

**MEETING MINUTES  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)  
ANNUAL JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND TMD COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2025  
HYATT CENTRIC DELFINA, 530 Pico Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90405**

**Call to Order:** Chairman Atallah called the meeting to order at 5:11 PM

**Roll Call & Self Introductions:** Chairman Atallah called for self-introductions. Those present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

**Board of Directors Present:** Chairman Younes Atallah, Secretary Lauralee Asch, Treasurer Karen Ginsberg, Member Neil Carrey, Member Jan Williamson, Member Tim Defuria, Member Jeff Klocke, Member Darlene Evans and Interim City Manager Elaine Polachek

**Tourism Marketing District Committee (TMD) Present:** Vice Chair Aileen Carreon, Treasurer/Secretary Cameron Haseli, Member Juan Viramontes, Member Simon Fricker, Member Inessa Udovechenko, Member Sonia Metz.

**Also Present:** SMTT President and CEO Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano, SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo, SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Administrative Assistant Bella Cifuentes and Santa Monica Daily Press Journalist Devin Sypher, The Ambrose Hotel General Manager Chance Reno, Walker Consultants Principal/Director of Studies Steffen Turoff, Walker Consultants Consultant Jonathan Wicks, and City of Santa Monica Parking Manager Zach Pollard.

**Absent:** Board Member Shahid Kayani, Board Vice Chair Charlie Lopez-Quintana, TMD Member Karina Sedigh and TMD Member Jessica Rincon.

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

**City of Santa Monica Parking Rate Study:** Guest presenters City of Santa Monica Parking Manager Zach Pollard and Walker Consultants Principal/Director of Studies Steffen Turoff discussed the City's Parking Rate Study. Currently, 47.5% of users park for free for under 90 minutes, which impacts revenue. The plan focuses on generating revenue, managing demand with variable pricing, ensuring fair rates, and maintaining enforcement and public support. Main Street proposed rate increases include on-street meters from \$1.25 to \$2.00/hour with a 2-hour limit, and similar raises for off-street lots. Proposed permit and pass fees for employees, residents, and seniors also include: the monthly beach pass for Main Street employees increasing from \$80 to \$120; the annual beach pass for residents rising from \$155 to \$171; overnight beach passes for residents and guests increasing from \$150 to \$165; and the Santa Monica residents aged 62 and over increasing from \$25 to \$30.

The timeline includes public outreach from April to June 2025, presenting rates to City Council in August 2025, applying for a Coastal Development Permit (August 2025–July 2026), with final approval expected by August 2026.

**Approval of the April 8, 2025, TMD Meeting Minutes:** Treasurer/Secretary Haseli presented the April 8, 2025, meeting minutes. Member Viramontes moved to approve the minutes and Vice Chair Carreon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Sedigh and Member Rincon absent.

**Acceptance of the TMD Collections Memo:** Treasurer/Secretary Haseli presented the TMD Collections Memo. Member Viramontes moved to accept the TMD Collections Memo and Member Fricker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Board Member Kayani and Board Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana absent.

**Approval of the March 12, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes:** Secretary Asch presented the March 12, 2025, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes for approval. Member Carrey moved to accept the minutes and Member Williamson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Board Member Kayani and Board Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana absent.

**Acceptance of the March & April Board Financials:** Treasurer Ginsberg presented the March & April Board Financials for acceptance. Member Carrey moved to accept the financials and Member Evans seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Board Member Kayani and Board Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana absent.

**5-Year Strategic Plan Vote:** SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards presented the SMTT 5-Year Strategic Plan for approval. Member Williamson moved to accept the 5-Year Strategic Plan and Member Evans seconded the motion. The motion to approve carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Board Member Kayani and Board Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana absent.

**Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Advisory Committee Recommendation Vote:** Board Chairman Atallah presented the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Advisory Committee Recommendation, Shutters on the Beach General Manager Christophe Baraton, for approval. Treasurer Ginsberg moved to accept the recommendation and Member Defuria seconded the motion. The motion to approve carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Board Member Shahid Kayani and Board Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana absent.

**SMTT Staff Updates:** SMTT Vice President Ashley Dowgwillo updated the Board on marketing efforts, including the Spring Staycation with 4,507 landing page visits. Paid searches increased by 132% in April, with a new organic search plan in development. She announced the launch of a modern Visitor Guide at the July Tourism Summit and upcoming campaign "Find your pride in Santa Monica."

SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury reported on media efforts, noting Samantha Brown's Places to Love Route 66 episode airing in 2026 on PBS. Peter Greenberg recorded two radio shows, airing June 21, and filmed around Santa Monica for a fall release on Amazon Prime and Apple Plus. Media coverage included placements in Travel + Leisure, The Kelly Clarkson Show, Hamburger Abendblatt, and OpenJaw.

SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero and SMTT Director of Global Development Aleksandr Sigalus shared that the Media Canada Campaign had 642,710 impressions, with top hotels highlighted in the Bonotel Campaign. Key travel trade activities included the UK Sales Mission, AU/NZ Agent FAM, Aeromexico and VCA FAM, European Route 66 Roadshow, Virtuoso Toronto, VCA Mexico Reverse Mission, and Serandipians Trade Show. Upcoming events include Signature Travel LAX, ILTM Asia Pacific, Envoyage Australia FAM, Virtuoso Connects in the UK, and IPW 2025. Group Sales efforts featured ConferenceDirect APM, Tour Connection FAM, Planner Hero Tour, and VCA PME Roadshow. Upcoming events include VCA PME FAM, MPI WEC, and HelmsBriscoe ABC. International markets in Australia/New Zealand, Canada, France, Germany, and the UK are engaged through FAMs, and partnerships through 2025 and 2026.

**CEO Update:** CEO Misti Kerns provided an April 2025 update and the 2024 Economic Impact report. In April 2025, hotel demand increased 4.1% to 82,800, with ADR up 2% to \$363.36. Airport volume was 2.4 million, down 6.6%, and visitor spending reached \$89.1 million, up 13.4%. In 2024, Santa Monica had 4.2 million visitors, a 9% drop from 2023. Average stay was 1.39 days, and total visitor days declined 14%. International visitors increased 67%, reaching 1.87 million, with spending up 29% to \$470.9 million. Domestic visitation fell 33% but with higher per-capita spending, total domestic spending declined to \$445.6 million. Kerns also shared industry insights, noting the economy was strong before trade tensions but remains vulnerable due to four shocks: reduced disposable income from tariffs, supply chain issues, tighter financial markets, and rising uncertainty.

**For the Good of the Order:** There was none.

**Adjournment:** Chairman Atallah adjourned the meeting at 6:42 PM.

**Next Board of Directors Meeting**  
Wednesday, July 9, 2025

**Next Tourism Marketing District (TMD) Meeting**  
Tuesday, September 9, 2025

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

## OUR VISION

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

## OUR 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.