



**Travel Santa Ana
Q4 Board of Directors Meeting
Wed., October 15, 2025 @ 2 p.m.
Hotel Zessa, 201 E. MacArthur Blvd.**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 2:07 pm by Aaron Saliba

Attendees

- Aaron Saliba, Hotel Zessa a DoubleTree by Hilton
- Wendy Haase-Roberts, President & CEO, Travel Santa Ana
- Marc Morley, City of Santa Ana
- Cory Sams, MainPlace Mall
- Ryan Chase, 4th Street Market
- Frank Atayade, Holiday Inn
- De'Andre Gipson, New GM South Coast Metro Courtyard
- Quinn Su, Former DoubleTree
- Luis Vasquez, Holiday Inn Express & Suites

Directors Not in attendance

- Erin Warady, Cannabis Chamber of Commerce
- Courtyard By Marriott, OPEN

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the July minutes approved by Ryan Chase and Marc Morley

Public Comments

No public comments currently

Chair Report (A. Saliba)

Tourism Marketing District renewal

- The agreement is currently with the City of Santa Ana's attorney, pending approval.
- The agreement is similar to the original issued in 2021. The City of Santa Ana will continue to be responsible for collecting the 2% assessment and distributing it to Travel Santa Ana.

- Travel Santa Ana and Civitas Advisors are in contact with the city to ensure the new agreement is signed by December 31, 2025.

City of Santa Ana & Hoteliers meeting

- Thank Frank and his team for hosting these quarterly meetings.
- In attendance were Councilmember Bacerra, City Manager Alvaro Nunez, Marc, and Commander Maria Lopez.
- Four hotels were represented: Hotel Zessa, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express and California Lodging Suites.
- November 4 City Council Meeting, council members will vote to approve drones to track criminal activity. Hoteliers are encouraged to attend or write a letter in support. Wendy to provide additional information, including a sample letter, once item is on the agenda.
- Recommended that the sample letter be personalized.
- 2026 dates for the quarterly meeting have been shared via a calendar invite by Councilmember Bacerra's office. Holiday Inn will again host.

2026-2028 Board of Directors

- Election of Directors shall be held during the Q2 Board of Directors meeting on April 15, 2026.
- Wendy to reach out to all current board members to gauge continued interest. If you are not interested in continuing, please let Wendy know.
- Aaron Saliba, Hotel Zessa, would move to past chair role.
- Frank Atayade, Holiday Inn, approved as incoming chair due to his support, leadership, and efforts in the Tourism Marketing District Renewal.
- Luis Vasquez, Holiday Inn Express & Suites, considering vacant position left by Courtyard Orange County.

President & CEO Evaluation

- Executive committee conducted the evaluation for the President & CEO in conjunction with her four-year work anniversary (August).

2026 BOD Meeting Dates

- January 14, April 15, July 15 and October 14
- All meetings begin at 2 p.m.
- Location of meetings TBD, please let Wendy know if available to host.

BOD, Hotels & Marketing Advisory Group Annual Celebration

- December 10 from 4-6:30 p.m. at Tacos Madre Kitchen & Cantina, 3390 S. Bristol St. Invitation to follow.

Financial Report (R. Chase)

- Link to Q3 financials located [here](#)
- In August, \$156,759.66 in Tourism Marketing District (TMD) revenue was collected.
- Budget YTD (November 2024 to present) TMD revenue = \$1,326,036.04
- Total Tourism Marketing District revenue collected = \$6,637,084.57.
- Motion to approve by Frank Atayde and approved by Quinn Su.

President's Report (W. Haase-Roberts)

2025 Sales Highlights (Presentation included in Google Drive)

Tradeshow and Lead Performance

- In the first three quarters of 2025, Travel Santa Ana participated in 25 tradeshows across 25 U.S. cities, generating 633 appointments with planners and buyers.
- This extensive reach reinforced Santa Ana's presence in both domestic and international markets.
- Sales efforts secured 70 qualified leads and declined 39 unqualified ones, focusing on high-value prospects aligned with Santa Ana's hotel and meeting space capabilities.

