

SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
SMTT Conference Room, 2427 Main Street
Wednesday, July 12, 2017
5:15 p.m. – 6:50 p.m.

Board Members Present: Raphael Lunetta (Chair), Nicole Flynn (Vice Chair), Darlene Evans, Albin Gielicz, Rosemary Regalbuto, Neil Carrey, Rick Cole and Laurel Rosen.

Board Members Absent: Richard Chacker (Treasurer), Paul Leclerc (Secretary) and Juan Viramontes.

Staff Present: Misti Kerns, Kim Sidoriak and Monique Haslock.

Call to Order: Chairman Lunetta called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Roll Call and Welcome Neil Carrey: Board Members introduced themselves and welcomed new member, Neil Carrey. Carrey shared a brief overview of his personal and professional life which included serving on more than 20 non-profit boards and 15 committees.

Chair Report: Chairman Lunetta mentioned that when he joined the Board as Chairman, he wanted to champion the value of tourism and create a bond between residents, the community, and small businesses to better understand tourism in our complex city. Last weekend, he observed just how busy the city and beaches were and feels the perception of Santa Monica Travel & Tourism, as well as the city, needs to be addressed with the growing homeless and safety issues. Lunetta asked Board Members to stay engaged, work as a team to make a difference, and anticipate needs when they witness something heading in the wrong direction – say something, do something. He mentioned that SMTT is looking at how frequently the board should meet moving forward and will be addressed later in the meeting.

City Managers Update: Cole shared that the Downtown Community Plan's formal adoption will be in two weeks. Council took action on three new items: 1) Streamlining the process for housing projects – 7,500 sq. ft. or less it will be handed by Planning Commission; 2) Minimum of 20% affordable housing and up to at least 30%; 3) Parking structures – will not have minimum parking structure requirements so if businesses have more parking than needed, it can be released and utilized by residents.

He addressed the homeless situation stating that the city will be: 1) Applying principles of CompStat, a management tool used by police departments to get timely and accurate information, rapid deployment of resources, effective tactics, and relentless follow-up, to help bring real time numbers/data in the field – first meeting will be July 26, 2017; 2) Adopting philosophy of relentless engagement with every homeless in a humane, compassionate, and effective way; 3) Engaging the community by getting more people involved; 4) Working closer with L.A. County cities such as City of Los Angeles, Culver City, and West Hollywood.

Cole mentioned they were monitoring the Twilight Concert Series. This week 20,000 are expected. If the remainder are at 15,000-20,000 the city can manage safely and concerts will continue this summer.

Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes were not presented or voted on due to lack of a quorum.

Board Financials: May 2017 financial were not offered or voted on due to lack of a quorum.

Approved at the September 13, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting.

Staff Updates: Kerns proposed meeting every other month starting in September as she understands a monthly commitment can be difficult. August and December are typically dark due to holidays and slow periods. The possibility of losing engagement was mentioned however we may have Lane/Committee meetings in the off months, and could always call a special meeting if necessary. Looking at piloting this new meeting schedule for 6-months. During the months when no meeting takes place, board and staff communication will be sent out. Meeting dates are as follows: September 13, 2017, November 8, 2017, January 10, 2018, and March 14, 2018.

Kerns gave Rosen the floor and she announced that the Chamber has re-appointed Nicole Flynn and Juan Viramontes to the board and appointed Matthew Lehman to fill the vacant seat.

She mentioned that people need to speak-up and speak-out. When issues arise regarding homeless, or more importantly any crime, it is good practice for businesses to let SMTT and council know.

Kerns touched on staff turnover and mentioned that flex time and vacation time have not been reviewed or altered in several years. SMTT will propose new policies to ensure we are better able to recruit and retain on competitive, fair, and legal terms.

Sidoriak shared that SMTT was at the California Travel Association annual conference and was joined by Evan Meyer of Beautify Earth as Beautify Earth was nominated by SMTT to receive the 2017 Cultural Tourism Champion Award. A press release and photo opp are being arranged to share the excellent news with the community and press.

She stated that we continue to forge ahead with our Community relations plan, which includes columns every other week in Santa Monica Daily Press and content in every issue of Seascape. The two main messages in the community relations plan are “What Was Your First Visit to Santa Monica?”, encouraging residents to share their first visit stories and therefore remember that many people living here also started out as visitors. The first visit campaign includes social media posts, print ads and digital banners on local community outlets. The second message is Tourism Myths, addressing commonly held myths about tourism in Santa Monica.

Sidoriak said that SMTT helped celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Green Certified Business program at City Hall with Sustainable Works. SMTT was a founding partner of the GBC program 10 years ago and has played a role in promoting green businesses and encouraging tourism business partners to get certified. Loews, Le Meridien, Shore Hotel and Ocean View Hotel are just a few examples of green businesses from the tourism sector.

Kerns shared we have a new Group Sales Manager, Beth Hansler, starting next week. Beth comes from Loews but has worked in many hotels and is involved with many non-profits in the community.

For the Good of the Order: Gielicz shared July 15th is the monthly bike ride with Mayor Winterer, and July 20th is Montana Art Walk. Carrey said the city opened 6 acres at the airport for recreational use, and a White Dinner is next month. Regalbuto shared Beautify Earth painted 3 utility boxes on Montana, and Peace Initiative which addresses human sex trafficking - would like to discuss further with Kerns. Rosen mentioned you will find information on Green Tours in September and Water Conservation in October on their website.

Adjournment: Being no further business Chairman Lunetta adjourned meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Approved at the September 13, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting.