

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Deer Lodge Broken Arrow
Minutes - November 21, 2013

Board Members: Julie Shelton, Patty Cowan, Mike Mergenthaler, Kerri Kumasaka, George Everett, Dale Siegford, Fay Najjar, Ellen Baumler, Carol Eichler, Pat Doyle, Lynette Kemp, Mike Strang, Paul Marsh, Other participants and guests: Suzanne Elfstrom, Don Chlebeck, Chere Jiusto

President Julie Shelton called the meeting to order. She thanked the Broken Arrow for hosting the meeting. She also thanked the Sweet Palace for bringing chocolates for the group. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction and talked about what was going on in his or her local community.

Mike Mergenthaler moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. George Everett seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Since we had no public comment we went into the financial report. Sarah had financial statements available and a list of projects. As of October 31, 2013, we have \$2916.71 in the checking account and \$126,302.90 in the money market account. For membership we have \$15,304.18 in our account as of October 31, 2013.

Sarah reported that the cost for the Lewis and Clark Country joint venture will be \$1714.30 for each participant which saves us almost \$300 from what was approved. We have been working on membership and the travel guide. Victor Bjornberg from the Montana Office of Tourism is asking for help funding a reprint of the Crown of the Continent Map. After some discussion a move was made and Patty Cowan seconded that we give \$500 toward the reprint. The motion passed unanimously.

Sarah asked the participants of the Branding Workshop in Helena of November 7th to talk about what all they discussed. Pat Doyle said they reviewed the winter campaign and talked about social media. The state doesn't advertise the Get Lost program but that it still works. It was also announced that Pam Gosink and Victor Bjornberg will be doing a workshop in Butte soon. Pat Doyle said it would be great to get the small businesses to come.

Julie thanked John O'Donnell from the Prison Museum Complex who had sent along passes for anyone who wanted to go to the museum after the meeting. She reported that right now we are all working on membership and the travel guide and more information would be covered later in the meeting.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout submitted an inquiry report. So far in October and November we had 275 inquiries which were 204 service leads, 40 emails, 30 phone calls and one letter. 723 guides have been mailed out so far for October and November. Most inquiries came from Audubon, Readers Digest, Southwest Montana Website and Sunset magazine. Interests were in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, family activities and the Lewis & Clark Trail. Inquiries came from California, Montana, Texas, and Illinois and Pennsylvania.

Mike Strang talked about getting our maps updated with the new Southwest Montana Brand. We had large poster size maps made of Gold West Country several years ago for visitor centers. We will look at the new map in the guide and see if that is what we want to use.

Suzanne Elfstrom, Partners Creative, talked about the membership. The membership applications went out the last of October and the beginning of November. This year we have a three tiered membership: accommodations and lodging, tourism businesses, and friends of tourism. We also have advertising opportunities with Trip Advisor, banner ads, e-newsletter ads, and the travel guide. Fay asked about sending out a press release so businesses will see it in the paper also. Suzanne said she could write one up to go out to some of the members who could put it in their local papers. George talked about outreach with associations such as the Silverbow Area Lodging Association. We also talked about hiring someone to do membership on a part time or commission base. Mike Mergenthaler, Suzanne and Sarah are to check into this and bring to the next executive board meeting. Dale Siegford talked about how we have so much more flexibility with the membership funds.

Jacque Lavelle, the new superintendent from the Grant Kohrs Ranch gave us an update and information on the National Historic Site. They are open daily, year round except for Christmas and New Year's. They have many programs throughout the year and special events as well. They will have their Victorian Holiday Open House Sunday December 8th from 1-4 p.m. She wants to hear any information or comments on the Grant Kohrs Ranch from us. Paul Marsh mentioned that it is not well marked and a little confusing. Jacque will see what she can do about that. Their average tourism is about 20,000 a year and they hope to improve on that.

Chere Juisto from the Montana Preservation Alliance had a presentation and talked about the Sage and Stone website and mobile app. They have changed the name back to Sage and Stone from Historic Montana Southwest. They have already created an identity with the original name. They are looking at how to position the project. They would like to put post cards in chambers and visitor centers. They also want to put window clings up for people to learn about the site. The Sage and Stone site will link back to the state site for more information. They charge \$50 the first year and \$25 each year after that to keep a business on the website. Donald Chlebeck asked how the town of Whitehall could get included. Chere was unsure as they are currently just working with businesses. It was asked if they would include the Helena area. Chere said they could but would need more money to include them.

Suzanne talked about the travel guide and gave a presentation. She has a tentative schedule of December fourth for a Go To Meeting for print advertising. In January she will present banner ads. She showed the layout and pagination options for the travel guides. It was mentioned that the pretty flower pictures were actually obnoxious weeds and should probably be changed out.

It was mentioned that AAA should reconnect their scenic routes. We talked about the cover and had several great options to view before making a final decision. We voted on a sunset cover. Sarah is to get shipping information from Curtis Spindler of Certified Folder.

Due to the fire at Sarah's house, the board approved to allow Sarah to take her bonus now and to add \$1000 to it. Much appreciation was expressed.

Next meeting is in Butte on January 23, 2014.