Presentations and Market Outreach

- AnaLaura delivered 15 presentations, including:
 - One for 80 members of Meeting Professionals International (MPI).
 - One for 91 certified meeting professionals during a Visit California-sponsored lunch at Connect.
- Expanded international exposure through 5 radio spots, 1 TV interview, and 3 webinars (two reaching over 200 Aeroméxico agents/executives).
- Expanded sports market engagement through a new partnership with LamontCo, aimed at broadening sports-related lead generation and reaching new market segments.
 - LamontCo provided strategic guidance on maximizing visibility, engaging key associates, and showcasing Santa Ana's venues to sports planners.
 - An introductory webinar was conducted, with another scheduled before year-end to feature local hotels and venues aligned with preferred sports market opportunities.
- A one-sheet highlighting Santa Ana hotels was created for the Parks & Recreation Department to distribute to sports planners. We continue to partner with the city to further strengthen relationships with those who oversee the sports facilities.

International Engagement

- Focused on international growth by:
 - Hosted a breakfast featuring loteria in Mexico City to engage planners.

- Facilitated hotel onboarding with Despagar and Nuitee, resulting in 70+ room nights and continued bookings for one hotel.
- Hosted a Canadian agent from Alberta Motor Association (AAA equivalent) and connecting with Santa Ana's own U.S. Consul General in Montreal.

Economic Impact

- YTD 2025 (Jan–Sept): sales efforts generated an estimated \$4.53M in potential economic impact, driven by distributed leads and strengthened by innovative marketing activations.
- 2024 (Full Year): \$9.29M in potential impact.
- Q4 2025: Participation in IMEX Americas, four more tradeshow (87 appointments), and three possible FAM tours.

Market Observations

- Recovery in group sourcing trends continues.
- Many bookings are either short-term (3–6 months) or long-term (2027+).
- Limited-service hotel demand is soft.
- International travel to the U.S. is impacted by a strong dollar, inflation, and global political factors.

2025 Marketing Highlights

Digital Campaigns and ROI

- Expedia “Always-On” Campaign:
 - 24,472 room nights, \$3.3M hotel revenue, ROI \$24.72:1 (includes \$42,500 Visit CA co-op).
- OC JMC Quarterly:
 - 40,813 room nights, \$5.6M revenue, ROI \$74.66:1.
- Soccer World Championship Co-op:
 - 5,651 room nights, \$758,535 revenue, ROI \$30.24:1.
 - *Visit Buena Park, Visit Palm Springs. Expedia Case Study
- Despegar (Latin America): 111 room nights, \$14K revenue, ROI \$1.40:1.
- Adara: 179 bookings, \$72,659 revenue, ROI \$9.69:1.
- TIKI Banner Campaign: 123,652 impressions, 10,034 clicks, CTR 8.11% (benchmark 6–7%).

Media Coverage

- Hosted both influencers and traditional travel writers, including members of North American Travel Journalists and International Food Wine & Travel Writers Association.
- Conducted radio interviews including those during Mexico tradeshow.
- Featured in *Small Market Meetings* (May issue) for “Meet California’s Cultures.”

2025 Website & Social Media Highlights

Digital Growth (Jan–Sept 2025)

Metric	2024	2025	Change
Website Sessions	246,917	499,352	+102%
E-Newsletter Subscribers	793	1,264	+59%
Open Rate	42%	46%	+9.5%
Instagram Followers	3,048	6,340	+108%
Facebook Followers	1,409	1,543	+9.5%
LinkedIn Followers	499	582	+16.6%
YouTube Views	27,411	11,104	–59.5%
Facebook Reach	1.6M	96.7K	–93.9%

Insights

- Website sessions and newsletter growth highlight the success of SEO and AI-integrated content.
- Social media declines (Facebook and YouTube) are attributed to algorithm shifts and reduced viral content.
- Community sentiment influenced by immigration-related media narratives.

