

# JOINT MEETING MINUTES JPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & VISIT GREATER PALM SPRINGS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort | Springs Salon G  
74-855 Country Club Dr.,  
Palm Desert, CA 92260  
8:30 am – 10:00 am

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:38 a.m. by JPA Chair, Waymond Fermon, at the JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa in Palm Desert, CA.

## **Roll Call**

The roll call is recorded on the following page.

## **JANUARY 30, 2026**

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**JPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT**

**ABSENT**

CITY OF INDIO	Waymond Fermon, Mayor Pro Tem, <b>Chair</b>	<b>x</b>	
	Elaine Holmes, Council Member		
CITY OF LA QUINTA	Linda Evans, Mayor, <b>Vice Chair</b>	<b>x</b>	
	Steve Sanchez, Council Member		
CITY OF CATHEDRAL CITY	Raymond Gregory, Mayor		
	Ernesto Gutierrez, Mayor Pro Tem	<b>x</b>	
CITY OF COACHELLA	Dr. Frank Figueroa, Mayor Pro Tem	<b>x</b>	
	Denise Delgado, Council Member		
CITY OF DESERT HOT SPRINGS	Gary Gardner, Council Member	<b>x</b>	
	Daniel Pitts, Council Member		
CITY OF INDIAN WELLS	Brian Penna, Mayor Pro Tem		
	Bruce Whitman, Council Member	<b>x</b>	
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS	Ron deHarte, Council Member	<b>x</b>	
	Jeffrey Bernstein, Council Member		
CITY OF PALM DESERT	Evan Trubee, Mayor	<b>x</b>	
	Jan Harnik, Council Member		
CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE	Ted Weill, Council Member		<b>x</b>
	Lynn Mallotto, Mayor		<b>x</b>
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE	V. Manuel Perez, Supervisor, 4th District	<b>x</b>	

**VGPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT**

**ABSENT**

Rolf Hoehn, <b>Chair</b> - Indian Wells Tennis Garden	<b>x</b>	
Peggy Trott, <b>Vice Chair</b> - Kimpton Rowan Palm Springs	<b>x</b>	
Aftab Dada, <b>Treasurer</b> - Hilton Palm Springs Resort		<b>E</b>
Nusrat Mirza, <b>Secretary</b> - JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort		<b>E</b>
Kate Anderson, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians	<b>x</b>	
Lorraine Becker, Cabot's Pueblo Museum	<b>x</b>	
Sejal Bhakta, Hampton Inn & Suites, Palm Desert and Indio	<b>x</b>	
John Bolton, Oak View Group	<b>x</b>	
Celeste Brackley, The Line & Saguaro Hotels	<b>x</b>	
Gary Cardiff, Cardiff Limousine & Transportation	<b>x</b>	
Kenny Cassidy, Acme House Company	<b>x</b>	

Jay Chesterton, Fantasy Springs Resort Casino	X	
Dermot Connolly, La Quinta Resort & Club	X	
Tim Ellis (Emeritus), Ellis Hospitality Services	X	
Eddy Estrada, Smarter Property Management	X	
David Feltman, VRON Palm Springs	X	
Mark Girton, Goldenvoice & Empire Polo	X	
Rob Hampton, Palm Springs Convention Center	X	
Dan Johnson, Grand Hyatt Indian Wells Resort & Villas	X	
Jerry Keller, LULU California Bistro	X	
Patrick Klein, The Shops on El Paseo		E
Kelly McLean, Poppy	X	
Allen Monroe, The Living Desert		E
Lee Morcus (Emeritus), Kaiser Restaurant Group		E
Liz Ostoich, FARM and Tac/Quila Palm Springs		E
Brad Poncher, Homewood Suites by Hilton La Quinta	X	
Greg Purdy, Palm Springs Aerial Tramway	X	
David Putnicki, HOTEL PASEO	X	
Tim Pyne, Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa		E
Saverio Scheri, Agua Caliente Casinos		E
Bob Schneider, Desert Consulting	X	
Ankit Sekhri, Two Bunch Palms		E
Barb Smith, Eventis Destination Services	X	
Boris Stark, Palm Desert Vacation Properties		E
Ebony Stinson, Indian Wells Resort	X	
Joe Tormey, CSU San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus	X	
Doug Watson, Strategy   Innovation   Co.	X	

**A quorum was reached: 26 BOD and 9 JPA.**

**STAFF/ATTORNEY**

Scott White, President and CEO  
 Brian Kelty, VP, Finance and Administration  
 Colleen Pace, CSMO  
 Davis Meyer, VP, Government & Industry Relations  
 Julie Sinclair, Director of Corporate Communications  
 Samuel Thompson, Director of Indian Wells Tourism  
 Stefanie Kilcoyne, Director of Technology & Operations  
 Sarah Goslin, Exec. Asst. & Board Admin

