



LODI WINE
WINEGRAPE
COMMISSION

**Lodi Winegrape Commission
Meeting Minutes – FINAL
January 14, 2025**

The Lodi Winegrape Commission met on Tuesday, January 14, 2025

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Diego Olagaray at 12:15PM.
2. Roll was called

<u>Commissioner</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Alternate Commissioner</u>	<u>Present</u>
Scott Armolea	X		
Pieter A den Hartog	X	Garret Schaefer	
Jason Eells	X	Todd Maley	
Dirk Heuvel	EX		
Farrah Felten Jolley	EX	Gerardo Espinosa	X
Joan Kautz	EX	Brett Pieretti	X
Diego Olagaray	X	Mitch Spaletta	
Hadyn Schatz	X	Joe Laranaga	X
Jacylyn Stokes	X	Colton Machado	

Also, in attendance was Mirek Wilczek (CDFA Marketing Branch) and Dawson Lewis. Staff present Stuart Spencer and Stephanie Bolton. A quorum was established.

3. On a motion by Stokes/Schatz the minutes of the October 30, 2024 and November 18, 2024 meetings was approved (Exhibit A & B).
4. Public Comment on Items Appearing on the Agenda – None
5. **Financial Report** – The Finance Committee reviewed the 2023-24 Fiscal & Compliance Audit and presentation by Croce, Sanguinetti & VanderVeen at their meeting on December 3, 2024. The draft audits had previously been sent to board members. There were no findings. Motion to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee to approve the 2023-24 Fiscal & Compliance audits. Stokes/Eells – Carried
6. **Chairman’s Report** – Chair Olagaray updated the board on his recent activities including the including attending committee meetings. He also updated the board on a proposed monument that the City of Lodi is funding to be placed along Highway 5. They are looking for a local entity to take ownership of the artwork. Many believe the Commission, or the California Wine Education Foundation is the natural recipient. Additional community support

has been arranged to fund the installation and site prep. The monument would be placed on a leased piece of property at a nominal rate. More details will follow. Olagaray has also reached out to LWC legal counsel Jill England to initiate the annual review process for the Executive Director. He would like to get it done earlier this year. Additionally, he reminded everyone that the Commission's annual meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2025, at Hutchins Street Square.

7. **Executive Director's Report** - ED Spencer updated the board on recent Commission activities (Exhibit C) including the Winery BID, staff changes, and Visit Lodi. He also discussed the Commission's 2024-25 budget and the implications of the 2024 harvest. Across the board the Commission is reducing spending where possible and aiming to be as efficient and effective as possible. He also discussed recent press concerning the wine and grape industry and efforts to fix some of the regulatory and trade issues (duty drawback) putting California winegrapes at a disadvantage. They also discussed the board retreat in November.
8. **Committee Reports:**

Executive Committee – The committee met at 11am today and primarily discussed market conditions and the Commission budget.

Grower Marketing Committee – The committee met on Thursday, January 10. Before the meeting, staff and committee chair Joan Kautz met with Calhoun & Company to review the past year's public relations activities and results, as well as to discuss future plans. Due to budget constraints, we are focusing on more cost-effective PR strategies, including pitching Lodi stories more frequently and reducing the number of in-market events. The committee has decided to hold off on new advertising and instead prioritize public relations efforts, particularly by highlighting structural inequalities, such as duty drawback, that are negatively impacting the winegrape market. The PR activities from the past year have increased the visibility of Lodi Wine in the media.

Winery Marketing Committee – The committee met on Wednesday, January 8, and is continuing to plan for the Lodi Wine & Chocolate event, which will take place over Valentine's weekend. Tickets for the event have been on sale since early November. The committee is also working on new promotions, including filming a video during the event.

Additionally, a small working group is forming to discuss immediate actions that can be taken to increase visitation and visibility for Lodi wineries. One of their initiatives is centered around the concept of "No Reservations." This idea aims to highlight the accessibility of Lodi's wine and wine-tasting experiences, especially in contrast to other regions that often require reservations and charge high tasting fees. The concept also conveys a welcoming message, emphasizing that Lodi wineries are open to everyone..

Lodi Rules – The LODI RULES Committee met on December 10, and the Commission held its annual leadership meeting for LODI RULES on December 11. During this meeting, Stephanie, Stuart, and Pieter (Committee Chair) reviewed the past year with the auditors and

Protected Harvest. The program has grown to cover 75,000 acres across California, Washington, and Israel, with about half of those acres in District 11. Staff is also working to renew the certification contract with Protected Harvest for the 2025 growing season and aims to recover the \$0.20 per acre fee that was negotiated in the previous contract. Additionally, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the LODI RULES program on January 22 at the annual meeting, starting at 10 a.m. During this event, we will recognize five of the six original growers who first certified in 2005: Vino Farms, Colligiere Farming, Mohr-Fry Ranches, Keith Watts, and Sutter Home. Following the meeting, the annual LODI RULES vision workshop will take place.

Research, Education, Communication – The Research, Education and Communication committee is scheduled to meet this Thursday, January 16. Stephanie continues to help growers navigating the challenges of vineyards removals, ag burning, and the various incentive programs in place. In late November the committee hosted Dr. Julie Urban from Penn State. She is the leading expert on Spotted Lantern Fly. It was a productive visit and much was learned as we prepare for this invasive pest to arrive in CA

9. Other Organization Reports:

CWEF – no additional information.

LDGGA – no report

SJCFCB – no report

Lodi Grape Festival – no report

CAWG – no report

10. **Public Comment** – No comment

11. **Agenda Items for Future Meetings** – None

12. The next meeting will be the Board Retreat, scheduled Thursday, March 6 at Noon.

13. The meeting adjourned at 1:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart Spencer
On behalf of Pieter den Hartog
Secretary