



GROWER MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES – APPROVED
February 4, 2026

The Grower Marketing Committee of the Lodi Winegrape Commission met at 12:00pm on Wednesday, February 4, at the Lodi Winegrape Commission office, 2545 W. Turner Rd., Lodi, CA.

The meeting was called to order at 12:25pm.

Roll was called. Committee members Joan Kautz, Curt Gillespie, Craig Ledbetter, Aaron Shinn, Aslyn Eells, Mohrgan Fry, and Colton Machado, were in attendance, along with staff members Stuart Spencer, Jenny Heitman, Dr. Stephanie Bolton, and Allison Champion.

A quorum was established.

Minutes from the November 20, 2025, meeting were approved. Ledbetter / Shinn – carried.

Public Comment on Items Appearing on the Agenda

No public comments on items appearing on the agenda were made.

Marketing & Advertising

Staff provided an overview of ongoing and future marketing activities.

“No Reservations” Initiative – The “No Reservations” initiative, launched October 2025, positions Lodi as approachable, unpretentious, and welcoming, focusing on accessibility and hospitality rather than exclusivity. Media coverage to date has included Forbes, Wine Business, Sacramento Business Journal, Travel and Tour World, and Trend Hunter, among others. Staff is supporting the initiative through lodiwine.com blog articles (four to date), along with coordinated social media and email newsletter content.

Export Marketing –

- **Wine Paris (February 9-11, 2026)** – Lodi will have a regional presence in the California Wine Pavillion at next week’s event. Stuart Spencer will attend.
- **Mexico Market Lodi Tour (April 20-24, 2026)** – Lodi will participate in a tour of Mexican markets (Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Los Cabos), hosting a curated mix of educational seminars, trade tastings, and exclusive dinners.

Public Relations

Staff provided an overview of ongoing and future public relations activities.



CAWG Leader of the Year – Stuart Spencer was named CAWG’s 2026 Leader of the Year and will be honored at an Awards of Excellence reception on January 27, 2026, during the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium in Sacramento.

Jim Gordon Visit to Lodi (January 15-16, 2026) – Jim Gordon of *James Suckling Wine* visited Lodi to gather content for an upcoming feature, touring five wineries and joining Markus Niggli of Markus Wine Co. to prune an old-vine vineyard.

Wine Sample Mailings – Wine samples were sent to Sara Jimenez (*Somm in the City*) and Ana Carolina Quintela (*Decanter*) upon request for evaluation and potential inclusion in upcoming coverage.

Grower Outreach & Education

Grower-Friendly Marketing Ideas Blog – See “Reports from Other Committees: Research, Education & Communications Committee.”

Lodi Winegrape Commission Annual Meeting (March 5, 2026) – The Commission will host its annual meeting on Wednesday, March 5, from 4:00-6:30pm. A brief presentation will be followed by a wine social. All are welcome to attend.

FY 2025-26 Budget

The budget for December 2025 was reviewed (Exhibit B).

Reports from Other Committees

LODI RULES Committee

Dr. Stephanie Bolton developed LODI RULES wooden nickel tokens that can be redeemed for a complimentary tasting at the Lodi Wine Visitor Center. Lodi growers will be encouraged to distribute the tokens to their contacts as a simple incentive to introduce new audiences to Lodi wines and the region.

Research, Education & Communications Committee

Grower-Friendly Marketing Ideas Blog – Dr. Stephanie Bolton is developing a blog article for lodigrowers.com that urges Lodi growers to adopt simple, consumer-focused marketing (e.g., storytelling, social media, agritourism) to help drive wine demand and support grape sales amid current industry challenges.

Winery Marketing Committee

Lodi Winery Business Improvement District (LWBID) – Assessments for LWBID began January 1, 2026. A board of directors was finalized, and officers were elected at the January 13 meeting.

Lodi Wine & Chocolate (February 14-15, 2026) – The committee is hosting the 29th annual event in 2026.

Public Comment on Items Not Appearing on the Agenda



No public comments were made on items not appearing on the agenda.

Set Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Grower Marketing Committee is scheduled for April 8 at 12:00pm.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Kautz, Committee Chair

Questions or requests for further information should be directed to Joan Kautz (209-712-3300) or Stuart Spencer (209-367-4727).