



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, October 16, 2025  
Hampton Inn & Suites

**Call to order:** 8:03 AM

**Report on posting of the agenda:** Executive Director Johnson announced the agenda was posted on Friday, October 10, 2025, at 5PM at the California Welcome Center, 8155-6 Arroyo Circle, Gilroy, CA 95020.

**Roll Call:** Brent Bonino, Cameron Childers, Dave Peoples, Eric Gebhardt, Jonathan Bohnenberger, Larry Imas, Mark Jacobsen, Mattie Scariot, Michelle Carlen, Terrence Fugazzi, Trevor Van Laar

**Absent:** Jeff Orth, Mike Patell, Kelli Jones

**Staff:** Executive Director- Frank Johnson, CWC Manager- Susan Childers, Tourism & Community Engagement Coordinator- Mary Gurries Bejarano.

**Public Guests and Advisors:** Mike Conrotto

**Public Comment**

BM Michelle Carlen delivers the findings and suggestions after the volunteer study group met via Zoom and evaluated their research; more questions need to be answered before moving forward, for the better understanding of the impact of the digital billboard proposed for Gilroy. Information packets and a letters of endorsement from other cities that opted to adopt a digital billboard, stating the positive impact on the business community, and its' incorporation into their economic development plan.

Board members discussed the necessary steps still needed, the benefits and negatives of the potential electronic billboard from the position of events, hotels, businesses and non-profits, in addition to the control, liability, and maintenance of the structure. Mike Conrotto answered board members' questions with available information; the final consensus being that more information was still needed regarding the advertisement contracts with the City of Gilroy, with the topic on the City Council meeting agenda for Monday, October 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Old Business**

**Motion to hold the vote from the previous meeting, pending further information. No vote regarding the Visit Gilroy position to support/not support the decision on electronic billboards along HWY 101 in Gilroy:**

Visit Gilroy does not take a stance on the electronic billboard today, pending clarity on ad contract revenue allocation and sequestration, local business pricing and time slots, non-profit rates, and how many times the free ad space can be divided.

First: Johnathan Bohnenberger  
Second: Eric Gebhardt  
Motion passed unanimously

**Google Analytics Report and Marketing activities, September 2025** – ED Frank Johnson: As shown in our performance summary, our social media has had a colossal month of growth, noting healthy follower gain over the past few years on social media. We are currently split-testing three ad creatives targeting road trippers, families, and adults interested in wine and craft beer. The road tripper creative is performing best, which aligns with our stronger “Gilroy as a HUB” messaging strategy.

### **Consent Calendar**

**Motion to approve Board Meeting Minutes from September 18, 2025, and September 2025 Financials:**

First: BM Mark Jacobsen  
Second: BM Eric Gebhardt  
Motion passed unanimously.

### **New Business**

Santa Clara County Rural Zoning Amendments – ED Frank Johnson has attended two meetings and is coordinating with county representatives, local farms, wineries, and stables regarding potential rezoning. The proposed changes could have severe negative impacts on numerous local businesses if enacted.

New downtown kiosk map, Yosemite Journal, and Sharks Co-Op ad – We have an ad running in Yosemite Journal magazine and a co-op ad with the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce and City of Gilroy in the Sharks yearbook to drive interest in Gilroy. Additionally, the downtown kiosk map outside of CMAP TV will be replaced with an updated version of a Gilroy Visitors Map featuring our new branding once the glass is repaired.

Website lodging report – Our booking widget measures our website's referral effectiveness by tracking click-throughs to Gilroy hotel websites, totaling 453 in September. Top performers: Hampton Inn & Suites and Hilton Garden Inn (79 each), Best Western Forest Park Inn (77), Days Inn (68), and Quality Inn (67).

San Francisco Press Event – This was a very successful event, resulting in 30 quality meetings with writers, influencers, and media professionals. Three days after the event, Gilroy Gardens earned a mention in Nerd Wallet, featuring the Great Big Boo Halloween event.

FIFA – We will be making an effort to market Gilroy as a destination for sports tourism; March Madness, Superbowl, FIFA all motivate this effort. Revamping our Ale Tril map as a guide to the “Gilroy Fan Zone” directing people to our website, rounding out our proximity to the games, as well as our destination offerings.

Audit Results and Future Audit – Upon completing this audit cycle, ED Frank Johnson advises that the board accepts the clean audit report; Audited financial statements are included in the board packet. With a new audit period approaching, Visit Gilroy will need to select a new company to execute, as the current company no longer offers the services.

**Motion to accept the audit results:**

First: BM Michelle Carlen  
Second: BM Eric Gebhardt  
Motion passed unanimously.

November Board meeting – By a show of hands, the November meeting is moved up one week to November 13 to ensure strong attendance before the holidays. October financials will not be available by then, so multiple months of financial reports will be voted on in January.