Joyce Kiehl, Director of Communications  
 Sean Smith, Director of Economic Development  
 Gary Forsythe, Dir. of Palm Springs Tourism  
 Krystal Kusmieruk, Senior Marketing Manager  
 Jorge Rodriguez, Accounting Manager  
 Bruce T. Bauer, Legal Counsel  
 Andy Cloutier, Director of Human Resources

**AGENDA ITEMS**

1. **JPA Chair, Waymond Fermon, called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m.**
2. **JPA Chair, Waymond Fermon, led the Pledge of Allegiance.**
3. **The Clerk of the Board conducted Roll Call. A quorum was reached.**
4. **JPA Chair, Waymond Fermon, asked whether there were any changes to the agenda. Finding none, the agenda was confirmed.**
5. **JPA Chair, Waymond Fermon, called for public comment.**
  - a. No public comment on record. No members of the public requested to speak. Public comment was closed.
6. **Approval of Minutes (All Vote)**
  - a. **The JPA Executive Committee and VGPS Board of Directors Joint Meeting Minutes dated December 12, 2025, were presented for approval.**
    - i. JPA Chair Fermon asked for changes or abstentions. No changes noted. Cathedral City and Indian Wells abstained. JPA Chair Fermon asked for a motion. Linda Evans with the City of La Quinta made a motion to approve. Gary Gardner with the City of Desert Hot Springs seconded. The city of Rancho Mirage and the County of Riverside were not present to vote. There was no further discussion, and the minutes were approved based on the roll call at the beginning of the meeting.
7. **Nomination and Approval (VGPS BOD Vote)**
  - a. **Tim Ellis introduced Sheila Buciuman, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage, as recommended for the open TBID Hotel Board of Directors seat.**
    - i. Board Chair Rolf Hoehn asked for a motion to approve. Celeste Brackley made a motion to approve. Peggy Trott seconded. No abstentions. The motion passed. Sheila Buciuman was approved for the Board of Directors seat based on the roll call at the beginning of the meeting.
8. **Consent Calendar (JPA Vote)**
  - a. **The Warrants and Demands dated December 2025 for Pacific Premier Bank were presented for approval.**
    - i. JPA Chair Fermon asked for a motion. Gary Gardner with the City of Desert Hot Springs made a motion to approve. Linda Evans with the City of La Quinta seconded. JPA Chair Fermon asked for changes or abstentions. No changes or abstentions. The city of Rancho Mirage was not present to vote. There was no further discussion, and the Warrants and Demands for December 2025 were approved based on the roll call at the beginning of the meeting.
9. **Presentation by Barb Newton, President and CEO of the California Travel Association (CalTravel). The topics included:**
  - a. Political Climate and Legislative Trends
  - b. Care Court Program
  - c. Elections
  - d. Upcoming CalTravel Events
  - e. CalTravel PAC Growth
10. **CEO/President's Report: Scott White and team presented the VGPS 2026 Goals & Objectives and 2025 results.**
  - a. **Hunden Partners has been selected to lead the Destination Stewardship Plan project. This is the Visit Greater Palm Springs 10-year master plan.**
    - i. A key goal is to create a destination regional plan that will also include nine city-specific master plans. Each city will work with Hunden and VGPS, ensuring each community's unique priorities, opportunities, and challenges are directly reflected. Our goal is to have a final plan that is measurable and

actionable. The timeline is expected to be 13-14 months, with a planned kickoff in March pending contract finalization.

**b. Several key research initiatives for the year were outlined:**

- i. Resident Sentiment Study: A two-wave study, with the first ending in February and the second by the end of July, aiming for 1,000 survey takers.
- ii. Image and Awareness Study: Conducted with Smari to understand perceptions in key markets.
- iii. 2025 Visitor Intercept Study: Results from 2,600 participants are expected in March.
- iv. Other studies include an annual Economic Impact Study, a Meeting Study, and a Restaurant Week Survey.
- v. New dashboards are being developed to provide accessible data on various segments and trends.

**c. Air Service and Financials**

- i. Palm Springs Airport (PSP) had another record year with 3.3 million passengers. Seat capacity was up 6%, with 2.4 million total seats. New services include flights from Alaska, American, Delta, Southwest, and United, including a new nonstop flight from Newark. The Dulles (Washington, D.C.) flight contract was renewed for a second year.
- ii. A financial update through November showed revenues are slightly over budget and expenses are under, primarily due to timing.

