

**MEETING MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2024
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM – 2427 MAIN STREET**

Call to Order: Board Chairman Carrey called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m.

Roll Call & Self Introductions: Board Chairman Carrey called for self-introductions. The Board of Directors members present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

Present: Chairman Neil Carrey, Vice Chair Younes Atallah, Secretary Darlene Evans, Treasurer Charlie Lopez-Quintana, Member Kera Blades-Snell, Member Karen Ginsberg, Member Shahid Kayani, Member Jeff Klocke, Member Jan Williamson, City Manager David White.

Also Present: Noble Studios representatives B.C. LeDoux and Danni Winter, SMTT President & Chief Executive Officer Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano, SMTT Senior Director of Communications Lauren Salisbury, SMTT Senior Director of Marketing Mandy Eck, SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Client Services Manager Alyssa Dorn, SMTT Client Services Coordinator Alexis Faust.

Absent: Member Lauralee Asch.

Public Comment: Chairman Carrey called for public comment. There was none.

Noble Studios Presentation on SMTT's Rebrand: LeDoux and Winter recapped the rebrand and went over the brand future and purpose (to inspire the world with Santa Monica), principles (Community Matters, It's Possible, Roll with It, Amplify the Vibe, Believe in Better), personality (Warm, Easy, Open, Young-at-Heart, Cosmopolitan, In-Motion, Original, Creative), promise (You've Arrived), position (Beach Vibes + Urban Vibrations), vision (by inspiring the world with Santa Monica, connecting our community, amplifying our vibe and believing in better, we will become the world's premier beach-city destination for both residents and visitors alike), and brand line "Flow Against the Grain." The website has been updated to showcase bold colors and more movement, and over the course of 4 days, 9 locations and 30 setups, 500+ photos were taken to showcase our new branding. These photos will be used in digital ads, social ads, print ads and more.

The media plan goals are to increase year-over-year growth in ratio of weekday to weekend occupancy, allocate budget strategically to drive more traffic during shoulder seasons, generate increased economic impact by driving visitation and overnight bookings and increasing length of stay, and differentiate from other CA beach destinations and ensure Santa Monica is recognized as the premier luxury and the original beach city destination. KPIs include awareness (CPS, Reach, Frequency, Video Views), Engagement (Clicks, Sessions, CPC, Video Completion Rate), and Conversion (Partner Referrals, Session Time, Soft Conversion Rate).

Vice Chair Atallah asked about measuring conversion, and Noble responded that they are measuring impressions, click-through, who signs up for the newsletter, and more. SMTT Senior Director of Marketing Eck added that we get robust metrics from Book Direct and we will have a presentation for the Board on all the metrics and conversions in September.

SMTT CEO Kerns also shared with the Board that we have photoshoots planned for future content, and that we're looking to do a campaign with Datafy to get even more specific with who our ads are targeting.

City Manager Update: City Manager White informed the Board that Council decided to reallocate resources to hire 4 additional police officers over the next year, including recruitment. They had initially received feedback to cut budget, but that decision was reversed.

Next week, the City will bring forward request to an exclusive meet with Revitalization Partners Group, who are looking to revitalize the Civic Auditorium. This will give the group six months to dig in and see if it's feasible for them.

A parking tax increase proposal will be brought back to Council July 23rd (would increase parking tax by 8% to generate funds for the City). The City is now looking for an advisory measure to be associated with the tax to require a certain amount of the additional funds from the tax to be allocated to fire, police and homelessness prevention services. This is for private parking, not public lots or meters. On the City side, a study will be done with the Coastal Commission about the potential for parking rate increases. The Coastal Commission's concerns are focused on the beach lots and access therein.

Niki Newsome is officially the new City Clerk. Monday is the beginning of election season; people have until mid-August to get their paperwork in to apply for committees.

On the economic development side of things, the Fairmont Miramar project made it through an architectural review board. The airport plan also just completed Phase One. Residential project applications are regularly coming in, including with new developers. Meetings are also happening with new property owners on the Promenade who have ideas for new retail concepts and hope to bring a fresh energy to DTSM. Treasurer Lopez-Quintana asked about hiring security; the City pays for enhanced security at top of the Pier and Promenade parking. The City does not have resources to provide more private security but a recruitment push is coming soon, and the City is staying open-minded about the potential for incentive packages.

White then updated those present on the police department and crime, sharing a YouTube video of how the police department uses the drone program to proactively find perpetrators of crime: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnVyCzNiMyc>. Automatic license plate readers, another drone, and more technological advancements are coming. Additionally, crime now is half of what it was in the 90s. White encouraged those present to share with the public how the City is working to prevent crime and the positive news, as there have been some news articles that focused on crime in unbalanced ways. The City is focusing on bigger and broader channels to share good news, as local news sources have been less receptive to publishing good news.

Open Nominations & Voting of Executive Committee Slate of Officers:

Chairman Carrey stepped aside as Chair after two years in the role. Chairman Carrey nominated Younes Atallah as the new Chairman. He called for open nominations; there were no other nominations.

Charlie Lopez-Quintana received a nomination for Vice Chair. Carrey called for open nominations; there were no other nominations.

Karen Ginsberg received a nomination for Treasurer. Carrey called for open nominations; there were no other nominations.

Lauralee Asch received a nomination for Secretary. Carrey called for open nominations; there were no other nominations.

Slate vote: Darlene Evans moved to accept the slate of officers. City Manager White seconded. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote of the slate of officers with Member Asch absent. The new slate of executive officers includes Chairman Younes Atallah, Vice Chair Charlie Lopez-Quintana, Treasurer Karen Ginsberg and Secretary Lauralee Asch.

