

**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)**  
**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS and TOURISM MARKETING DISTRICT (TMD) COMMITTEE**  
**TUESDAY, June 21, 2022**  
**Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel, Catalina Ballroom**

**Call to Order:** Board Chairman Gielicz called the meeting to order at 5:11pm.

**Roll Call & Self Introductions:** Chairman Gielicz called for self-introductions. Board Members, TMD Committee Members, and those present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

**Board Present:** Chairman Albin Gielicz, Vice Chair Neil Carrey, Treasurer Younes Atallah, Member Lauralee Asch, Member Shahid Kayani, Member Charlie Lopez-Quintana, Member RoseMary Regalbuto, and City Liaison Anuj Gupta.

**Tourism Marketing District Committee (TMD) Present:** Chairman Younes Atallah, Vice Chairman Sam Jagger, Secretary/Treasurer Aileen Carreon, Member Melissa Alvarez, Member Kevin Anawati, Member James Graham, and Member Jessica Rincon.

**Also Present:** SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT CPO Rachel Lozano, SMTT Director of Global Business Development Todd Mitsuata, SMTT Operations Coordinator Alyssa Dorn, and SMTT Executive Assistant Jennifer Hover.

**Absent:** Board Secretary Jan Williamson, Board Member Darlene Evans, Board Member Jeff Klocke, TMD Member Juan Viramontes, and TMD Member Julien Laracine.

**Public Comment:** Board Chairman Gielicz called for public comment; there was none.

**City Manager Update:** City Liaison Gupta informed the Board and TMD Committee of topics that will be covered in upcoming City Council meetings including that in a special meeting on June 21, 2022, City Council met to discuss changes to Council meetings rules. In next week's Council meeting, they plan to discuss budget adoption for the next year, permanent outdoor parklet and dining, and a Transient Occupancy Tax increase measure for safe and clean services. Other upcoming Council topics include modifications to the sidewalk vending program (including a significant increase in areas where permitted vendors can operate), rent control charter amendments, and a potential canvas tax measure.

City Liaison Gupta also informed the Board of SaMo PRIDE events, the past Saturday's Juneteenth event, and that outdoor water use limits will start on July 5th due to drought conditions. Additionally, he updated the Board and TMD Committee that last month the Pier Task Force (now known as the DART team) had a study session on quality-of-life issues on and around the Pier and beach. The City has also continued its work with the state on a statewide vending bill, as well as food health and safety rules.

**Approval of the February 8, 2022, TMD Committee Meeting Minutes:** TMD Secretary/Treasurer Carreon presented the Meeting Minutes. TMD Vice Chairman Jagger moved to approve the minutes and TMD Member Alvarez seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with TMD members Juan Viramontes and Julien Laracine absent.

**Acceptance of the TMD Collections Memo:** TMD Secretary/Treasurer Carreon presented the TMD Collections Memo. TMD Vice Chairman Jagger moved to accept the Memo; TMD Member Graham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with TMD Members Juan Viramontes and Julien Laracine absent.

**Approval of the March 9, 2022 Board Meeting Minutes:** Board Vice Chair Carrey presented the Meeting Minutes. Board Member Regalbuto moved to approve the minutes and Board Member Asch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Board Secretary Jan Williamson, Board Member Darlene Evans, and Board Member Jeff Klocke absent.

**Acceptance of the January, February, March, & April 2022 Financials:** Board Treasurer Atallah presented the January, February, March, and April 2022 Financial Memos. He noted that there are no significant variances in January or February. In March and April, TMD assessment collections were ahead of the forecast due to higher-than-expected occupancy, though we expect costs in coming months (due to supply chain issues) to balance out the forecasted and actual collection amounts overall. Board Vice Chairman Carrey moved to accept the Financial Memos; Member Kayani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Board Secretary Jan Williamson, Board Member Darlene Evans, Board Member Jeff Klocke, TMD Member Juan Viramontes, and TMD Member Julien Laracine absent.

