

Gold West Country

General Board Meeting – Anaconda Copper Village Museum

Minutes – March 25, 2010

Board members: Fay Najjar, Dale Carlson, Judy Westfall, Carol Eichler, Ellen Baumler, John O'Donnell, Pamela Kimmey, Mike Mergenthaler, Paul Marsh, Mike Strang, Jim Davison, Julie Shelton, Beth Ihle, Richard Krott, Sara Rowe,

Participants: Connie Ternes Daniels, Cheryl McKinley, Kathleen, Tom Lowe, Lynette Kemp, Sandy Shull, Jim Jenner, Daniel Kane, Dave Williams, Julia Brewer, Scott Sylvester, Mike Steele, Adam Vauthier, Casey Ferguson, Laura Obert, Ray Ryan, Pete Kurtis Shawn Peterson

President Mike Mergenthaler called the meeting to order. We went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction.

Mike Strang moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Sara Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Sarah handed out the financial reports and said that we have \$76947.82 in the state checkbook and \$9,044.82 in the money market. We also have \$63,077.46 in the membership account. Cost break outs are listed out on the financial reports Paul Marsh moved that the report be approved as submitted, Fay seconded the motion and it was approved.

MARS STOUT from the call center submitted an inquiry report. So far, in 2010, we have received 430 inquiries and mailed out 1286 travel guides. Of the travel guides 298 were email requests from the Gold West website, 104 were telephone calls, and 28 were reader service leads from national magazines (and 1,700 more just came in) Inquiries came from Washington, Pennsylvania, California, Florida, and Wisconsin. They were interested in history and ghost towns, wildlife viewing, rock hounding, Lewis and Clark, and family activities.

George Everett sent an update on the National Folk Festival. They have the first seven performers on the website and will be adding six more by Friday. Posters and brochures will be available a little later in late April or early May. You can go to the website at www.nationalfolkfestival.com

Paul Marsh said that there isn't an update on the Sage and Stone information. He explained what the Sage and Stone brochure and book were about if anyone needed the book they could get them for \$4 and sell them for \$5.

Mike Strang thanked people for serving on the Bike committee and that they have a committee meeting after the Gold West meeting. The Montana Mountain Bike Alliance is making a brochure that will include information on the ethics on using the trails.

Sara Rowe reported that the Billings Travel Expo is this weekend. It is the first show put on by Quickriver and covers a 600 mile radius. We will report next month on how things went.

The Montana Office of Tourism received the bid to do a portion of a great television miniseries. It will be filmed in the summer of 2011 and will bring huge amounts of new money into the state. The film office is looking to the Regions and CVB's for some help with incentive funds for the project. Mike Mergenthaler read a letter from the film office and Betsy Baumgart, the administrator for the Montana Office of Tourism. We will discuss more on this at a later time.

Mike Strang talked about the promotion of the state parks. We can check into putting more information on our website. We might be able to add another resource area.

Mike also said that Lima will be getting a rest area. In time, they will be looking for help and financial support with the information kiosks that will be part of rest area. This is something we need to be aware of and need to start thinking about what we want to do with this opportunity.

Mike was asking about the follow-up on the inquiries to call center. We use to get extra inquiries from the state but because of opt-in rules and regulations we can't get them now. The call center sends out our travel guides as fulfillment for information requests.

Scott Sylvester from G&G advertising gave us an update. He said that the ads are placed, the travel guide is out and they are working on the marketing plan.

Rod Trenary, who places our television ads, sent information on the ad placements. He wanted feedback on the response from the ads. Jim Jenner said that the response in Philipsburg has been phenomenal. Other than that, we haven't received much response on the ads placed with Gold West Country. Our call center did receive a call last week requesting information.

Sarah gave an update on the Top Ten Scenic Drives. A brochure with the map was passed around. This was the only copy Sarah received at the region and visitor center meeting. Richard asked for more information on this and how are the brochures being distributed. Sarah will find out how to get more brochures.

We looked at our preliminary budget information. We have not received the final budget number from the state at this point. We will have less money than last year to work with and will need to put back in cooperative funds in the state account. We will have more information on the budget next week and we will have full discussion at our next meeting.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies talked about possibilities for the website. The possibilities include an interactive version of the birding brochure, new content (such as mountain biking opportunities), expanded social networking and interactive elements, encourage more submitted content, ongoing email marketing campaign with associated website content, expanded video and pod cast content, enhancements to trip planner and campground finder, suggested travel ideas and itineraries, contests and user submissions, campaign to increase travel related businesses on site, search engine optimization and link building campaign, and website promotion and advertising (ad agency will probably handle this one).

We talked about the legislature and keeping the congress informed about tourism issues. We will need a form with speaking points. Since this is an election year we need to talk to legislators about the issues that are important to us.

Under public comment, Jim Jenner talked about his experience with Route 66 and how it grew in popularity. The Yellowstone Trail will be 100 years old in 2012 and it would be ideal to begin thinking about this now.

We discussed Superhost and what is changing. It is hard to get employers to send their employees for this training. Several free trainings are given and even then we have had some difficulty in getting employees to attend. At the Governor's Conference a free training will be given. They are also working on an online training program.

Pepsirefresh.com is going online in two weeks. It is a national program that gives grants and has people vote on them. People can talk to job service about this.

The next board meeting will be on April 22 at Boulder Hot Springs.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.