Next Steps

- Develop a refreshed social media campaign to increase reach and engagement, particularly on Facebook and YouTube.
- Establish a more consistent posting cadence across all platforms to sustain visibility and follower growth.
- Expand video content production and fully utilize YouTube Studio tools to optimize performance and audience retention.
- Continue to leverage influencer partnerships and cross-promotions to drive authentic storytelling and organic reach.
- Build hotels into our regular content mix by creating more features, videos, and partner spotlights that connect our lodging options to the overall Santa Ana visitor experience.

2025 Programs

- Santa Ana Enthusiast Program
 - Launched complimentary training program to educate the community on Santa Ana’s tourism value.
 - 255 participants certified as Enthusiasts, including city employees, hoteliers, and residents.

- Top hotels and partners (Santa Ana Zoo, Frida Cinema, Mater Dei HS) recognized with celebratory pizza events.
- Proud Santanero Campaign
 - Featured 14 locals to date across three series:
 - Including Jon Julio (Blading Cup/THEM Skates) and local historian Tim Rush in 2025.
 - Upcoming features this year: Ana Laura of Perla, Santo's Pizza and Sariñara's Tamale Factory, Santa Ana's oldest restaurant.
 - Hopeful additions like Rickenbacker Guitars and Suavecito in 2026.
 - Winner of a Gold Award by Vega Digital Awards.
- Visitor Loyalty Program
 - Launched the Visitor Loyalty Program, which offers special discounts and promotions to guests staying at Hotel Zessa, a DoubleTree by Hilton, and the Holiday Inn Santa Ana–Orange County Airport.
 - The goal of the Santa Ana Visitor Loyalty Program is to encourage visitors to explore and experience the city's attractions, restaurants, and retail establishments.
 - Partnered with 4 attractions (including Bowers Museum) and 5 restaurants.
 - Encourages hotel guests to explore local experiences, awaiting first redemptions.

Hidden Gems

- "Hidden Gems" segment aired on PBS Travel Detective, also streaming on Amazon and Apple TV+.
- Awaiting airing dates for Blue Lot and Alta Baja Market episodes.

2025 Awards & Recognition

- Recognized for excellence in:
- Website, Visitors Guide, Annual Report, Mexico Digital Ad Campaign, Culinary Passport, Michelada Guide, Branding, and Destination Video.
- Major achievement: Named one of the "Best CVB/DMOs" by Smart Meetings Magazine.

2025 TMD Revenue

- Projected TMD revenue: \$1.58M.
- Forecast accuracy: within \$1,900 of target.
- Operating slightly under budget.

2026 Strategic Overview

- Our sales and marketing initiatives for 2026 are strategic, targeted, and data driven.

- Focus remains on maximizing ROI, expanding reach, and building long-term destination loyalty.

2026 Advertising

- Continue Visit California co-ops; \$162,500 earned in returns (\$42,500 in 2025).
- Maintain Expedia Always-On due to high ROI and conversion rates.
- Increase investment in pay-per-click advertising for meetings and sports.
- Continue Despegar campaign and explore new international platforms.
- Renew partnership with OC Restaurant Association to reinforce food/beverage positioning.
- Hire a digital media agency to oversee strategy, media planning, buying, optimization, and ROI tracking.
- Adopt new media attribution research tools to link advertising to visitation.

Maintain current year's total while reallocating funds to emphasize digital strategy and analytics.

2026 Partnerships

- Continue relationships with HelmsBriscoe and HPN Global for planner access, education, and lead reporting.
- Continue collaboration with LamontCo for sports lead generation.
- End partnership with OC Sports Commission (minimal ROI; fee increase from \$5,500 to \$8,000).
- Incorporate Playeasy, a sports tourism platform made for DMOs, that connect event organizers with destinations, with the objective of bringing visibility to Santa Ana sports facilities that can generate overnight stays for teams. Santa Ana will be the only Orange County city included in this platform; other California cities already using it are Sacramento, Greater Ontario, Santa Rosa, Walnut Creek, Lancaster and Murrieta.
- Allocate \$50,000 from reserves for World Cup 2026 activations.

