

MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SMTT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2020
DIGITAL ZOOM MEETING VIA SECURE LINK - 5:00PM

Call to Order: Vice Chairman Hirsch called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

Roll Call & Self Introductions: Vice-Chairman Hirsch called for self-introductions. Board Members gave brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

Present: Vice-Chairman Damien Hirsch, Secretary Neil Carrey, Treasurer Albin Gielicz, Member Darlene Evans, Member Gerry Peck, Member Katie E. Lichtig, Member Lauralee Asch, Member Jeff Klocke, and Member Jan Williamson.

Absent: Member Rosemary Regalbuto

Also, Present: Lane Dilg, Interim City Manager, SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns, SMTT Director of Operations Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief Marketing Officer Kim Sidoriak, SMTT Director of Business Development Brian Wright, and observing, CSUN Student Daniel Medved.

CLOSED SESSION

Vice-Chairman Hirsch provided an overview of the impacts of Covid-19 stay at home order to the hotel industry from a financial and operational standpoint.

CEO Update: Kerns provided an update on the immediate and long-term effects of Covid-19 on SMTT operations and staff layoffs and reductions of pay. She emphasized the need for accurate forecasting as it's very difficult to predict the next 18 months. Review of all expenses and needs will continue to be evaluated on a weekly basis. She informed of the industry virtual meetings and events she's attended on behalf of SMTT. Kerns recapped communication efforts amongst City of Santa Monica, SMTT, Santa Monica Chamber, DTSM, BID representatives for Pico, Montana and Main St. Chamber of Commerce Chair and SMTT BOD Klocke shared the cooperative work regarding a business survey to help rank needs for economic recovery that will be proposed to council. Kerns added the importance of the Experience Management Plan as it can serve as a guide for city staff as we build to recovery and to incorporate the input and research that has been completed. BOD Gielicz and Williamson weighed in on how the entire community needs to be involved, neighborhood groups to the arts.

Operations & Financial Update: Edwards gave a detailed overview of SMTT's immediate action plan when Covid-19 occurred and the steps taken to activate cost saving plans. She shared a current financial picture and efforts SMTT staff are taking to layout the upcoming fiscal year amidst the crisis. Kerns shared efforts of state and national outreach to encourage change and inclusion for nonprofits for PPP. Members offered information and questions on state and federal loans.

City Manager Update: Lichtig joined the meeting at approx. 5:30 pm and provided information on the city's challenge in obtaining federal funding. Interim City Manager Lane Dilg joined at approx. 5:40 pm and reintroduced herself to the group in her new role. Dilg shared that she and the economic recovery task force are focused on restructuring the organization, emergency response and economic recovery. She and the leadership team will realign foundational services for a safe and clean Santa Monica. Questions and discussion around city's financial outlook were offered. BOD's expressed thanks and congratulations. Lichtig shared a few ideas from the economic recovery task force to aid businesses in recovery and the challenge with the virus and not being able to encourage travel due to cross contamination.

Approval of the January 8, 2020 Special SMTT Board of Directors Meeting Minutes: D. Evans moved to approve the minutes, Gielicz seconded the motion with a change noting Vice Chair Hirsch's absence at the January 8, 2020 meeting. The motion carried unanimously with member Regalbuto absent.

Acceptance of Financials: December 2019, January and February 2020 financial statements were presented by Treasurer Gielicz with questions from member Peck on an unpaid invoice in December on the marketing line, Sidoriak was going to check to confirm when payment was made, member Carrey moved to accept the financials; D. Evans seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with member Regalbuto absent.

Acceptance of Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Respreads Budget and Forecast: Vice Chair Hirsch moved to accept the 2019-2020 budget respreads, Secretary Carrey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with member Regalbuto absent.

Approval of Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Draft Budget and Forecast: Secretary Carrey moved to accept the 2020-2021 budget and forecast; Williamson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with member Lichtig abstaining and member Regalbuto absent.

Guest observer Daniel Medved departed meeting at approx. 6:45 p.m.

City Manager Update Continued:

Lichtig further offered background on city finances and budget shortfall due to the crisis. Members suggested an op-ed in Daily Press with a multi-pronged communications outreach that could be offered to help residents and businesses better understand why the budget is in a deficit. Members inquired about the city's economic task force composition and leadership and asked how to get involved. The board also asked about several emergency orders and offered suggestions moving forward. The members thanked Katie for postponing her first date of retirement due to the crisis, for her hard work and dedication to the community and SMTT. All wished her the best in her retirement on May 30.

SMTT Staff Updates: Sidoriak shared strategy and campaigns that we will be leading community wide. Phase 1 (now): During "Safer at Home" - Santa Monica Cares which will encourage support for our local businesses, sustain and foster local pride and share ways to support local efforts/charities. Phase 2 Recovery- "Santa Monica Shines" to drive local and regional visitation into hotels, restaurants, retailers and attractions. SMTT's Santa Monica Shines marketing program. Utilizing owned channels to share policy information from the city, encourage volunteerism, promoting local business offerings, support restaurants, virtual wellness, virtual activities for kids, live beach cams and zoom backgrounds of Santa Monica. A toolkit will be created for local community organizations (City, Nonprofits, BID's and Chamber of Commerce) to utilize for consistent look and messages while strengthening the message. A review of what will inform the approach and timelines to launch Shines was offered. She shared a detailed review of vehicles that will be utilized as recovery campaign components that include paid media, destination wide offers fulfilled via online travel agency (OTA) Deployment of new Visitor Guide polybagged with LA Magazine summer issue to 20,000 LA residents, launch of the online personal tours on Santamonica.com. She also shared the campaign design and artwork with group.

Wright shared Travel Industries Sales updates including that all international offices and agreements have been placed on hold, relationships continue. Strategy to increase visitation include research in watching consumer confidence and traveler sentiment. Good news the one place that ranks top on the list to visit are beach destinations. And seeing an uptick in top markets showing interest in traveling. Leads are still trickling in for fall bookings from groups, keeping an eye on policy and effects to AFM. Looking forward to 2028 and the Olympics in process of room blocks and rates being secured. An update of our work with Visit California was provided to the BOD's.

For the Good of the Order Vice Chair Hirsch called for the Good of the Order.

Public Comment: Vice Chair Hirsch called for public comment. There was none.

Adjournment: Vice Chair Hirsch adjourned the meeting at 7:13 p.m.