

**MEETING MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
SPECIAL MEETING
ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT
THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2026
REGENT SANTA MONICA BEACH– 1700 OCEAN AVE, SANTA MONICA, CA 90401**

Call to Order: Chair Lopez-Quintana called the meeting to order at 10:16 AM.

Roll Call & Self Introductions: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for self-introductions. Those present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

Board of Directors Present: Chair Lopez-Quintana, Vice Chair Jeff Klocke, Treasurer Simon Fricker, Secretary Karen Ginsberg, Member Tim Defuria, Member Neil Carrey, Member Darlene Evans, City Manager Oliver Chi and Member Jan Williamson, who joined at 11:02am.

Also Present: SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano, SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo, SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, SMTT Executive Assistant Haylee Jost, Downtown Santa Monica CEO Debbie Lee, and Heal the Bay Water Quality Data Specialist Naomi Meurice.

Absent: Member Lauralee Asch.

Public Comment: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for public comment. There was none.

Approval of the June 24, 2026 Joint Board & TMD Meeting Minutes: Secretary Ginsberg presented the June 24, 2026 Joint Board & TMD meeting minutes. Chair Lopez-Quintana moved to approve the minutes and Member Defuria seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Asch absent.

Review of the 2027 Board of Directors Meeting Calendar: SMTT President/CEO Kerns presented the 2027 Board of Directors meeting calendar for the Board of Directors' reference.

Heal the Bay Presentation: Water Quality Data Specialist Naomi Meurice presented an overview of water quality conditions at the Santa Monica Pier and the work of the Santa Monica Pier Water Quality Task Force. She highlighted historical bacteria trends, noting that the Pier has ranked among Heal the Bay's "Beach Bummers" for 15 of the past 21 years, with significantly elevated bacteria levels since 2020. Recent testing indicates that contamination is localized around and beneath the Pier, with unsafe bacteria levels detected up to 100 meters from the shoreline. The Task Force is conducting additional sampling and DNA analysis to identify potential sources, including birds, humans, dogs, infrastructure, and other contributors. Meurice also discussed potential solutions, including improved bird deterrents, infrastructure improvements, and continued monitoring, with the Task Force expected to provide the City with recommendations for long-term solutions.

Downtown Santa Monica Presentation: CEO Debbie Lee presented an update on Downtown Santa Monica (DTSM), highlighting current efforts related to clean and safe initiatives, brand management, economic development, and business engagement. She noted improvements in downtown infrastructure and public safety, including increased police presence and enhanced private security, as well as ongoing efforts to support businesses and address storefront vacancies through beautification programs. Lee reported strong performance from recent downtown activations, including significant increases in visitation and double-digit growth in spending, and shared that DTSM is now tracking foot traffic, dwell time, transactions, and average spend to better measure event and marketing impacts. She also highlighted

upcoming programming and major events, including Halloween, holiday programming, ice skating, and preparations for future Olympic-related opportunities. Lee discussed strategies to attract and retain businesses, strengthen partnerships, and balance local and visitor audiences, while continuing to position downtown as a vibrant destination.

TMD Renewal Update: SMTT President/CEO Kerns briefly outlined the next steps for the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) Management District Plan renewal, noting that the Plan will be presented to the TMD Committee for review on Wednesday, August 12. If subsequently adopted by the City, the renewed TMD Management District Plan will take effect July 1, 2027.

Working Lunch & Discussion: The Board of Directors held a working lunch provided by Orla during which members of the leadership team provided brief overviews of their respective departments, including team structure, core functions, and goals for FY 2025–2026 and FY 2026–2027. Leadership also discussed key priorities and areas of focus for the upcoming years and engaged with the Board regarding how staff time and resources should be allocated to best support the organization's goals.

Board Discussion: The Board of Directors conducted a SWOT exercise to identify potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to Santa Monica's image as a destination, branding, and community. Board members collaboratively discussed and identified key areas for consideration and agreed to review and prioritize several items from each category during upcoming meetings to determine areas of focus for the Board.

For the Good of the Order: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for Good of the Order comments. There were none.

Adjournment: Chair Lopez-Quintana adjourned the meeting at 2:55 PM.