

**MEETING MINUTES  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2025  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM – 2427 Main Street**

**Call to Order:** Chairman Atallah called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM

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

**Present:** Chairman Younes Atallah, Vice Chair Charlie Lopez-Quintana, Treasurer Karen Ginsberg, Member Jan Williamson, Member Tim Defuria, Member Jeff Klocke, Member Tim Defuria, Member Darlene Evans and Interim City Manager Elaine Polachek.

**Also Present:** SMTT President and CEO Misti Kerns, 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.

**Absent:** Member Neil Carrey and Member Lauralee Asch. Jeff Klocke was absent for the approval of meeting minutes and arrived at 5:13 PM.

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

**Approval of the June 4 and June 24, 2025, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes:** Chairman Atallah presented the June 4 and June 24, 2025, meeting minutes. Interim City Manager Polachek moved to approve the minutes, and Vice Chair Lopez-Quintana seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Carrey, Member Asch and Member Klocke absent.

**Acceptance of the May 2025 Financials:** Treasurer Ginsberg presented the May 2025 financial memo and cash basis document. Member Evans moved to accept the financials and Member Williams seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Carrey, Member Asch and absent. Member Klocke arrived for the remainder of the meeting.

**Opening Nominations & Voting of EOC:** Chairman Atallah proposed postponing the opening of nominations and voting for the Executive Officer Committee (EOC) until the next regular Board of Directors meeting on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, due to a significant number of member absences. Member Evans moved to accept the proposal, and Member Defuria seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Carrey and Member Asch absent.

**SMTT Staff Updates:**

SMTT Vice President Ashley Dowgwillo updated the Board on marketing performance and research insights. She highlighted the Spring Lodging campaign, noting that data through June 21 shows estimated room nights for Tier 1 hotels at 11 with a campaign impact of \$41,181, and for Tier 2 hotels at 45 with a campaign impact of \$16,695. Destination visits attributed to this campaign totaled 278, generating an estimated impact of \$37,252. She emphasized that the data does not yet include travel from June 22 to July 25.

Dowgwillo also shared key findings from recent research by 62ABOVE, including stakeholder interviews, surveys, and over 500 visitor surveys. Secondary data included national trends and visitation tracking. Results showed that 83% visit for food, 74% for shopping and entertainment, and 74% for cultural attractions. Additionally, 76% of visitors are very likely to return within a year, with an average satisfaction rating of 4.6 stars. She closed by highlighting the strong likelihood of visitors recommending Santa Monica, supporting SMTT's ongoing marketing efforts.

SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury reported on media coverage and media visits. Earned media included Santa Monica Daily Press, Daily Mail, and The Pride, with UVM AVE coverage valued at over \$956,886 in June 2025 and approximately \$8.4 million year-to-date.

Salisbury highlighted completed Familiarization (FAM) media visits with South Korea Group Influencers, Australian influencer Cassie Tannenberg, U.S. influencer Erin Fong, Australian blogger Megan Singleton, and U.S. media rep Karuna Eberl. Upcoming visits include New Zealand Herald's Marie Barbieri, The Telegraph's Nigel Tisdall, and HELLO! Magazine's Emily Hawkins-Longley. Social media insights showed Facebook engagement up 55% and impressions up 11% in June. Instagram engagement was stable, but views slightly decreased due to regional LA protest coverage.

SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus reported on recent activities. Sigalus highlighted the IPW Trade Show 2025 in Chicago, where SMTT and partners hosted a media reception, client event and met with over 240 buyers from 60+ countries. At ILTM Asia Pacific in Singapore, he held 104 appointments with top travel advisors from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, India, and China. Sigalus and the SMTT team also hosted the Envoyage Australia Executive Familiarization (FAM) from July 6-8, showcasing the destination to luxury travel leaders.

Upcoming events include a Luxury Flight Centre FAM on July 14-15 with advisors from the UK, Australia, and Mexico, and Virtuoso Travel Week in Las Vegas, August 9-15, with client events at Bellagio, Spago, and a yoga experience for 50 clients.

SMTT Director of Group Sales Ozzie Otero shared recent activities. Otero and the SMTT team hosted the VCA Professional Meetings & Events Familiarization (FAM) in June, bringing eight event professionals and a media attendee on a three-day itinerary. Otero also attended the HelmsBriscoe Annual Conference in Toronto to network and showcase Santa Monica. Upcoming, Ozzie will participate in IBTM Americas in Mexico City in August with Hotel Casa del Mar and Shutters on the Beach to connect with Latin American meeting professionals.

**CEO Update:** SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns reported on recent tourism performance data. For May 2025, hotel demand reached 93,800 room nights, a 2.4% increase year-over-year. The average daily rate (ADR) was \$358.51, a slight decrease of 0.2%. Leisure and hospitality jobs totaled 775,400, down 0.1% YOY. The average trip length was 2.3 days, and LAX airport checkpoint volume was 3.1 million, a 4.7% decline compared to last year.

Preliminary data for June 2025 shows hotel demand at 87,300 room nights, up 2.9% YOY, with an ADR of \$359.81, also down 0.2%. The average trip length was 2.2 days.

**For the Good of the Order:** Chairman Atallah announced the arrival of the City of Santa Monica's new City Manager, Oliver Chi, on July 17th, 2025, and thanked outgoing Interim City Manager Elaine Polachek for her valuable service and contributions during her time on the SMTT Board of Directors. Additionally, Chairman Atallah announced that KTLA will broadcast their morning show from Regent Santa Monica Beach on Wednesday, July 16th, and will introduce their new weather camera at the hotel.

**Adjournment:** Chairman Atallah adjourned the meeting at 6:03 PM.

## Next Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, September 10, 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.