**d. Colleen Pace Reported out for Convention Sales, Travel Trade, Marketing, and PR.**

**i. 2025 Group Sales Performance**

1. The group sales team booked over 262,000 room nights in 2025, a record high, surpassing the previous 2018 record of 238,000. This generated an economic impact of \$238 million.
2. The team successfully met goals for booking off-peak periods, including May, September, summer, and Q4.

**ii. 2026 Group Sales Goals and Strategy**

1. The 2026 goal is set at 250,000 room nights, adjusted down from 2025's actuals due to upcoming hotel renovations.
2. Key focuses for 2026 include: Continuing to attract off-peak business. Expanding partnerships like the one with Palm Beaches for cross-lead generation. Growing the sports market and reviving the sports committee. Re-launching the customer advisory board with a new mentor-mentee program. The marketing strategy will refresh the "Oasis is Real" campaign and explore co-op opportunities for meetings.

**iii. 2026 Strategic Goals: Digital Partner Transition**

1. A major goal is to transition from the current digital strategic partner, Granicus, who has been in place for over 10 years. The objective is to diversify partners for paid media, CMS, and CRM strategy. This change aims to better respond to the new digital landscape and how people consume content.
2. The transition timeline is: Paid services: This quarter. CMS planning: Q3. CRM: By the end of the year. The full launch is over a year away, with background work starting now to ensure success.

**iv. Marketing and Campaign Initiatives**

1. In 2025, 16 campaigns generated 30.8 billion impressions, 800 million more than the previous year.
2. Advertising effectiveness measured by Arrivalist showed a 43% lift in arrivals and a 13% lift in length of stay for those exposed to ads.
3. Finalizing the "Where You Shine Campaign", which specifically targets international and LGBTQ audiences. It will also be tested domestically to compare its performance against the "Escape Your Ordinary" campaign.
4. The Escape Series launched in December, a six-episode series now being promoted with a paid media plan starting this month.
5. Other Campaigns & Partnerships include the refreshed "Born to Chill" summer campaign and successful partnerships with Expedia, Vrbo, NCAA (Acrisure Series), and TED.
6. Production for summer co-op campaigns with partners is scheduled for the end of this month.
7. The China Social Media channels were established in December and will be activated in 2026.

**v. Expedia Ambassador Summit Sponsorship**

1. The organization is sponsoring the Expedia Ambassador Summit, a highly sought-after event. It will bring 40 content creators to the market for an immersion and education program. Activities include staying at the Parker and having dinner at a vacation rental to provide exposure for that sector.
2. A partnership with Mattel was announced, and the character "Ken" will attend as an influencer. Ken's first campaign stop will be in Palm Springs, providing additional exposure from Mattel and Expedia.

**vi. Website & Social Media Goal Adjustments for 2026**

1. Website Metrics Shift: New privacy laws in June 2025 have limited the ability to track user engagement on the website.
2. The rise of AI search provides users with answers directly, reducing clicks to the website.
3. Due to these changes, the focus for 2026 will shift from quantitative to qualitative measurements, emphasizing robust content for AI scraping.
4. Social Media Goals:
5. The 2026 goal for social media impressions is set at 21 million, an increase from the previous goal but adjusted to account for unpredictable viral moments.
6. Website clicks from social media are expected to decrease, consistent with the overall website trend.

**vii. Communications & PR Achievements and 2026 Goals**

1. **2025 Achievements:**
  - a. Achieved 7.2 billion in media impressions and a record-high PR quality score of 11,813, surpassing the goal of 8,500.
  - b. Hosted 30 international journalists for the IGLTA convention.
  - c. Launched a PR agency immersion program, bringing global representatives to the destination.
  - d. Partnered with "Maybe Sammy" in Australia on themed cocktails at no cost, with the winner receiving a trip to the destination.
2. **2026 Goals:**
  - a. The PR quality score goal is set at 9,200. Focus on securing media highlighting quality of life, workforce talent, and infrastructure.
  - b. Priority international markets include the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Australia, Mexico, India, and select Asian markets.
  - c. A new partnership with the Mille Miglia road race in Italy is planned for June.

**e. Sean Smith reported out on Economic Development.**

**i. 2025 Achievements:**

1. Finalized brand identity, logo, and messaging for economic development efforts.
2. Launched a dedicated economic development website, LinkedIn channel, and newsletter ("Thrive and Shine").
3. Advanced plans for an indoor amateur sports facility, with a study confirming its potential for success.
4. Completed the economic development strategic plan in partnership with the County of Riverside.