Approval of the May 29, 2024 Joint BOD/TMD Meeting Minutes: Former Secretary Ginsberg presented the May 29, 2024 meeting minutes. Member Carrey moved to approve the minutes and Member Williamson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Secretary Asch absent.

Acceptance of the May 2024 Financials: Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana presented the May 2024 financial memos and cash basis documents. Member Carrey moved to accept and Member Evans seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Secretary Asch absent.

SMTT Staff Updates: SMTT Senior Director of Marketing Eck presented details of SMTT's sponsorship for Pier 360 Beach Festival's Santa Monica Sandcastle Spectacular. Professional sand architect with Archisand Sandcastle Builders, Greg LaBon and his team, spent the morning constructing a sand art masterpiece inspired by the pier sign and featured SMTT's new brand line, Flow Against the Grain. The sand architects involved attendees, having them assist with some of the simpler elements. With this sponsorship, SMTT received our logo on the Pier's partner banner and signage onsite at the event, multiple on-stage announcements promoting the sandcastle event, brand integration of a dedicated social in-feed post and 2 Instagram stories on the Pier's Instagram account, a mention in the pre- and post-event press releases as well as inclusion in email newsletter distribution. Additionally, during the month of June, SMTT promoted SaMo Pride through our owned channels including a featured masthead on our website's homepage, dedicated landing page with a listing of SaMo Pride business specials, events and programming, SMTT's social media channels and email inclusion. Additionally, SMTT had a paid media placement with Edge Media, a large network of local LGBTQ+ news and entertainment publications. SMTT is still collecting stats and look forward to sharing in a future meeting.

SMTT Senior Director of Communications Salisbury highlighted an increase of 2,000 followers on SMTT's Instagram page. We have been posting stories daily during high-use hours around lunchtime, sharing as much real-time content as possible. Salisbury further showed how we were able to pivot at a crucial time to show Santa Monica as a safe and fun place to visit with broadcast segments in multiple locations including one on Good Morning Texas featuring the Travel Mom. UK headlines are also really positive, including one in The Times (UK) "Hollywood Glamour Hits the Beach in Santa Monica" – ad value of \$207 million! Other earned media coverage includes a video by Travel Guides (Australia) that filmed at the Fairmont Miramar. We also hosted FAMs with groups from Canada, France and Germany.

SMTT Director of Sales Otero and SMTT Director of Global Business Development Sigalus updated the Board on a successful travel trade sales mission to Canada in June and informed those present that there will be a pop-up mini sales mission in Vancouver this fall; invitations for hotels to register to join us went out today. Also, in June we participated in the Signature Travel LA Event, a partnership with the Sojourn Center (a local Santa Monica nonprofit that assists domestic violence survivors) to host a donation drive at Signature Travel's LA Regional Show which raised over \$6,000 in monetary donations and in-kind. SMTT's sales team also hosted a FAM with a France-based tour operator, attended Virtuoso Connections Asia in Singapore as well as ILTM Asia Pacific in Singapore. The appointments at these events were very high quality and some hotels who participated have already received leads and site visit requests. Coming up, we will represent Santa Monica at the Global Travel Marketplace (155 highly vetted North American travel advisors including 50+ pre-scheduled appointments) and Virtuoso Travel Week (luxury travel advisors from around the globe).

CEO Update: SMTT President & CEO Kerns...

- Cirque is coming into town Oct-Jan; we are working very closely with them. This is the first time for any Cirque shows that they've allowed a third party to book their tickets (hotel/ticket packages)
 - o Working on Cirque-related promotions as well—show your ticket for a discount, etc.
- Surveys out to hotels to gauge interest in need periods, for which markets do we need more representation, if there are any trade shows they're interested in attending that's not already in SMTT's deck, etc.
- Bitcoin: City launched a Bitcoin education program; MK sent a letter in support. Conference coming to Barker Hangar in September.
- MK will be out of the office for vacation, the US Travel Summer Summit and the ESTO trade show over the next few weeks.
- Charlie Lopez-Quintana informed the Board that we presented the 2022-2023 fiscal year audited financials to CPA Pia Chan during the Executive Officers Committee today and everything is perfect—only one reportable point of sale issue that has already been corrected.
 - o Goal to have the 2023-2024 audited financials completed by the end of this calendar year.

For the Good of the Order:

- Chris Carrey PAL Education Fund—gave \$38,000 of scholarships this year-- \$400,000 since the fund's inception 22 years ago.
- Thank you to Neil and Darlene for their time on our executive committee.
- Regent is now accepting reservations starting Sept 10, 2024. 80% of the rooms are completed.
- Williamson shared that *Tom Van Sant: An Earth Twin at the Digital Dawn* will be at the 18th Street Arts Center from August 2024 through February 2025. Van Sant's *Geosphere Project* was a precursor to Google Earth and Al Gore used Van Sant's images in *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Adjournment: Chairman Atallah adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Next Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Santa Monica, CA

MISSION STATEMENT

Santa Monica Travel and Tourism (SMTT) works to strengthen our local economy by enhancing and promoting our community as a distinctive, compelling and welcoming travel destination.

BRAND PROMISE

Santa Monica...an unforgettable beach city experience filled with eye-catching people, cutting edge culture and bold innovations. It's the essence of the California lifestyle.

VISION STATEMENT

To ensure Santa Monica is recognized as the premier beach city destination in the world.