



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, September 21, 2023  
Hampton Inn & Suites

Call to order: 8:03AM

Report on posting of the agenda: ED Johnson announced the agenda was posted on Friday, September 15, 2023, at 5PM at the California Welcome Center, 8155-6 Arroyo Circle, Gilroy, CA 95020.

Roll Call: Brent Bonino, Chantelle Mace, Dave Peoples, Eric Gebhardt, Kurt Michielssen, Marline Avelar (until 8:30), Michael Fulcher, Tom Cline, Victoria Valencia, Michele Campbell.

Absent- Don Delorenzo, Mark Jacobsen, Mattie Scariot, Mike Patel, Sarah Lira, Trevor Van Laar.

Staff present: Executive Director Frank Johnson, CWC Manager Susan Childers, and Tourism & Community Engagement Coordinator Mary Gurries.

Guest present: Jason Raby

Consent Calendar-

Approval of August 17, 2023, board meeting minutes- Motion to approve: Michael Fulcher, Second: Kurt Michielssen. Approval of Financial Reports- Motion to approve: Victoria Valencia, Second: Dave Peoples. August minutes and financials approved unanimously.

New Business- New giftshop Items

To offer a variety of items for purchase without posing as product competition for our Partners, Welcome Center Manager, Susan, has sourced new merchandise items from Laser Gifts, due to visitors asking for more "masculine" souvenirs. Select items such as key chains, yoyo's, ballpoint pens, wood-slice magnets, and wood-slice ornaments can be customized with laser etching to say "Gilroy, CA". Board members discussed how vendors are approved, and the process of Partners getting merchandise to be sold in the Welcome Center. Chantelle says that WSCV would like to have some merchandise sold in the Welcome Center such as wine stoppers, and possibly other items. Frank says items should say "Gilroy" or "California" on them to be marketable. Board members discussed approving Laser Gifts as a vendor, and holding off ordering until other merchandise items are brought forth by the Wineries of Santa Clara Valley to be carried in the store. Vote for permission for Susan to add Laser Gifts as vendor- Motion to approve: Dave Peoples. Second: Kurt Michielssen. Motion passes unanimously.

August 2023 Google Analytics Report and August Marketing Activities - Jason Raby: Most popular pages: Homepage, 33 Things to Do, Event Calendar, Gilroy Gardens. Website traffic is down 27% from prior year. The hotel page is down 73% from prior year; last year we had an Ad campaign pushing hotel stays, so that could be why traffic is currently lower. Device overview; Mobile 72%, Desktop 26%. Submitted GMH Ad which runs from October to December that focuses on all the new breweries downtown, with photos

and descriptions. Visit California submission for Halloween activities such as Gilroy Gardens Great big BOO. CCTC submission: Beer Crawl, Pumpkin Junction, Renaissance Faire, Tamal Festival. Social media impressions on Instagram had a 30% increase over prior month. Beer Crawl campaign Ad will run until the event day. Another Ad for the La Ofrenda Festival Dia de los Muertos event will run shortly after.

#### Old Business

Welcome Michele Campbell representing the GDBA. 7 Years on the GDBA Board, Vice Chair this year, will be Chair next year starting January 2024. She is personally in insurance for 17 years, specializing in Medicare. There are now 13 board members for the GDBA, and many infrastructure changes are slowly happening. They are looking for a new administrative assistant for the GDBA. Events are growing and earning nice profits; future changes include exploring the possibility of multi-day events and collaborating with other partners to plan and host community events such as the Inaugural La Ofrenda Festival and Wellness Fair in October.

Audit Update - ED Johnson, BM Van Larr, bookkeeper Marsha McQueen, and the CPA met together; the CPA has all the necessary paperwork to move forward. The audit process has begun, the review will be completed, and then submitted for taxes. With funding coming from the City of Gilroy and TBID, this audit is a healthy process for financial transparency.