**ii. 2026 Goals:**

1. Implement the marketing and communications plan, including attendance at key trade shows.
2. Continue to identify location, funding, and partnership opportunities for the indoor amateur sports facility, with a goal of breaking ground in 2027.
3. A report on funding models for the sports facility is expected by the end of Q1.

**f. Lauren Bruggemans reported out on the TEAM GPS Foundation and Stewardship.**

**i. Foundation (Workforce Development):**

1. The Tourism Foundation will be rebranded as the Team GPS Foundation to widen its scope.
2. A new fundraising event focused on high school and college culinary programs will be added during Restaurant Week.
3. The senior-level "Visionary Leaders Leadership Institute" program will launch in the spring.

**ii. Stewardship:**

1. The destination became a certified autism destination in April.
2. A sustainable meetings landing page with resources ("Four Cs of Sustainability") was developed.
3. A partnership with Caravanserai will be launched to support local artists with business training.

**g. Davis Meyer reported out on Advocacy & Community Partnerships.**

- i.** The "One Coachella Valley" campaign for short-term rentals achieved over 25 million impressions, and a voter sentiment survey showed 86% support.
- ii.** The team met with all state legislators and will advocate for a cleanup bill for SB 346.
- iii.** Restaurant Week had a record 121 participating restaurants in 2025.
- iv.** Spa Month was launched with 50 participating spas.

**11. VGPS Board of Directors Items (VGPS Board Vote)**

- a. The VGPS Board of Directors were presented with the VGPS 2026 Goals & Objectives for approval.

- i. Board Chair Rolf Hoehn asked for a motion to approve. Celeste Brackley made a motion to approve. Rob Hampton seconded. Board Chair Rolf Hoehn asked for changes or abstentions. No changes or abstentions. The motion passed, and the VGPS 2026 Goals & Objectives were approved based on the roll call at the beginning of the meeting.

**12. JPA Executive Committee Items (JPA Vote)**

- a. The JPA Executive Committee was presented with VGPS 2026 Goals & Objectives for approval.
  - i. JPA Chair Fermon asked for a motion. Evan Trubee with the City of Palm Desert made a motion to approve. Gary Gardner with the City of Desert Hot Springs seconded. JPA Chair Fermon asked for changes or abstentions. No changes or abstentions. The cities of Rancho Mirage and La Quinta, and the County of Riverside, were not present to vote. There was no further discussion, and the VGPS 2026 Goals & Objectives were approved based on the roll call at the beginning of the meeting.

**13. VGPS Board of Directors and JPA Executive Committee members provided updates on their cities and businesses**

**Desert Hot Springs:**

- o The DHS Spa Tour on January 29<sup>th</sup> was very successful – after an 11-year hiatus.
- o Desert Night's on the Boulevard (every Friday & Saturday) will take place this weekend with concerts, food, and a Farmer's Market.

**Cathedral City:**

- o **Taste and Sounds of Cathedral City:** Free concerts every Tuesday, starting February 10<sup>th</sup>.
- o **NCAA College Softball Tournament:** February 19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> at Field of Dreams.
- o **LGBTQ Days:** March 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, featuring bed races and a performance by David Archuleta.

**Palm Springs:**

- o The restored Plaza Theater has 56 events scheduled in the next 60 days.
- o A Marilyn Monroe Centennial Celebration is scheduled for May 28-31, including a Guinness World Record attempt for most look-alikes.

**Indian Wells:** The BNP Paribas tennis tournament starts in the first week of March, with Novak Djokovic expected.

**Indio:**

- o **Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival:** February 12<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- o **Black History Celebration:** Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup>.
- o **First Indio Pickleball Open:** Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at Miles Park.

**Empire Polo Club:**

- o The lacrosse tournament grew to a record 551 teams.
- o The Coachella Valley Invitational, with 18 pro soccer teams, runs from February 6<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>.
- o California Care Force will host a free health clinic from February 27<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**14. The next JPA/Board of Directors Joint Meeting date was announced.**

- a. Friday, March 27, 2026, at the Palm Springs Convention Center

**15. The joint meeting of the JPA Executive Committee and VGPS Board of Directors was adjourned at 10:08 am by JPA Chair, Waymond Fermon.**

The complete Board Packet can be viewed on our website [here](#), and a direct link to the presentation is also available on our website [here](#).

**Clerk for the Board:**

Signed by:  
  
 874A6B20DD81403...  
 Sarah Goslin, Executive Assistant & Board Administrator

**VGPS Board of Directors Secretary:**

DocuSigned by:  
  
 03BB0B0560FE410...  
 Nusrat Mirza, Secretary

**Approval Date:**

3/30/2026  
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