LAKE COUNTY
WINEGRAPE COMMISSION
NORTH COAST | CALIFORNIA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
Jon Holzapfel

Vice Chair
Joy Merrilees

Secretary-Treasurer
Mayra Benitez

Pilar Luchsinger White

Clay Shannon

Padraic Sherlock

Jonathan Walters

David Weiss

Lake County Winegrape Commission
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, August 18, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

1. Meeting was called to order by Chair Jon Holzapfel at 2:05 p.m. Board Members present: Jon Holzapfel (via Zoom), Joy Merrilees, Mayra Benitez, Pilar Luchsinger White, Padraic Sherlock, Jonathan Walters, David Weiss. Board Members absent: Clay Shannon. Quorum established. Also present: Megan Hoberg, Marketing & Events Manager (via Zoom); Miranda Townsend, CDFA Economist (via Zoom); Jill England, Attorney (via Zoom)

2. Minutes from the June 19, 2025, LCWC Board meeting were approved (*Motion #1; Weiss/Merrilees, 7-0-1*).

   Chair Jon Holzapfel gave a brief Executive Committee report, noting Debra Sommerfield's retirement and the actions needed to replace the President position. The Board decided to retain the title "President" with a salary range of $95,000–$105,000. Applicants will be required to reside in the North Coast Appellation. The job description will be amended to include responsibilities for obtaining state and federal grant funds, and Jill England will prepare the revisions. Once finalized, the position will be posted on LinkedIn and Winejobs.com, with applications directed to jobs@lakecountywinegrape.org. Resumes will be forwarded to Joy Merrilees, who will screen applicants and conduct initial Zoom or phone interviews. The Executive Committee, will meet biweekly to review applications and determine next steps.

   The Board approved increasing vacation accrual for the President's position from 10 to 15 days annually, outside of the Employee Handbook's standard 10-day policy *(Motion #2; Holzapfel/Walters, 7-0-1).*

   The Board approved splitting the current Secretary/Treasurer role into two separate officer positions pursuant to Article IV of Commission Bylaws *(Motion #3; Weiss/Holzapfel, 7-0-1).*

   The Board approved Mayra Benitez as Treasurer *(Motion #4; Luchsinger/Merrilees, 7-0-1).*

   The Board approved Jonathan Walters as Secretary *(Motion #5; Sherlock/Weiss, 7-0-1).*

3. Closed Session

4. Return from closed session. Holzapfel noted that Megan Hoberg will receive a pay increase and that details will be discussed offline.

5. Holzapfel discussed the upcoming referendum, noting that the vote can be conducted three to six months before the end of the fiscal year. Jill England provided a recap of Voter Access Procedures and confirmed that existing practices remain compliant.

   The Board approved to hold the referendum vote February 1, 2026 *(Motion #6; Merrilees/Walters, 7-0-1).*

6. Marketing Committee Chair Pilar Luchsinger provided an update on activities, suggesting "on the road" seminars at out-of-area venues during the winter months. Marketing & Events Manager Megan Hoberg elaborated on current and upcoming activities, including the assessment mailing to growers and vintners completed on August 1, 2025, distribution of the Recap Piece to growers and the Buyer Guide to vintners, and the submission of two LCWC videos to the Wine

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Spectator competition. Additional Grower Spotlights will be released soon. Upcoming events include the Pear Festival on September 27, 2025, the Global Buyers Marketplace on October 27–28, 2025, the San Diego Food & Wine Festival on November 7–8, 2025, a Comparative Tasting at Soper Reese on November 13, 2025, and the WIN Expo on December 4, 2025.Research & Education Committee Chair Sherlock mentioned that he spoke to Chris Chen about vineyard mothballing and that results from their study are a few years out.

Research & Education Committee Chair Padraic Sherlock reported on discussions with Chris Chen regarding vineyard mothballing, noting that results from related studies are still several years away. Merrilees mentioned that the County of Lake is exploring grant opportunities to support the use of sheep grazing in vineyards as a mothballing method. Megan Hoberg noted that Chris Chen offered to host a meeting on the subject of mothballing at the LCWC office in early December, and Holzapfel suggested including instruction on vine grafting as an additional topic. Merrilees mentioned that the County of Lake is exploring grants to help provide ag resources for sheep to graze in vineyards for mothballing purposes.

Sherlock also noted that Jett Johannson of Simonit & Sirch will complete the final year of the Lake County Pruning School study, comparing cluster counts and phenolics between Beckstoffer demonstration vineyard blocks and adjacent conventionally pruned blocks.

7. Vice Chair Joy Merrilees gave a brief update on Community/Industry Relations activities, including the state of the Lake County Winery Association. She also suggested that LCWC explore obtaining a non-profit status to raise funds and host marketing events. Jonathan will review previous minutes where this topic was discussed and what was advised and voted on. Miranda Townsend mentioned that Stuart Spencer of the Lodi Winegrape Commission would be a good resource to find out how their organization implemented a non-profit for their organization.

David Weiss noted that vineyard values are declining, presenting challenges for refinancing, and stated he would speak with County officials regarding reappraisal options available to growers.

8. Treasurer Myra Benitez reviewed fourth-quarter financials and will meet with LCWC Bookkeeper Mary Terou regarding projections.

Board approved FY 2024-25 year-end financials (*Motion #7; Luchsinger/Merrilees, 7-0-1*).

9. Next meeting: 3:00 p.m. on October 14, 2025

10. Adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally

Committee Members	Motion #1	Motion #2	Motion #3	Motion #4	Motion #5	Motion #6	Motion #7
Jon Holzapfel, *Chair*	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
Joy Merrilees, *Vice Chair*	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
Mayra Benitez, *Secretary/Treasurer*	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
Pilar Luchsinger White	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
Clay Shannon	**Absent**	**Absent**	**Absent**	**Absent**	**Absent**	**Absent**	**Absent**
Padraic Sherlock	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
Jonathan Walters	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
David Weiss	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**	**Aye**
FINAL TALLY	**7-0-1**	**7-0-1**	**7-0-1**	**7-0-1**	**7-0-1**	**7-0-1**	**7-0-1**

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Hoberg

Megan Hoberg, Marketing & Events Manager, Lake County Winegrape Commission