

**MEETING MINUTES  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)  
SPECIAL TOURISM MARKETING DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026  
COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT – 425 COLORADO AVE SANTA MONICA, CA 90401**

**Call to Order:** SMTT CEO Kerns called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

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

**Present:** Member Aileen Carreon, Member Armando Campos, Member Sonia Metz, Member Inessa Udovchenko, and Member Juan Viramontes, who arrived at 10:08 AM.

**Also Present:** SMTT Chief Executive Officer Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo, SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Client Services Manager Alyssa Dorn, SMTT Executive Assistant Haylee Miller, The Eden General Manager Danielle Delcambre, The Sovereign Manager Jennifer Cleveland, The Cottage Manager Juana Rosales, Santa Monica Hotel Manager Andrea Melchor, The Viceroy Area Vice President of Operations Connie Wang.

**Absent:** Member Shahid Kayani, Member Karina Sedigh, Member Simon Fricker, and Member Kenneth Clark were absent.

**Public Comment:** SMTT CEO Kerns called for public comment. There were no comments.

**EOC Roles Overview:** SMTT CEO Kerns reviewed the role of Executive Officer Committee (EOC) positions of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Treasurer/Secretary. All three executive roles hold a one-year term. Kerns explained that the committee's responsibilities encompass overseeing and voting on the collective allocation of Tourism Marketing District (TMD) funds, with all decisions being recorded publicly.

**Open Nominations & Vote on Executive Officers Committee (EOC):** SMTT CEO Kerns opened the nominations to TMD Committee Members for the Executive Officer Committee. Member Juan Viramontes nominated Member Aileen Carreon for the role of Chairperson, and Member Carreon accepted the nomination. Member Sonia Metz nominated Member Juan Viramontes for the role of Vice Chairperson, and Member Viramontes accepted the nomination. Member Aileen Carreon nominated Member Armando Campos for the role of Secretary/Treasurer, and Member Campos accepted. SMTT CEO Kerns motioned to approve the nomination to accept the slate of Executive Committee Officers as follows: Member Carreon for Chairperson, Member Viramontes for Vice Chairperson, and Member Campos for Secretary/Treasurer. Member Carreon moved to approve the motion. Member Viramontes seconded the motion. Each Committee Member then voted individually to approve the motion. The slate was carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Fricker, and Member Clark absent.

**Approval of the TMD Policy Update:** SMTT CEO Kerns presented changes in the language of the current TMD Policy to extend the timeline of installing the new TMD Committee to include the month of March. Chairperson Carreon motioned to accepted the TMD Policy changes, and Member Udovchenko seconded the motion. The TMD Policy change was carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Fricker, and Member Clark absent.

**Approval of the November 12, 2025, TMD Meeting Minutes:** SMTT COO Edwards presented the November 12, 2025 meeting minutes. Secretary/Treasurer Campos moved to approve the minutes, and Member Udovchenko seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Fricker, and Member Clark absent.

**Acceptance of the Year-to-Date Tourism Marketing District (TMD) Collections Memo:** SMTT COO Edwards presented the Year-to-Date Tourism Marketing District (TMD) collections memo. Member Metz moved to accept the memo and Secretary/Treasurer Campos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Fricker, and Member Clark absent.

**Vote on TMD Start Date & Increase for 01/01/27:** SMTT CEO Kerns presented the TMD Increase of \$0.25 for Tier 1 and Tier 2 hotels, and \$0.10 for Tier 3 hotels beginning on 01/01/27. Vice Chairperson Viramontes moved to accept the TMD Start Date and Increase the assessment fee and Chairperson Carreon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Fricker, and Member Clark absent.

**SMTT Staff Updates:** SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and sharing updates on new brand photography developed in partnership with 62 Above. The refreshed assets emphasize a lifestyle perspective of Santa Monica, with an increased focus on luxury offerings to support global sales initiatives.

Dowgwillo provided a preview of the redesigned santamonica.com homepage, which prioritizes booking functionality, user-generated content, hotel integrations, neighborhood exploration, and curated itineraries. The updated site is designed to drive conversions by placing “Reserve Your Stay” prominently and integrating real-time hotel booking capabilities.

Dowgwillo shared that the Spring Staycation Campaign is currently live, targeting Los Angeles County residents, with participation from 21 hotels and running through April 13.

