

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Old Works Golf Course, Anaconda
Minutes - October 24, 2013

Board members: Julie Shelton, Fay Najjar, Dave Williams, Dale Siegford, Paul Marsh, Judy Westfall, George Everett, Anna Provost, Pat Hansen, Ellen Baumler, Mike Mergenthaler, Ambers Wood-Jensen, and employee Sarah Bannon. Members and guests: Jim Davison, Leona Rodreick, Kim DeLong, Kris Hauck, Linda Hamilton, Russ Hamilton, Shawn Peterson, Linda Brown, Stephanie Munk, Rebecca Schmitz, Suzanne Elfstrom, Pat Doyle, Ryan Stensrud

President Julie Shelton called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m. We went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction. Julie thanked Fay and Old Works Golf Course for hosting the meeting and the wonderful setup. She also thanked Dale Siegford from the Sweet Palace for bringing chocolates which were passed around the room.

Mike Mergenthaler moved that the minutes be approved and Amber seconded the request. Motion passed unanimously.

Since there was no public comment we went into the financial report. Sarah had two handouts and reported that we have \$9,476.58 in our state account and \$126,292.07 in the money market account. The budget for the fiscal year was also handed out so that members could see where the money is allocated and what the projects are. The membership checkbook as of September 30th had \$21,023.28. As of October 23, the checkbook had \$15,824.13 due to payment for new stationary and some other payments. We also have \$5,985 for membership enhancements to the intranet site as well as some other projects. Mike Mergenthaler moved that the financial report be accepted as presented/ Amber seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Sarah talked about several grant programs available through the Montana Office of Tourism. They have the Special Event Program Grant, Tourism Infrastructure Improvement Program Grant, and the Electronic Grant. Southwest Montana nonprofit businesses can really benefit from this. Sarah would like to set up a workshop to help people write their grants. Carol Crockett, Montana Office of Tourism has offered to come to a workshop to help educate people on information needed for the grants.

Julie said that we had an executive board meeting about funding and will talk about it later in the meeting. She also thanked Dale Siegford for the two boxes of chocolates that were passed around the meeting.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout gave the inquiry report. She had a handout with all the information on inquiry leads, where they came from, what people are interested in and what state or country that the inquiry originated. We have had 9095 inquiries and given out 13,736 travel guides through the call center since July of this fiscal year. Rebecca also had a list of many of the questions that people ask when they call. She talked about the book about W.A. Clark's daughter who died a recluse. She said millions of people are reading the book and that it is a stellar opportunity to tie into Southwest Montana history. Rebecca recommends the book: *Empty Mansions: the Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune* by Bill Dedman and Paul Clark Newell. The first third is almost entirely set in Southwest Montana with a description of William Clark's life in Bannack, Deer Lodge, Butte, and Helena and how he started said fortune through the business dealings in those towns. There's even mention of Marcus Daly, Anaconda and its stack.

We talked about putting up a list of books of Montana and Montana authors on the site. Tempest is adding information to the blog on the book. Dale Siegford also asked about putting up a list of the films made in Montana.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies reported on the website and internet. He had gone to the call center and got great ideas for the website and internet. Mike is in the field doing video of the fall colors. They are working on updating the intranet site with the new membership information. Also, they are building program to give members

priority space on the website. They will be giving our website a facelift with the new logo, color and brand from Partners Creative. Julie also announced for everyone to give information and pictures on events for them to add to our Facebook site. Please send to Linda at Tempest Technologies or call her at 406-495-8731.

We talked about the Lewis and Clark Country Project. This is a multi-state project that is now working with Montana and Idaho. Victor Bjornberg from the Montana Office of Tourism is taking the lead on this project that involves all the regions. It is a partnership with many states and the National Park Service. The project is to enhance, diversify and increase visitation at attractions, visitor centers, state and federal parks, communities and byways in the Lewis and Clark Country. Circle tours will be created in surrounding areas.

Kris Hauck from the Montana Economic Development Council talked about the Cooperative Marketing Project called the Madison Valley / US 287 Tourism Initiative. The project has to do with letting travelers going to and from Yellowstone know about the US 287 route. The highway is not recognized by Google and the traffic has started dropping in the area but is picking up in the surrounding counties. Kris mentioned that one problem is only post office boxes are showing up for the Ennis area and so people don't really know where to go. The project will be a website up through the corridor. Much discussion took place about the project. It is strongly recommended by the board that Virginia City and the Ruby Valley will be added as soon as this gets off the ground. Kris explained that in order to get started they just focused on the Madison Valley Corridor. Mike asked if any work is to be done with the Department of Transportation. Kris said that is the third phase of the project. Shawn asked about the advertisement in the airport in Bozeman. It is being looked into but it is not easy to accomplish just yet.