Agri-tourism Update - Lion Ranch is a new addition to our website, and Moose Mountain is another winery that's interested in being listed. Frank has reached out to many other Gilroy businesses- the common response is liability being the biggest issue/hardship.

Mercury News Co-op Ad Campaign - The City of Gilroy, Visit Gilroy, and the Chamber of Commerce have partnered together to run a \$60K digital Ad campaign that will direct the reader to a landing page with a video focusing on the vibrant activity and optimism in Gilroy. This Ad will be digital and print media.

#### New Business (resumed)

Visit California Steering Committee update - California is the #1 state in the industry, with the Central Coast (Ventura to Morgan Hill) being the top tourism region. Some CCTC dignitaries came to visit Gilroy Gardens, Chitactac-Adams Heritage County Park, Terra Amico Farms, The Neon Exchange, and had dinner in Downtown Gilroy. They were very impressed with all of the visited locations, and things such as the beautiful horticultural Gilroy Gardens, regenerative farming efforts at Terra Amico Farms, the embracing and preservation of Native history sites like Chitactac-Adams, and the repurposing and preservation of historical buildings like The Neon Exchange. These visiting individuals representing CCTC live in San Jose, and Santa Cruz, and they take stock of different areas and resources offered in the region.

Geofencing – ED Johnson shared data sampled for the Garlic City Car Show for 2023 showing a 100% increase in attendance from last year, including many out of town visitors.

Website update - Volunteer Committee for Website rebuilding consists of board members Michael Fulcher, Chantelle Mace, Marlene Avlar, Mattie Scariot, and Frank Johnson. ED Johnson sent a list of other websites containing features similar to what our future website should emulate. 3 RFPs are being built: one for re-working the website, one for photography, and one for content.

A fishing blog is being considered as a writing piece from a traveling writer, so that option is being explored as a new angle to offer as a tourism resource.

The new GMH ad addresses the new craft beer culture in Gilroy, showcasing different offerings downtown. Hopefully the breweries can coalesce and come together under unified messaging to solidify a unified craft beer culture.

Culinary Scene – A strong pillar in tourism is the culinary scene. Top things that travelers currently look for in their food experiences are authentic, off the beaten path, hole-in-the-wall, unique places that are not always the generic restaurant. Visit Gilroy plans to invest in quality video and photography to showcase the authentic Mexican food in Gilroy.

#### Staff reports

Visit Gilroy Executive Director December Report - ED Johnson: Congratulations to our board member, Marc Jacobsen, the recipient of the Young Professional Award at the Gilroy Spice of Life Gala presented by the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce. The City Council has formed a new Downtown Committee with 5 City Council Members; board members Frank, Tom, and Victoria participate. This committee is tasked with researching how similar cities handle 5 different objectives: vacancy ordinance, code enforcement, sound abatement, plywood removal and blight, and beautification in the downtown area. Working with the city attorney as well, the goal is to build strategies and action plans that can be brought to city staff, then to City Counsel. A new San Jose Mercury News Reporter, who would cover the South Valley area, lives in Gilroy. This may be a good connection opportunity for the Wineries of Santa Clara Valley, and the Downtown Business Association. A new Ice Cream Shop going into the old Porcella's Music store, Savvy Sweets, will be in Downtown next year. ED Johnson was asked to speak at a Leadership Gilroy panel discussion. This board represents many good aspects of Gilroy, and in the shadow of the Miliias Restaurant closing their doors, it is important to support each other in business.

CWC Manager's Report - Susan Childers: Walk-in's for the month of August: 2,037; up 5.4% over PY. August Gross Sales \$3,875; up 12% over PY. 131% over the monthly budget for sales, 128% of our annual budget. 219 retail sales for August, with 33 being international guest sales, 101 Gilroy resident sales. 281 internationals, representing 38 different countries. Top visiting countries include Germany, Canada, and South Korea. Deliverables: 976 pieces of collateral were distributed for leads and community outreach. A big thank you to LJB for donating some pumpkins and gourds for our decorations at the Welcome Center, a sign will be put up noting where they came from, so visitors are encouraged to visit. Staff suggestions may have influenced the increase in sales for this month. The Welcome Center does track where all the retail sales customers are from; from local, other California regions, other states, and other countries.