**Vote on the 2023 TMD Increase and Deferral of the Increase to Jan 1, 2023:** Board Treasurer Atallah informed those present that our fiscal year ends June 30, rather than at the end of the calendar year, so the TMD Committee votes each year to change the effective date of the annual TMD Assessment Increase to January 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year—in this case, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The proposed increase is 10 cents for Tier 3 hotels (with an average rate of \$100-\$199 per night) and 25 cents for Tier 2 hotels (with an average rate of \$200-\$299 per night) as well as Tier 1 hotels (with an average rate of \$300+). The purpose of these funds is to market our destination—the City of Santa Monica—to the benefit of all. SMTT COO Edwards added that these funds are used 85% for destination marketing activities; only 10% goes to administrative needs and 5% to a contingency fund. TMD Member Graham moved to approve both the 2023 TMD increase and deferring the increase's effective date to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. TMD Vice Chairman Jagger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Board Secretary Jan Williamson, Board Member Darlene Evans, Board Member Jeff Klocke, TMD Member Juan Viramontes, and TMD Member Julien Laracine absent.

**Board Approval of the 2022-2023 Adjusted Budget:** Board Member Kayani motioned to approve the adjusted 2022-2023 budget. Board Member Regalbutto seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Board Secretary Jan Williamson, Board Member Darlene Evans, and Board Member Jeff Klocke absent.

**SMTT Staff Updates:** SMTT CEO Kerns updated the Board and TMD Committee on SMTT's marketing activities. She informed those present that in July we have a month-long partner event in Brighton Beach U.K., Santa Monica's new friendship city, during which Santa Monica chefs will take over a new Brighton food hall, activities centered around health and wellness such as a Paddle around the Pier event will take place, a local Santa Monica artist will partner with Brighton's artists on a mural, and more. There are numerous hotel and restaurant partners participating, including a Michelin Rated Restaurant/Hotel near Brighton's oceanfront. The program will include a visit to France with Josiah Citrin a Michelin Chef in Santa Monica for a cooking demo and lunch with Paris based media and clients.

Kerns went on to describe a Spring media campaign and integrated marketing plan with Edge Media Network, the largest LGBTQ media company in the world. SMTT is also conducting a paid media test on TikTok to drive awareness at a low CPM (cost per thousand impressions). TMD Committee Secretary/Treasurer Carreon expressed an interest in acquiring databases during campaigns like this to continue marketing to the audience after the main campaign ends. SMTT CEO Kerns then showed those present example pages from SMTT's new website redesign, scheduled to launch mid-Summer, including a MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Events) landing page. Additionally, SMTT is looking for a new partner to produce the new physical 2023 Visitors Guides and Maps as physical copies are still in demand, especially for international visitors, though SMTT has a virtual version as well.

SMTT CEO Kerns informed those present of SaMo PRIDE activities happening city wide our offering of Circuit Shuttle wraps and Santa MoniCARES' sponsorship of the Queer Prom at Water Garden. SMTT COO Edwards described the background of the Queer Prom and that it is designed as a chaperoned, safe space for the school-age LGBTQIA+ community in Santa Monica. Santa MoniCARES was their main sponsor, assisting them with food, the DJ, the venue, a photographer, and more. We are working to help the GSA establish themselves as a nonprofit so they can have year-round events.

Kerns then showed a behind-the-scenes look at the commercial Visit California filmed partly in Santa Monica and informed those present that it will run in international and domestic markets. She also showed a video of the SMTT team's efforts at IPW, including information on matched donations to a local Florida charity and the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Arts Center in Santa Monica.

