road trip with Visit California

Continued effort to highlight opening of Highway 1

Wine Country Tourism

Elevate luxury wine and culinary

- differentiate from Sonoma/Napa
- Highlight tasting rooms as well as wineries

Chicago Flight Launch

- May 23 flight launches
- Paid Media Campaign to begin at end of month
- Digital and geo- targeted ads
- Broadcast and streaming in Chicago
- Sweepstakes with iHeartRadio
- Chicago Media Mission with 12+ top tier outlets

Update on social media posting including Carmel by-the-Sea

Earned media highlighted

- 56 featured stories
- 19 hosted media
- \$4.5 M in ad equivalent dollars
- 1.06 B Impressions

Coalition for Chicago Flight video ad viewed

VISIT CARMEL BOARD

Officer Elections for the following nominees to serve one-year terms starting in April.

Chairperson – Carrie Theis

Treasurer – Mark Watson

Secretary – Susan Dampier

Additional nominations call. Nominations closed.

Motion to elect as a slate Greg Ahn, seconded by Candace Fecteau.

Unanimously approved. No abstains.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT: Amy Herzog presented

Carmel Bach Festival – being transformed.

Younger, edgier - asking for an update on their current path

Can we bring them into to our community in a more inclusive way including hosting musicians

Culinary Week

Hotel and restaurant stakeholders already using the marketing tool kit

Most events ticket sales are ahead of last year. Dolce Vita close to sell out shortly.

May 23rd inaugural Chicago flight party at MRY

Visit California coming next March for Outlook Forum in Monterey – 1,000 attendees
Looking for collaborations with See Monterey

Upcoming

April meeting - Prelim draft budget for next year

May Meeting – Finalized budget

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT:

PR report presented by Marrissa Mallory

- 10.6 M Total reach
- 6 earned placements
- 26% of average share of voice – second largest next to Napa
- 100% Barcelona Principles scoring (all earned 85 or higher)

Press highlights

- Eater San Francisco
- Travel & Leisure

Social Media Results presented by Annika Berg

- 3,318 Net follower growth
- 3.4 M impressions
- 31.7 K social engagements
- 68 stakeholders featured
- Instagram engagement rate up 6% YOY
- Facebook engagement rate up 5.25 YOY

Top performing posts highlighted

Call to action – here is what you can do/see in Carmel

Best Seat in the House social campaign featured Brophy's
Travel & Leisure press placement

Campaign beginning to take shape – Carmel by-the-Sea, Then & Now Outlined. Will show images from old Visitor Guides next to current photos.

MARKETING UPDATE:

Jeff Burghardt presented:

March – Your next great escape – Fly market intentional
LoCale Magazine – Most awarded small town
Sweepstakes – winner announced

Paused Highway 1 initiative - then rebooted
Performing exceptionally well

Well ahead YOY Carmel Culinary Week

Wine Walk performing very well including the Mobile App

Sizzle reels continuing to perform well – new to be launched

Fairytale Cottages – brochure reprinted – well received

On-line sales of Visit Carmel Merchandise – on going through Visitor Center and online

Generative AI overwhelming standard searches

Staying up to date with new LLM input

Continuing to build infrastructure to come in high in searches and AI recommendation

Scrunch is a new partner to help with new AI placement and visibility

- Analysis of Carmel Market
- Provide a FAQ to assist us with marketing with AI

Downside is Website traffic down

- To be expected with AI searches increasing
- More dollars added to SEM adds
- Email continued efforts
- Remarketing performing very well
- Google Max – will be the future to adds – Stationed to take advantage of this

FINANCIAL REPORT

Presented by Mark Watson:

\$1.147 M balance sheet

February Operating statement

- \$342K in revenue collected versus \$383K budgeted – funding from the City not showing
- YTD revenue up \$46K
- PR spending \$220K against budget of \$238K
- Marketing \$55K under - \$1.242 spent versus \$1.187 budgeted
- Sales and promotion on budget
- Admin expenses 179K spent versus 185K budgeted

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Budget next month focus

No additional proposals for addition to agenda

Adjourned

Carrie Theis adjourned the meeting at 4:33PM