Stephanie Munk said that being involved in Trip Advisor would be good. We talked about a map in West Yellowstone of all the routes. Leona told Kris she had a contact for her for Public Affairs. Dale moved that we allocate \$3875 of cooperative funds toward the project. Paul seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dale Siegford moved that we approve \$3875 of Cooperative Marketing for the Madison Valley / US 287 Tourism Initiative. Paul seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

George mentioned that the ITRR results from the Folk Festival show that the impact is up a million from the previous year and also includes more out of state people. Since we are not sure of rollover at this time we will wait to approve any more funds until our January meeting.

George also offered to suggest the Madison Valley Route for getting to the Folk Festival. He also offered to write a letter of support for the E-Grant for the project.

Fay asked about updates to the effects of the government shutdown. They had 14 rooms canceled. Amber said most hoteliers did have affects from the shutdown. George said there was a delay in getting the NEA Funds.

Rocky Mountain International (RMI) will be in Missoula April 29th – May 3rd. Sarah is to send a link to Dan Thyer with the information.

Suzanne Elfstrom, from Partners Creative gave a membership update. At the last meeting we had gone through all the benefits and costs of the membership. The mailing is scheduled for early November. Information can also be obtained at members.southwestmt.com. A brochure will be sent as well with information on where we spend our money and on the back panel a pie chart on where travelers spend their money in our region.

Suzanne also showed on the overhead the Media Plan. Two additions since the last meeting were the Discover America and also Yellowstone Journal and links. We also talked about trying to get more information out at the Bozeman Airport. Right now we are on a waiting list to get our travel guides in the airport. Suzanne reported on Trip Advisor witch had major increases from 2012. Page views were up 20% and for quarter three we had 22,400 page views.

Suzanne talked about the new design for the travel guide. It will be reorganized to be more experiential. The lodging will be revised and formatted for easier readability. It will include more maps and will be broken up a bit. Kris said that Pamela had said our map only shows our region and should include Yellowstone. Dale said that we could do Yellowstone to Glacier.

Suzanne talked about including arts and architecture, libation which included beer, wine and distilleries. She also talked about soft adventure and moved birding into this category. The communities will be moved more toward the back and will focus on their best features. The resources will be made smaller and redundant information will be removed. We talked about events and this section and decided to only put in major events that have tourist appeal. Suzanne suggests we drop the scenic tours as they are and put them in each category.

One point of contact is needed for each category. Copy will be due November 8th. We talked about the front cover. Helena has an anniversary as does Philipsburg and also there is a Territory Anniversary. Kris Hauck said that 95% of the people come for scenery and wildlife and whatever picture we use is should be scenic and mountainous.

Kim DeLong talked also about the history and historical information.

The first guide proof will be in mid-December. The second proof will be shortly after the New Year. We might need to add four more pages. We will be adding more on hiking and biking. Kris asked if we had considered food to farm as a category. Suzanne had but is unsure if we can get it into this guide with all the other changes we have and with the shortage of space.

The following are the point of contact: history – Pat Hansen, Arts and Culture – Ellen Baumler, Libations – everyone that has that information in their area, Mountain Biking – Julie and Amber for the Butte area, Outdoor – Judy Westfall, Leona Roderick, and Anna Provost. Judy will talk to Mike Strang and Dori Skudrud.

We talked about rodeos, farmers markets, and festivals. Also we talked about some of our unique events like the Draft Horse Show. Everyone is to determine their top 5 events and get them to Sarah. Sarah will send out a form. The list will be pared off from there to fit in the travel guide.

Leona said that the Deer Lodge National Forest has updated their visitor maps. They are revised and water proof and \$10 per map.

Pat Doyle reported that Helena was chosen for the Best Geo Caching from Rand McNally. Also, MBA has the area designated as one of the top 16 cycling destinations.

Stephanie reported that Town Pump is having their Food Bank Drive and that they will match dollar for dollar of donations and that the money will stay in the local communities.

Kim DeLong reported that they are back at the Great Northern. The Shakespeare Company had three times as many audience members. They will be expanding their season and will also partner with the Great Northern Best Western.

Our next meeting is in Deer Lodge on November 21st.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.