

**MEETING MINUTES  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM – UPSTAIRS OFFICE**

**Call to Order:** Chairman Carrey called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm.

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

**Board Present:** Chairman Neil Carrey, Vice Chair Younes Atallah, Treasurer Charlie Lopez-Quintana, Secretary Darlene Evans, Member Lauralee Asch, Member Kera Blades-Snell, Member Karen E. Ginsberg, Member Shahid Kayani, Member Jeff Klocke, and City Liaison Anuj Gupta.

**Also Present:** SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Marketing Officer Michael Gurrieri, SMTT Executive Assistant Jennifer Hover, SMTT Chairman Circle Member Albin Gielecz, and Big Outdoor Representative Kiley Kmiec.

**Absent:** Member Jan Williamson

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

**Big Outdoor Digital Kiosk:** As a representative of Big Outdoor, Gielecz and Kmiec presented an overview of the new wayfinding program for the City of Santa Monica. This program is a digital wayfinding and out-of-home advertising kiosk to provide interactive information to residents and visitors, enhance public safety via emergency capabilities, deliver community messaging, support local businesses, enhance resident and tourist experiences, and generate revenues to support City services and programs through advertising sales with approximately 25 wayfinding kiosks across the City of Santa Monica. Members offered feedback on the locations of kiosks and requested to add them south of Casa del Mar and Shutters on the Beach.

**City Manager Update:** City Liaison Gupta updated the Board of Directors of the new events portal located on the city's website; [santamonica.gov/events](https://santamonica.gov/events), where community members can now view events by location, category, and city program. He informed of the joint press releases with SMTT regarding new hotel investments in Santa Monica, including 8 property updates, Downtown Santa Monica Business, and Investments.

Gupta informed that City Council will be hosting their Bi-Annual Retreat and Workshop on Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am at the Main Library. They will be reviewing the Five-Year Financial Forecast, reaffirming Council priorities, including Addressing Homelessness, Clean & Safe Santa Monica, and Equitable & Inclusive Economic Opportunity & Recovery. He advised of two additional priorities, Racial Equity and Social Diversity and Sustainable Connected Community, that will be recommended to the City Council. The direction of the Bi-Annual Budget and 1<sup>st</sup> allocation of the CS/GS Funds recommended being directed to develop a Homelessness Strategic Plan (HSP) and accelerate the City's work on addressing homelessness.

**CS Oversight Committee Discussion & Vote:** Chairman Carrey advised the Board of the City Council's creation of an Advisory Committee to make recommendations regarding the expenditure of additional funds raised for safe and clean support by increasing the transient occupancy tax on March 1, 2023. The committee will be comprised of a 5-member committee that includes Santa Monica residents and representatives from local hospitality businesses and the homeless behavioral health services community. City Council is requesting the SMTT Board of Directors to provide recommendations for (2) hospitality representatives for the Advisory Committee.

Chairman Carrey asked the board to provide suggestions on who they believe would best represent the hospitality industry and to provide a representative from beachside hospitality businesses and inner city

hospitality businesses. The Board nominated for beachside business: option 1: Sam Jagger, General Manager, The Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows, option 2: Christophe Baraton, Shutters on the Beach, option 3: Kevin Anawatii, Le Meridien Delfina Hotel, for inner city businesses: option 1: Juan Viramontes, The Gateway Hotel, and option 2: Danielle Goller, The Ambrose Hotel. Kerns to reach out to gauge interest and advise the board of directors. Chairman Carrey called for a motion, Secretary Evans moved to approve the nominations, and Vice Chair Atallah seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Member Williamson absent.

**Approval of the January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes:** Secretary Evans presented the Meeting Minutes. Chairman Atallah moved to approve the minutes and Member Kayani seconded the motion. The motion carried with one abstention from Member Asch with Member Williamson absent.

**Acceptance of the December 2022 Financials:** Treasurer Lopez-Quintana presented the October and December 2022 Financial Memos. Chairman Atallah moved to accept, and Secretary Evans seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Member Williamson absent.

**Approval of the 2023-2024 Annual Report & City Budget Request:** SMTT CEO reviewed the annual report and city budget with the Board. Chairman Carrey called for a motion to approve the 2023-2024 Annual Report, Secretary Evans motioned for approval and Treasurer Lopez-Quintana seconded. The motion carried unanimously with Member Williamson absent. Chairman Carrey called for a motion to approve the 2023-2024 City Budget Request, Vice Chair Atallah motioned for approval and Secretary Evans seconded. The motion carried unanimously with Member Williamson absent.