### **Staff Reports**

**CWC Gilroy Manager's September 2025 Report** – Susan Childers: We had 823 walk in's in September, with 15% international visitors and top visiting countries being Germany England and Mexico. There were 137 retail transactions, putting us at 117% of the annual budget. Thank you to LJB Farms for the donation of pumpkins and gourds inside our California Welcome Center that brighten and elevate our seasonal displays. We supported the Gilroy Downtown Business Association by hosting the Beer Crawl mascot, "Skelly", at the Welcome Center to promote the Beer Crawl. E-commerce research is underway, searching for the best service to support selling hats and shirts. I get many vendor inquiries regarding popular annual events through the year and do my best to direct them to the appropriate contact for that event. Our Visit Gilroy Holiday party is being planned, please mark your calendars for December 9<sup>th</sup>; a formal invitation will be forthcoming. Holiday hours will be adjusted with the Gilroy Premium Outlets Center hours, staying open until 6 PM on weekends, and opening an hour earlier at 11 AM on Sunday.

**Tourism & Community Engagement Coordinator September 2025 Report** – Mary Gurries Bejarano: A new fall activities blog was published on the website featuring pumpkins, festivals, wine, and more. A ticket giveaway for the NorCal Renaissance Faire was executed on Instagram, generating over 100 eligible entries, 163 new followers, and 18,000+ views. ED Frank Johnson notes recurring efforts to encourage local businesses to capitalize on Renaissance Faire interest, which positively impacts Gilroy hotels year after year. In September, over 1,600 pieces of collateral were distributed to hotels, including new Halloween brochures from Gilroy Gardens' Great Big Boo event and Gilroy Winery brochures that complement the Santa Clara Valley Wine Trail map. Additional brochures have been pre-ordered due to high demand and their effectiveness in promoting Gilroy's wine country.

### **Board Member Reports**

BM Brent Bonino – Still trying to gather information to best navigate the topic of proposed rezoning in the county.

BM Eric Gebhardt – September and October are going well for the hotels; weddings and seasonal cooler sports tournaments have been bringing bookings on the weekends, and local construction bookings remain steady throughout the weekdays.

BM Mattie Scariot – The Poppy Jasper International Film Festival was named in a list of "Best Film Festival poster in the World", next to other festivals like the Cannes Film Festival. We're working with new artist for this year's poster, looking forward to this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There have been several claymation classes hosted by PJIFF at the Gilroy Library and Covale, both for kids and adults; also working with some wineries to host classes. Three films will be screening at La Ofrenda Festival. PJIFF received the VTA grant this year, getting people from Silicon Valley with a scavenger hunt map on the back of a festival schedule. Mattie

Scariot participated in a summit meeting in collaboration with other regional film industry members with the vision to create a film HUB in this area, bringing people to create films here, and participate in our festivals to show how important this positive economic impact can be; Watsonville Film Festival and Poppy Jasper International Film Festival will host a summit at our next events. Sponsorships are open for 2026, and we have 800 submissions so far.

BM Dave Peoples – The annual Old St. Mary Cemetery tour is 10 AM on Nov 1<sup>st</sup>. Meet at the Serra Cottage, entrance of Saint Mary's. Dave Peoples returned from the Takko-Machi Garlic and Beef Festival in Japan, which was very well attended with between four and five thousand attendees. A Takko-Machi exchange student will be staying in Gilroy at the end of October, with a farewell party held at the Gilroy Senior Center on Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>. The Sister Cities International Conference is happening soon in Orinda, which will host representatives from across the country; several Gilroy Sister Cities members will be there.

BM Mark Jacobsen – The Garlic Festival is happy to report \$75K in volunteer payout hours from the 2025 festival.

BM Jonathan Bohnenberger – The first Chick-fil-A, Gilroy Fall Festival is next Friday, with haybales and pumpkins, Games, costumes, and a dunk-tank next Friday from 4-7 PM.

BM Larry Imas – The Winery Association has been overwhelmed with this proposed rezoning situation. The lack of information is astounding. Existing wineries will need to come into compliance, but any new wineries will have large hurdles, and agritourism will suffer. This proposed change will affect more than wineries – farmstands, equestrian locations.

BM Cameron Childers – Park attendance for the Great Big Boo is going well. October 31 will be free for Gilroy residents, and November will be \$10 Gilroy Resident Month!

BM Terrence Fugazzi – There is a City Council meeting on Monday. City cleanup and upkeep is ongoing, with a dedicated taskforce. I'm on a subcommittee regarding the Sharks project, moving forward.

BM Michelle Carlen – Monthly "Networking at Noon" Chamber of Commerce lunch next week on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at Old City Hall, Amazon Web Services sponsoring. Efforts for 2026: We are solidifying dates for the Annual Legislative Summit, and the Spice Awards Gala. The second Lunch and Learn series last week had great discussion and attendance.

Adjourned 9:53 AM