Tourism and Engagement Coordinator report - Mary Gurries: Blog page is down 27% over PY. The most popular blogs in August were Gilroy Rodeo Spotlight, the main blog page, and 7 hidden gems in Gilroy Gardens. Updates on the committees and board meeting attended: WSCV mixer, WSCV Board Meeting, the Holiday Festival and Parade committee meeting, the Third Friday Art Walk weekly zoom, and GDBA board meeting. 954 pieces of collateral were distributed to the Hotel and RV park partners in August.

#### Board Member Reports

BM Valencia - Chamber of Commerce update: The e-waste event is coming up Sep 30, they have collected 6000 lbs. at each of the Chamber events this year. In partnership with the San Jose Conservation Corp, this is a training opportunity for them to disassemble and practice putting things together and scrap the material. There are several Chamber Mixer events coming up, as a good

networking opportunity as well. The Gilroy Chamber of Commerce is tracking 7 Bills in the CA government that could affect fast food establishments, unemployment, and sick-leave. BM Valencia has more info if desired.

BM Bonino - LJB Farms update: The upcoming market vendor event on Sep 30-October 1 will be the kickoff for the harvest season and Halloween as the grand opening of the 2 pumpkin patches at LJB. They will have live music and Greenlee's Bakery coming to make fresh beignets, along with local vendor tables.

BM Mace - Wineries of Santa Clara Valley update: WSCV hired a new social media manager, Carlos Bradley, who is boosting their social media presence. The Vine to Wine event at Mountain Winery is coming up as their biggest event of the year.

BM Campbell - Gilroy Downtown Business Association update: The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Beer Crawl is coming up on October 14, with 30 tasting spots though downtown. La OFrenda Festival is October 28, and the Holiday Parade has been turned into the Holiday Festival this year, with a parade, Trail of Treats, Santa and the Grinch. The Chalk Festival and the Tamal Festival are also coming up.

BM Peoples - Historical Society: The Portuguese Lady of Fatima Procession is on Oct 1, it goes from the Portuguese Hall to St. Marys' Church and then back again after mass. This procession is an extremely extravagant day, with their capes being made new every year ranging from \$3,000-\$12,000 each, for the "queens" from each visiting Lodge for the procession. The Gilroy Cemetery has 40 individual stops along the Historical Walking Tour, with so many historical families buried there.

BM Fulcher - Gilroy Gardens update: This Sunday is the last day for Water Oasis, and the next weekend is the opening for Big BOO! Many different promotions and specials are being offered for admission for opening weekend. Marketing to families and children is still the best business model, with the presale wristband for 2 mocktails in the park is the highest-selling add-on item online.

BM Cline - City update: The ordinance for sidewalk vendors went up yesterday, and over the next few weeks City staff will be reaching out and educating vendors on the process of acquiring permits and other necessities. Another enforcement officer was added to help with enforcement, which begins in October. The San Jose Sharks have been approved as a Project Manager for the Sharks Ice project. The construction schedule is available on the city website. June 2026 is the target opening for the completed project. This strong and successful organization will bring positive investment and morale to Gilroy. The paving on Luchessa near Monterey St. is now complete.

BM Michielssen - Economic Development Committee update: The dissolution of the EDC is moving slowly, and they are still working with BM Valencia and Candace so that the Chamber can continue the work with economic development. ED Johnson says thank you for being a presence at so many of the Gilroy events.

Chair Gebhardt - Hotel updates: Summer was solid, no drastic changes to hotel occupancy. September may be a little slow due to the weather, but has steady traffic with some weddings, the Renaissance Faire, and some sports tournaments through October. Since the Hilton Garden Inn has changed management recently, we look to hopefully reengage with their management in the near future.

Adjourned: 9:25AM