Visitor data from December through early February indicated approximately 900,000 visits from over 50 miles away, with overnight visitors accounting for 35% of total visitation and an average stay length of two days. The most visited areas included Downtown Santa Monica, the Pier, and the Third Street Promenade. Average in-market visitor spend was \$168 per trip, with top feeder markets including New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Seattle-Tacoma and Dallas-Fort Worth were identified as high-value markets based on higher per-trip spending.

Dowgwillo reported that organic website traffic increased 7% month-over-month and 6% year-over-year, with top search queries including “Santa Monica,” “Santa Monica Pier” and “things to do.” Event-driven searches continue to play a significant role in driving website traffic, reinforcing SMTT’s activities and event marketing strategy.

Dowgwillo introduced the implementation of the Scrunch platform to monitor brand sentiment across AI search tools, noting over 4,000 search appearances since December. Insights from this platform are being used to refine website content and improve discoverability.

Dowgwillo revisited the 2025 Expedia campaign, noting it generated nearly \$4.5 million in revenue, approximately 12,000 room nights, and was supported by a \$75,000 investment. Based on its success, SMTT plans to launch a new Expedia campaign from April through July, supported by Visit California with a 25% match, and expected to generate approximately 3.4 million impressions.

Dowgwillo highlighted ongoing Route 66 Centennial marketing efforts, including placements in Visit California’s road trip guide and the installation of themed light pole banners throughout the destination. She encouraged hotel partners to develop Route 66-themed experiences and packages to capitalize on increased demand and media interest.

Dowgwillo also emphasized the importance of event-driven marketing, highlighting upcoming and anchor events including the Santa Monica International Jazz Festival, U.S. Women’s Open, SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury shared public relations and media updates, emphasizing Route 66 as

the top-performing media narrative. Salisbury reported over 100 media engagements across International Media Marketplace events in New York, London, and Paris.

Salisbury highlighted major media initiatives including a television feature and national radio broadcasts with Peter Greenberg, as well as ongoing global press coverage across outlets such as National Geographic, The Telegraph, and HELLO! Magazine.

Salisbury reported that SMTT generated over \$4 million in earned media value from November through February. Upcoming media opportunities include a Today Show segment focused on Route 66 and multiple international press trips.

Salisbury also noted that Santa Monica was recognized on Tripadvisor's Best of the Best Beaches list. On social media, impressions increased 63.4% and engagement rose 8%, with event-related and food content driving the highest performance.

SMTT COO Edwards also presented an update on Film Santa Monica, launched September 1, which has more than doubled film permit activity year-over-year and generated over \$200,000 in revenue for the City. A new online database has been introduced to connect production companies with local hotels and businesses, creating additional revenue opportunities.

SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus highlighted continued engagement with international markets through sales missions, FAM trips, and trade shows. SMTT participated in activations across New York, Germany, Canada, Mexico, Paris, and London, emphasizing key markets such as the UK, France, Germany, and Mexico.

Sigalus also reported strong performance from international co-op campaigns with Visit California, achieving an 8% increase in bookings year-over-year, with notable growth from India, Japan, Australia, and the UK. Upcoming initiatives include participation in IPW, ILTM Cannes, and additional FAM trips and roadshows.

SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero shared updates on the upcoming Goldenvoice music festival, anticipated for September 2026. The two-day beachfront event will feature approximately 20 artists and premium ticket offerings, with hotel packages playing a central role in initial ticket sales. SMTT is working closely with event organizers to ensure hotel inclusion in packages and to maximize economic impact for the destination.

**CEO Update:** SMTT CEO Kerns provided updates on industry trends and external factors impacting tourism.

Kerns attended the Visit California Board Meeting, where updated forecasts showed a slight increase in 2025 visitation and travel spending. However, ongoing challenges include negative domestic media coverage related to cost, homelessness, and safety perceptions, as well as increased competition from Florida.

Kerns highlighted efforts by Visit California to shift messaging through creative campaigns, including storytelling and new road trip initiatives.

Kerns also emphasized the growing momentum behind the Route 66 Centennial, which has generated over 54 million media impressions globally to date.

Additional updates included progress on major events such as the FIFA World Cup 2026, the approval of the Los Angeles Convention Center expansion, and national advocacy efforts led by the U.S. Travel Association in response to economic challenges impacting the travel sector.

Kerns concluded by noting strong performance indicators for Santa Monica, including a 55.3% increase in MICE events year-over-year and a 6.6% increase in booked rooms.

**For the Good of the Order:** SMTT CEO Kerns called for Good of the Order comments. There were none.

**Adjournment:** Chairperson Carreon adjourned the meeting at 11:46 AM.