SMTT Director of Global Business Development Mitsuata updated the Board and TMD Committee on the team's success at IPW with meetings with 170+ buyers and a client event with over 90 top clients in attendance. He then shared details of domestic and international airlift (including airlift coming back to LAX), as well as upcoming partner campaigns and trade shows. Additionally, SMTT hosted Familiarization Tours (FAM) for the new French airline French Bee as well as 6 luxury specialists and product managers for a United Airlines x UK FAM. Mitsuata spoke on Group Sales and how SMTT Sales & Services Manager Ozzie Otero has been working on the West Coast DMO Alliance as well as attending events such as the Arizona Sales Mission, the Prestige Global Meeting Source meeting, HelmsBriscoe's Annual Business Conference, and by hosting 10 meeting planners during the Client Advisory Board event. It is important

Board Member Lopez-Quintana asked about international feedback about traveling to the United States. Mitsuata expressed that airlift is still coming back, and while there is demand for travel, airlines struggle to keep up with demand. A recently lessened barrier to travel, however, is that testing requirements were dropped for vaccinated entry into the United States. SMTT CEO Kerns added that other challenges include flight prices, flight delays and cancellations, and international concerns about gun safety and homelessness. However, the overall impression of our specific destination from international travelers was good; they commented on cleanliness though some mentioned the need for updates and improvements in some locations.

SMTT COO Edwards presented images of the difference the Tourism Improvement District (TID) south of the Pier is making in overall cleanliness and informed the Board and TMD Committee that in September we will work with the City to decide whether to continue the program permanently and, if so, whether to expand it to more areas. The benefits of the TID have been seen in guest reviews and comments. Board Member Kayani asked for more information on the funding and expressed an interest in expanding the program. Kerns clarified that the TID is funded by an initial amount contributed by SMTT and then by a voluntary assessment pass-through. Kerns further discussed how Chrysalis, SMTT's partner on the TID, helps people transitioning back into the workforce. This effort is in cooperation with the City and is not meant to replace City cleaning efforts. Board Member Regalbuto suggested adding more trash cans in busy areas, and Kerns responded that a study showed that removing trash cans can have more effect on lessening litter. Also, more cans to empty means more city labor, and trash cans are on backorder, too. TMD Member Rincon expressed that she's heard of challenges Chrysalis has had finding power washing machines, and SMTT CEO Kerns explained that there is a specialized power washer required in Santa Monica that reclaims all used water to prevent pollution, and that SMTT has regular check-in meetings with Chrysalis to address any issues.

SMTT Chief People Officer (CPO) Lozano discussed the upcoming job fair happening on the outdoor dining deck at Santa Monica Place on July 12<sup>th</sup>. SMTT is looking at partnering with the food court and Metro for free lunches and free rides prize raffles for participants. For marketing, SMTT is focusing on LinkedIn, social media, on line ads, colleges, and participating businesses to share the event information with potential candidates.

**CEO Update:** SMTT CEO Kerns informed the Board and TMD Committee of SMTT's recent hires and current open positions. She then presented updates on SMTT's Experience Management Plan efforts. The Plan contains 3 guiding principles—sustainability, stewardship, and DEI, 9 strategies focusing on how to enhance the destination, and numerous catalytic actions to break down how to achieve the strategies. The Plan is not owned just by SMTT; it is a shared ownership of stakeholders throughout Santa Monica with a common agenda. SMTT's next steps for the Plan include involving city department heads, more community members, residents, businesses, and other stakeholder groups. Kerns then shared videos of tribute for Board Member RoseMary Regalbuto and Board Chairman Albin Gielicz, both of whom are terming out and for whom this is their last Board meeting. The board expressed gratitude for their years of service.

**For the Good of the Order:** Member Regalbuto shared a sticker sample designed to go on the back of restroom doors to provide victims of trafficking resources to call. She also emphasized the importance of training all tourism staff members to recognize signs of human trafficking. SMTT CEO Kerns agreed and told Member Regalbuto that SMTT would be donating to a human trafficking charity organization in Regalbuto's name.

SMTT CEO Kerns directed the Board and TMD Members' attention to the SMTT Strategic Plan and Lanes of Work in their meeting packet, showing SMTT's activities on behalf of the destination in March and April.

Board Chairman Gielicz took a moment to thank the Board, TMD Committee, and SMTT for their support for the past 8 years he's been on the Board.

**Adjournment:** Board Chairman Gielicz thanked his fellow BOD's and called to adjourn the meeting and TMD Chairman Atallah moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Member Regalbuto and with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50pm.