**SMTT Staff Updates:** SMTT CMO Gurrieri provided an update on Freize LA that took place February 16-19, 2023. SMTT promoted the event reaching over 25,000 impressions across email, social and digital platforms. He advised that SMTT will meet with the Frieze team about a multi-year deal and share thoughts from this year's event including the option to move away from a holiday weekend and large golf tournament, The Genesis Invitational. He informed of the official launch of the KindTraveler partnership on February 28, 2023, with 10 participating hotels – more than any other destination in California. Also, SMTT has updated its Online Street Art Guide with over 170 murals featured in Santa Monica. Once the update is complete, the guide will be promoted and hosted on SantaMonica.com, pushed out on social media, featured in newsletters, and shared with community partners: BIDs, Chamber, and Cultural Affairs. This is also a great tool to promote to international visitors and media.

Gurrieri informed that the 'Santa Monica Most Loved Businesses' program is back for its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and SMTT is helping the city promote across social and digital properties. Nominations are in and from March 15-31, 2023 people can cast their votes for their favorite Santa Monica businesses. SMTT is partnering with Veo to distribute free helmets at all visitor center locations. Veo will collect all used helmets and donate them to Santa Monica Spoke for recycling. SMTT relaunched the Consumer Newsletter to over 15,000 contacts and will continue to promote newsletter sign-ups on SantaMonica.com to grow our database.

He informed the board SMTT will host several domestic and international journalists in March. Charlotte Herold, Editor-in-Chief of Canada Business Journal, Canadian Influencers "Sidewalk Hustle" with over 650K followers; Tanja Schlect, Visit California's social media representative for the German market and Celest Moure, Canadian journalist from Virtuoso Magazine.

SMTT CEO Kerns shared the updates for the Global Business Development team, she updated the Board on the upcoming Familiarization (FAM) tour with UK Luxury Product Managers in partnership with San Diego Tourism Authority, hosting 8 attendees, including 6 product managers and executives from top UK travel agencies, SMTT UK Account Manager and San Diego Tourism Authority UK Account Manager.

Kerns informed on the events and trade shows the SMTT Travel Trade team attended including Brand USA Europe & UK Virtual Meetings, Visit USA & New Zealand Expos, and Go West Summit. Upcoming are the SMTT Canada Sales & Media Mission, SMTT Tourism Summit, IPW, and Japan Trade Mission.

Kerns updated that the SMTT Group Sales held virtual webinars with Prestige Global Meeting with 37 attendees sharing updates to the hotel products and the Loews re-brand. Additionally, the Group Sales team attended SITE Global New York, meeting with over 80 incentive planners during educational sessions and networking opportunities, and Retreat resources Mid-Atlantic Roadshow meeting with over 50 planners in New York City, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and New Hope, PA. Upcoming events include the ConferenceDirect Annual Partnership meeting, Visit California PME Roadshow in Denver and Seattle, SITE SoCal Education Experience, and MPI SoCal Chapter Global Meetings Industry Day.

**SMTT CEO Updates:** SMTT CEO Kerns provided an update on the Experience Management Plan (EMP), she shared highlights of projects each committee is working on. The projects include the Safe & Clean Committee is working on a train-the-trainer program for de-escalation and defining communication needs with formal and informal resident and community groups, the Cultural Happenings Committee is researching the prospect of bringing existing arts/cultural productions to create monthly or quarterly art series, the Diversity of Experiences Committee is reviewing current regulations and processes for short-term businesses and how to streamline those processes and researching the potential streamlining street closures for city-wide event processes, the Support Livability Committee is compiling a list of resources available from different entities in the community – city, hospitals, non-profits, for mental health, affordable housing, addiction, homelessness, etc.

Kerns reviewed the two-year operational plan for 2023-2025, focusing on 2-year operations plan as we continue to rebuild and recover from the pandemic.

**For the Good of the Order:** Chairman Carrey called for any items for good of the order. Carrey advised the board that Secretary Evans was selected as League of Women Voters – Women Who Shape Santa Monica and will be presented at a reception on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at Ocean House.

Vice Chair Atallah informed the board the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel has suspended operations as of Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the hotel will not be operational for approximately 9 months and will be repositioned as a non-Loews-managed property. He advised that all employees have been retained and rehired by the property's new owners.

Member Klocke informed of the retirement and removal of the original Sea Dragon ride on the Pier, on March 9<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 am Pacific Park is hosting a special retirement send-off with a few words from Santa Monica Mayor Davis and a helicopter pick-up of the ride exactly at 8:15 am, the public is invited to attend.

Member Blades-Snell informed that the Black Lives Festival that was to take place on Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup> has been rescheduled for Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm – 10:00 pm at Center Street Promenade.

City Liaison Gupta informed the two new open positions at the city – Communication and Public Information Manager and Council Office and Legislative Affairs Liaison.

Chairman Carrey informed the Board of Directors that the Kiwanis Club donated scoreboards to Belmar and Los Amigos Parks in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**Adjournment:** Chairman Carrey called to adjourn the meeting; the meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm.