



LODI WINE
WINEGRAPE
COMMISSION

**Lodi Winegrape Commission
Meeting Minutes – FINAL
January 20, 2026**

The Lodi Winegrape Commission met on Monday, January 20, 2026

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jacylyn Stokes Iniguez at 3:05PM.
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	Mitch Spaletta	
Jason Eells	EX		
Dirk Heuvel	X		
Farrah Felten Jolley	EX	Gerardo Espinosa	X
Joan Kautz	E X	Brett Pieretti	EX
Diego Olagaray	EX	Galen Schmiedt	EX
Hadyn Schatz	X	Joe Laranaga	
Jacylyn Stokes Iniguez	X	Colton Machado	

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

3. On a motion by Schatz/Heuvel the minutes of December 1, 2025 were approved. (Exhibit A).
4. Public Comment on Items Appearing on the Agenda – None
5. **Financial Report** – The Finance Committee reviewed the 2024-25 Fiscal & Compliance Audit and presentation by Croce, Sanguinetti & VanderVeen at their meeting on December 18, 2025. 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 2024-25 Fiscal & Compliance audits. Armolea/Schatz – Carried
6. **Chairman’s Report** – Chair Stokes Iniguez updated the board on recent activities. She also asked to discuss the California Association of Winegrape Growers and Family Winemakers sponsored state legislation (AB 1585) to close the loophole in the American appellation for wines bottled and sold in California. Under current federal law, a wine bearing an American designation can contain up to 25% foreign wine. The Lodi Winegrape Commission was

established under the California Marketing Act of 1937 to promote, protect, and ensure fair and orderly marketing of winegrapes grown in the Lodi region. While the Commission does not engage in political advocacy, campaign activity, or routine lobbying, it is both appropriate and necessary for the Commission to communicate with policymakers when an issue directly affects the integrity, demand, and economic viability of the commodity it represents. The federal rule allowing wine labeled “American” to contain up to 25 percent foreign wine directly impacts how California winegrapes are marketed, priced, and perceived by consumers. This labeling practice creates consumer confusion, weakens the value of the American appellation, and reduces demand for domestically grown grapes by allowing imported wine to be substituted behind a domestic label. These impacts go to the core of the Commission’s statutory purpose, which includes protecting the reputation of the region, preventing misleading marketing practices, and supporting stable markets for growers. Engaging on this issue is not political advocacy but commodity protection. Providing factual information and grower perspectives to policymakers regarding labeling integrity, market transparency, and economic harm to growers is consistent with the Commission’s mandate and with longstanding CDFA guidance governing marketing orders and commissions. Therefore, Chairperson Stokes is asking the board to support the proposed legislation. Motion to support AB 1585 truth in wine labeling. Heuvel/Espinosa - Carried

7. **Executive Director’s Report** - ED Spencer updated the board on recent Commission activities including progress on the formation of the Lodi Winery Improvement district, the Commission referendum, bulk wine imports, the budget and other activities. (Exhibit B)

8. **Committee Reports:**

Executive Committee – The committee has not met.

Grower Marketing Committee – The committee is scheduled to meet on February 4, 2026.

Winery Marketing Committee – The committee met on Wednesday, January 7, 2026. The committee launched the “No Reservations” campaign this past fall and has been putting out social content to position Lodi as the easy, friendly, accessible and fun place to go wine tasting. Additionally, the committee has been working on the 29th annual Lodi Wine & Chocolate Weekend scheduled for February 14-15, 2026. Ticket sales are trending very similar to last year. The committee also committed to sponsoring the Festival of Forgotten Grapes which will host two tasting events in 2026 in San Jose and Los Angeles.

Lodi Rules – The LODI RULES Committee met on December 9, 2025, and the Commission hosted its annual LODI RULES leadership meeting on December 11. During that meeting, Stephanie, Stuart, and Committee Chair Pieter reviewed the past year with program auditors and Protected Harvest. While the program experienced an overall 11% decrease in enrolled acreage, acreage enrolled in Lodi increased. As a result, Lodi (District 11) is now approaching nearly 50% certified acreage.

The committee will host the Annual LODI RULES meeting and lunch on January 21, 2026. At this meeting, Stephanie will introduce the new “Wooden Nickels” initiative as a creative way

to promote Lodi wines and grapes. Lodi growers can now receive redeemable wooden nickels for one complimentary wine tasting at the Lodi Wine Visitor Center. Growers are encouraged to take these tokens on their travels and share them with restaurant servers, wine shop staff, and younger consumers who are just beginning to explore wine. Wooden nickels are available at grower meetings and Lodi Winegrape Commission Board and committee meetings.

Following the meeting, a Sustainable Vision Workshop will be held and facilitated by Kent Reeves

Research, Education, Communication – The Research, Education, and Communication Committee met on January 12. The committee discussed the upcoming Commission referendum and the important work staff is doing that often takes place behind the scenes. In particular, Stephanie has been working diligently to improve the review process for the disbursement of GWSS/PD research funds. Over the past 20 years, Lodi growers have invested significant resources into this program, and it is critical that the review process is rigorous, transparent, and accountable to the long-term needs of the winegrowing community.

In addition, Stephanie has been working closely with CDFA to strengthen the grapevine certification program and recently met with CDFA staff regarding the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF). Much of this work happens out of public view, but it is essential to the long-term viability of the industry.

Stephanie continues to help growers one on one navigating the challenges of vineyard removals, ag burning, and the various incentive programs in place. Committee members agreed to participate in a new concept of “Member Projects” where each REC Committee member leads a project that they care about on behalf of the Commission to help the broader Lodi Winegrowing Community. Each project will be in the area of viticulture research, education and/or communications. Committee members Joe Valente and Cameron Heinitz hosted the first activity this past weekend when that assisted Tokay FFA with their Vine Pruning Competition. Over 100 high school students from across the state were in Lodi for the competition.

9. Other Organization Reports:

CWEF – no report.

LDGGA – Amy Blagg updated the board on Lodi District Grape Growers Association news and events including local legislature outreach. The annual business meeting is scheduled for February 9 and the annual dinner for Febr 19. They have a good delegation of local elected officials planning on attending. They are also working on putting together water and economic forums in the spring.

SJCFB – Andrew Genasci, Executive Director of the SJ County Farm Bureau updated the Commission on their recent activities. The California and American Farm Bureaus both added reforming duty drawback to their policy and legislative initiatives. Having the American Farm Bureau support helps broaden the coalition back in DC to remove the loophole that is incentivizing bulk imports. Additionally, the Farm Bureau’s annual Taste of San Joaquin is scheduled for April 2, 2026.

Lodi Grape Festival – no report

CAWG – no report

10. **Public Comment** – No comment

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

12. The next meeting was set for March 17, 2026 at Noon.

13. The meeting adjourned at 4:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart Spencer
On behalf of Pieter den Hartog
Secretary