

**Southwest Montana**  
**General Board Meeting –Virginia City, Elling House**  
**June 18, 2014**

Participants: board members: Julie Shelton, Paul Marsh, Desiree Shogren, David Williams, Amber Wood-Jensen, Lynette Kemp, Dale Carlson, Dan Thyer, Pamela Kimmey, Judy Westfall, employee Sarah Bannon

Members and guests: Carrie Smith, Gay Rossow, Kay Rossow, Elyja Allen, Kenzi Clark,

Advertising Agency: Suzanne Elfstrom, Website and Internet Agency: Shawn Peterson, Debbie Carlstrom

President Julie Shelton called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone and thanked Pamela Kimmey and the Elling House for hosting the meeting. We then went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction.

Trina Peterson moved to approve the minutes as sent out in the email. Paul Marsh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Sarah had handouts for the financial reports. Sarah reported that we have \$14,468 in the membership account. We have \$4525 in the state account and \$40,940 in the money market account. All balances are as of May 31, 2014.

For the executive director report, Sarah talked about the Tourism Advisory Council meeting that was in Red Lodge. Our marketing plan and budget was approved. A new approach for doing the marketing plan has been implemented this year and so far looks to make the process easier. The Rocky Mountain International met in Missoula. Sarah and Pamela Kimmey went and talked to 42 operators. Pamela explained how they would like to have a landing page in their language to help them get to our site. She also explained that they really want the information that was relevant to them and not as much on events such as pancake breakfasts. They all wanted one to three day itineraries to navigate through the area preferably with places to eat and stay. We will work on this with Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies. The Big Sky Fam tour was a great success. The participants send travelers to Southwest Montana but now that they received extra exposure to the area will be better equipped with knowledge to better serve the tourists. Suzanne Elfstrom talked about the *Discover America* magazine that we put an ad in and that it is also printed in several languages. We are also doing a Motorhome Magazine FAM Tour with Glacier County and Yellowstone Country next week. We have had some great articles come out from last year's "Stepping Back in Time" FAM tour. We had a USA Article as well as several others.

Sarah brought the Lewis and Clark Brochures and tear-off routes that we partnered with the other regions and North Dakota and South Dakota. Anyone wanting any please call the office. The Montana Office of Tourism did a Branding Meeting in Deer Lodge and will be doing one in Butte. Superhost was also in Deer Lodge, Anaconda, and Philipsburg.

Julie Shelton gave an update on the website committee. Shawn has reported on the changes to the website. We have a blog that goes up usually every Thursday. Facebook and updates are done and we are asking everyone to turn in events, pictures and anything that might be of interest to our audience.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout submitted a call center report. We have had 2,494 inquiries and mailed out 6,126 travel guides. "Better Home & Gardens, AAA Loving and the Southwest MT website

are our biggest sources for inquiries. Most interests were in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, Lewis and Clark, and rock hounding. Most of our inquiries came from Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. Our numbers are down over previous years for a couple of reasons. We no longer do much in reader service as not as much is offered and they have not been a proven source for who is actually coming to the region. Also, we are finding that some are obtaining the information directly on the internet.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies discussed more of the website and internet. They have worked on the accommodations and he has also been doing the membership enhancements to the site. He is open to suggestions and encourages people to check their records out. They are partnering with the Helena Tourism Alliance on video work which will include aerial footage. He went through the stats and the top listed page views were itineraries, calendar of events, maps, and ghost towns. In the visitor breakouts the internet traffic came from Montana, California, Washington and Illinois. Anyone who has updates can send them to [updates@swmt.com](mailto:updates@swmt.com). Please send information for events, Pinterest, and anything else that may be of interest. Please send pictures –people love the pictures. Also, it is very helpful when you share our posts on Facebook or any other social media.

Julie Shelton reported a bit on membership and said that we may have a meeting over the summer. We then broke for lunch.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative had samples of the tear-off maps. Paul had asked for some designation of the off roads for tourists who may not be aware. Much discussion took place on the maps and it was decided to send out the draft and get feedback by next Wednesday.

Suzanne talked about Trip Advisor. Because of changes that Trip Advisor has done our click through rates have dropped significantly. She is in close contact with them as to see what they are going to do about it and what our options will be. Suzanne also reported that the *History Channel Magazine* has changed completely and didn't inform us or the Montana Office of Tourism before putting our ads in. They have changed and are now *the Warrior Magazine, the Making of a Warrior*, which is about the military. She has been talking to them and we will not have to pay for our ad. This was a big loss for us as Suzanne has had great luck with this magazine. She will be looking at alternative placement for next year.

We will be setting up a membership and a travel guide committee meetings. We talked about listings in the travel guide and whether we will continue to do them again next year. A few people spoke in favor of them. Sarah asked people to observe the travel guide over the summer and give us feedback in the fall. We will be sending out information on the travel guide ads in August.

Our next general board meeting will be September 18. Lewis and Clark Caverns will check to see if they have availability to host the meeting. (They have since said they do not have availability but might be able to do the October meeting).

We will have an executive board meeting in August. Meeting was adjourned at 2:10.