

LWBID / LODI WINERY ALLIANCE MEETING MINUTES
March 18, 2026

The Lodi Winery Alliance met at 10:00 am on Wednesday, March 18, at the Lodi Winegrape Commission office, 2545 W. Turner Rd., Lodi, CA.

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:06 pm.

2. Roll Call

Board Members Present: Steve Carson, Tom Hoffman, Kyle Lerner, Faryn Schatz, Natalie Scotto, Sarah Spenker Pratt, Jeremy Trettevik, Jacob Woodworth, Wes Rhea

Public present: Liz Bokisch, Bokisch Vineyards; representative from Allied Grape Growers

Staff Present: Stuart Spencer, Jenny Heitman, Allison Champion

A Quorum was established.

3. Approval of February 18, 2026 Minutes

Motion: Approve minutes as presented

Motion by: Hoffman/Spenker

Result: Motion carried

4. Public Comment on Items Appearing on Agenda

No public comment.

5. Strategic Direction & Planning

Stuart Spencer reported that an organizational subgroup (comprising himself and two board members) met recently, following the marketing subgroup meeting. The board created informal, non-quorum subgroups to compartmentalize and advance work between meetings.

The organizational subgroup discussed the value of engaging a consultant to develop a strategic plan. Spencer has reached out to Stacie Jacobs at Soltera Strategies who previously facilitated strategic planning for both the Winegrape Commission (approximately 2018) and the winery community under the Commission umbrella (2021). That prior effort identified four strategic priorities, including establishing a stable revenue source for the industry.

The consultant is based in Paso Robles, manages Visit Paso, and is familiar with Lodi's past challenges in aligning winery and visitor bureau efforts. Spencer has a follow-up call scheduled for the next day and will report back with a proposal.

Several board members voiced support for the strategic planning process, noting that it would create shared ownership and a clear roadmap. A board member emphasized the importance of getting broad winery input, not just the board's perspective. Spencer outlined three levels of input used in past processes: the core board group, a community survey, and selected one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders.

There is no proposal before the board at this time. Spencer intends to fast-track the process and bring a proposal to the next meeting. In the meantime, short-term initiatives will continue moving forward.

6. Organizational Setup

Nonprofit Status

Documentation has been submitted to Civitas to file for nonprofit status. An additional form requires the board chair's signature and will be circulated when available.

Bank Accounts

The checking account is open and active. Signature cards were available for board members to sign at the meeting; one absent board member will sign upon return from travel. Once all signatures are in place, the initial \$20,000 contribution from LAVA can be deposited.

Staff reported working with the Commission accounting manager to set up a chart of accounts, including GL categories for assessment revenue, penalties, and interest, coordinated through HDL.

Management Services Agreement

Spencer addressed the need for a formal agreement between the LWA and the Commission for administrative services. He suggested a possible structure: a three-month interim agreement through the end of the Commission's fiscal year, followed by a six-month agreement starting July 1. The Lodi Winery Alliance will operate on calendar basis

Insurance

Paperwork is being submitted to obtain insurance bids. No further update at this time.

7. Assessment Collections (HDL)

HDL is setting up an online portal for wineries to submit quarterly data and pay assessments. Payment options will include credit card (winery absorbs processing fee) or ACH (organization absorbs the ~\$1.50 fee). The county required the LWA, rather than the county itself, to sign the merchant card agreement.

The finalized winery list required significant cleanup, as the initial pull of all ABC licenses within the district included many inactive and duplicate entries. Staff classified each as active or

inactive. Most major wineries have returned their entity information forms; remaining stragglers will have minimal revenue impact.

Target for portal launch is April 1, though it may extend slightly into April.

A board member asked whether wineries can absorb the 1.5% assessment rather than passing it to consumers. Spencer confirmed this is the winery's choice but noted it could create consumer confusion. No consumer complaints about the assessment have been reported.

8. Communications & Newsletter

Staff presented the new weekly newsletter template, now branded under the Lodi Winery Alliance with a distinct orange color scheme. The first issue will include an introductory note from the board, a featured article, industry opportunities, a No Reservations update, recent blog and press coverage, the marketing toolkit, and a "From Our Partner Organizations" section with updates from the Commission, Visit Lodi, and others.

This newsletter replaces the existing Commission newsletter to the winery community. The board discussed using a dedicated LWA email address as the sender; staff will explore options. A board member confirmed the newsletter should clarify that the Lodi Winery Alliance is the LWBID board.

Board members emphasized including value-add content (marketing insights, winemaking tips, industry articles) and were encouraged to forward relevant material to staff.

The Commission's Winery Marketing Committee is winding down, with the LWA Marketing Subgroup assuming its meeting time: first Wednesday of each month at 9:00AM.

Website Migration

Spencer reported progress on the lodiwine.com migration. A developer (5forests) has created a script expected to migrate most of the ~1,400 content pages from WineDirect to WordPress without significant additional cost. The migration will also address ADA compliance issues.

Discussion touched on coordinating with Visit Lodi's site, including API-linked event calendars and winery listings. A board member noted the SEO risks of duplicating content across two sites. Plans for a winery event submission form were also discussed.

Winery Map: Sacramento County wineries not paying the assessment will be removed. A Galt winery within the Lodi appellation but outside the LWBID boundaries has requested voluntary participation under the same assessment terms. Spencer will draft a voluntary participation policy for the April agenda. The map will be updated with the LWA logo.

9. Committees

Staff is following up with a provider about educational classes for the winery community. A UC Davis-Lodi mixer is planned for April 30 at Ruhstaller Farms in Dixon, aimed at connecting students with Lodi career opportunities. A Cal Poly student group is visiting the following week.

Spencer encouraged board members to participate in SVB's annual survey to ensure Lodi is represented in industry data.

American Fare Update

Approximately 80 tickets have been sold for the American Fair event at the local resort property during street fair weekend, roughly half through hotel packages. The target is approximately 500 attendees.

Board members acknowledged that the organizers' approach lacked early community collaboration but agreed to support the event, noting it brings consumer traffic and positive exposure to the region. Visit Lodi is sponsoring and facilitated a video shoot.

Market Conditions

Board members reported first-quarter business trending up year over year. Broader sales data appears to be flattening, though DTC remains down statewide. California visitation overall is down due to reduced international travel, but domestic visitation is stable and Lodi lodging is up year over year. Visit California is exploring how to better integrate wine into its marketing pillars.

10. Public Comment on Items Not Appearing on the Agenda

No public comment.

11. Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Voluntary participation policy, management services agreement, strategic planning update.

12. Next Meeting Date

Full Board Meeting: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at 10:00 AM

13. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately 11:28AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart Spencer
On behalf of Sarah Spenker
Secretary

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