

SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
SMTT Conference Room, 2427 Main Street
Wednesday, May 10, 2017
5:10 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: Raphael Lunetta (Chair), Ellis O'Connor (Secretary), Richard Chacker (Treasurer), Darlene Evans, Albin Gielicz, Jeff King, Paul Leclerc, RoseMary Regalbuto, Juan Viramontes, Rick Cole.

Board Members Absent: Nicole Flynn (Vice Chair).

Additional Attendees: Margaret Willis (City of Santa Monica/Human Services Administrator) and Sgt. Jeff Glaser (Santa Monica Police Department).

Staff Present: Misti Kerns, Kim Sidoriak, Evan Edwards, Nika Jalali, and Monique Haslock.

Call to Order: Chairman Lunetta called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Update on Homeless: Willis gave an informative update on the most recent statistics released at the city council meeting last night, including results from the January count. She stated that after years of a stable count we are seeing an increase in numbers. Overall total count is up 26% which includes a street count of 39%. Shelter count is up 9% which is good as people are indoors. In Los Angeles County 75-80% are unsheltered homeless. Some additional statistics – 36% have been homeless 5 years or more, 29% have been in SM less than one month, 23% were here looking for work, 19% here for the beach, 16% here for services. We've finally reached a crisis point so other communities are now willing to take action. She also shared The City of Santa Monica now has a homeless multidisciplinary street team consisting of licensed professionals who are better equipped to deal with medical and mental issues. They ride along with officers heading the Homeless Liaison Program and provide on-site treatment. Since assembled, the team has assisted with 25 homeless and successfully gotten 11 off the streets and 3 into permanent housing. Willis mentioned a few things they are doing to prioritizing efforts locally and regionally: focusing on the most vulnerable, taking a leadership role on regional level, and advocating for SM to get a fair share of Measure H funds.

Sgt. Glaser stated that due to the passing of prop 47, which no longer makes drug possession a felony, numbers have increased. Homeless drug users will take time served knowing they will get out quickly due to overcrowding. He shared that property crimes have gone up between 20-26%; however, most are crimes of opportunity and the recent car break-ins cannot be attributed to the increase in homeless. Stg. Glaser also stated homeless don't always want housing because they are used to the streets. Ron Hooks with West Coast Care has been a great resource in getting homeless back home. Ron and his son ride bikes around the city approaching homeless asking what their plan is and help reunite them with family in their hometown. They turned 6 people around in one day.

Open Nominations for EOC for FY 17/18: Chair Lunetta opened the floor for nominations of 2017/2018 officers – Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Board members were encouraged to nominate (self-nominations also welcome) at the meeting or via email to Lunetta and/or Kerns. All board of directors were asked to please nominate individuals only after confirming the individuals interest in serving. Cole confirmed that City Council will no longer accept board votes of suggested new directors for appointment however individual board member recommendations are encouraged.

Approved at the June 21, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting.

City Managers Update: Cole commented on the growing homeless situation stating there is a meeting on June 20th to address homelessness involving many local business leaders and includes representation from SMTT. Staff is focused on 1) Transitioning - City Manager's Office looking for candidates for senior positions. Assistant City Manager, Elaine Polachek, will retire on July 11th; 2) Downtown Community Plan – There are two hearings for public input with the final meeting on May 31. 3) Budget – proposed biennial budget comes out on May 24th with few changes from current, and a focus on further overall savings to ease the growing CalPERS expenses. 4) Mayor's Bike Ride – Cole recently joined the group and will work to help create a seamless experience on the beach front, new pedestrian path, and improved bike path adjoining the beach and pier areas.

Chair Report: Lunetta encouraged the group to work together to pinpoint important areas and challenges regarding the homeless, and realizes it's not an easy fix and will need everyone's attention. He shared that using the trespass arrest authorization form is a great tool to assist with homeless removal from the property by PD during non-operational hours. Lunetta stressed the importance of having open communication regarding all challenges faced by small business owners and residents, minimum wage, and tourism. He thanked Jeff King and Ellis O'Connor for their many years of commitment and leadership as their board terms end in June. Lunetta also reminded the Board of the tourism summit on Friday at 8:00am and any feedback after the event is always welcomed and appreciated.

Meeting Minutes: Secretary O'Connor presented the meeting minutes from the April 12, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was offered by Lunetta and seconded by Evans; the motion passed unanimously with all SMTT board members present with the exception of Vice Chair Flynn.

Board Financials: Treasurer Chacker presented the March 2017 financials. A motion to accept the financials was offered by Secretary O'Connor and seconded by King; the motion passed unanimously with all SMTT Board Members present with the exception of Vice Chair Flynn.

Staff Updates: Kerns shared SMTT is in the process of prioritizing its international and domestic markets based on feedback from hotel leadership of GMs and DOSMs as we must continue to evaluate international travel changes and booking trends. Additional funding from the city has been requested in order to assist in sustaining current production, revenues and to meet the growing need to focus on programs in emerging markets.

Sidoriak advised the Board that in celebration of National Tourism Week, May 7-13, 2017, SMTT kicked off its bi-monthly Tourism Talks column on Monday with a "What's Your First Visit to SM" story from Mayor Ted Winterer. All Board members were encouraged to share their first visit stories to help remind residents that many of us were first visitors to Santa Monica. The bi-monthly tourism talks columns will feature various first visit stories, along with features of how residents can take advantage of services offered by the tourism industry (i.e.- Residential discounts at hotels, hotel happy hours and special events, etc.).

Jalali reported on business development activities in the following markets: China, Brazil, Australia, United Kingdom, and Germany. She also shared that there will be three upcoming classes for the I Am Santa Monica Program on May 17th, 28th and 29th from 3:00pm-6:00pm. Jalali explained SMTT and some of our partners will be attending IPW, the largest travel trade show, in June where they will be meeting with over 152 clients.

Adjournment: Being no further business Chairman Lunetta adjourned meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Approved at the June 21, 2017 Board of Directors Meeting.