2026 Conferences

Reduced conference spending by 38% by shifting to biennial participation.

2025 Industry Relations

- Three possible 2026 FAM tours: HelmsBriscoe, California Cup, and Associations West.
- New opportunities:
 - CalSAE (California Society of Association Executives) expanded in 2025 to include Nevada and Oregon, rebranding as Associations West. Travel Santa Ana will leverage this growth by hosting a client presentation with

the Oregon chapter in Salem and an event for Portland-based planners. The goal is to position Santa Ana as the first California destination of choice for the Pacific Northwest association market and generate future group business.

- Seasonal Spectacular, one of California's top association shows produced by Associations West, takes place in December. Travel Santa Ana plans to sponsor the SGMP (Society of Government Meeting Planners) Golden State Chapter's annual breakfast the following day to reach government and third-party planners and showcase Santa Ana.
- Travel Santa Ana also shifted its MPI (Meeting Professionals International) affiliation from the Southern California Chapter to Arizona to strengthen visibility in key feeder markets such as Phoenix and Tucson. The team will collaborate with the chapter on smaller events and leverage relationships with HelmsBriscoe, HPN Global, and major corporate travel centers for Amex Global and BCD headquartered in Phoenix.

Slight budget increase to accommodate additional opportunities.

2026 Memberships

- Added OC Hotel & Lodging Association membership.
- Discontinued LGBTQ Meeting Professionals membership due to low ROI.

Budget allocation remains consistent.

2026 Outside Services & Printing

- 2026 Visitors Guide will be updated, not fully reprinted, cutting cost from \$50K to ~\$15K.
- Includes new cover, limited copy edits, and a small Spanish edition print run.
- Add part-time contracted assistant.
- Reduced costs by 25% over 2025.

2026 Public Relations

Slight reduction in spending by attending TravMedia IMM every other year instead of annually.

2026 Research

- Transitioning to a new research platform (used by Brand USA, Mastercard, U.S. Travel Association).
- Will include website and media attribution and expand international visitor tracking.

Budget increase from \$33K to \$53K (+61%).

2026 Tradeshows

- Continue a mix of international and domestic shows.

Reduced allocation due to more selective, ROI-focused participation.

2026 Website

- Slight budget increase due to vendor cost adjustments and two new features:
 - As Seen by AI, 12-month program, designed to help Travel Santa Ana understand and improve how our brand is interpreted by AI systems across owned, earned, and partner channels. Ensuring our destination is accurately represented in an increasingly AI-driven digital landscape, strengthening visibility and consistency across platforms.
 - Vision, designed specifically for destination marketing organizations, helps streamline content creation, strengthen collaboration, and keep pace with the fast-changing digital landscape.

Proposed 2026 Sales & Marketing Budget (see 2026 Budget/2025 Budget comparison)

Administrative Budget

Includes technology subscriptions: Adobe, ChatGPT 4.0, Sprout Social, QR Tiger.

2026 Salaries & Benefits

Proposed 2026 salary adjustments:

- AnaLaura: +3% → \$100,961
- Maria: +2.5% → \$85,280
- Executive Committee approved +3% increase → \$166,611 + 10% bonus based on 2025 salary for President & CEO.
- Includes increases for payroll taxes, benefits, and \$2,000 annually for life and disability insurance.
- Effective January 1, 2026.

Final 2026 Proposed Budget

- \$1,589,792 projected TMD revenue
- \$1,765,976 operational budget
- \$50,000 reserves
- \$176,184 carryover
- Total Proposed Budget: \$1,815,976
- <5% decrease over 2025 due to legal fees associated with Civitas

****2026 Budget Approved by BOD****

New Business

No new business reported.

Announcements

Next BOD meeting will be held on **Wednesday, January 14** at 2:00 pm at TBD

Adjournment

The meeting is adjourned at 3:35 p.m. Minutes recorded by Wendy Haase-Roberts.

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