

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Butte History Museum
Thursday, November 19, 2015

Participants: board members: Becky Henne, Julie Shelton, Paul Marsh, Desiree Shogren, Leona Rodreick, Lynette Kemp, Dale Carlson, Amber Wood-Jensen, David Williams, and Maria Pochervina; members and guests: Suzanne Elfstrom – Partners Creative, Valerie Baraza, Ross Johnson, Trina Peterson, Gary and Ann Provost, Julia Quigley, Crystal Denton, Kristen Swenson, Kenzi Clark, and speaker Dick Gibson

Vice President Becky Henne called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. We went around the room and did a self-introduction.

The minutes were emailed out after the last meeting. Amber Wood-Jensen moved that the minutes be accepted as submitted. Trina seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Since there was no public comment we went into the financial report. Sarah had handouts for the report. We had as of October 31, 2015 \$92,462.45 in the checkbook and \$30,145.30 in the money market. For the membership account we had \$13,782.26 in the checking account. Details were presented on the handouts. Maria Pochervina moved that the financial report be approved as presented. Anna Provost seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For the executive director's report Sarah talked about the Mega FAM tour which was a familiarization tour with European Tour Operators. They started in Billings and went all the way to Missoula. They visited Lewis and Clark Caverns, Butte, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg, and Anaconda for the Southwest Montana region. They loved the area and will hopefully direct their clients to the region.

Sarah met with a group in Jackson to discuss the Lost Trail Scenic Byway between Dillon and Fort Missoula. The Bitterroot Cultural Heritage Trust has received a Challenge Cost Share Grant from the Nez Perce National Historic Trail (Forest Service) to take on two projects. Project 1 was to secure designation and write a management plan for the Montana Scenic Historic Byway for the Lost Trail Pass. Project 2 is to create an Interpretive Vision for the route from Fort Missoula to Dillon. A workshop will be held in the spring in Hamilton to see what all the stories are and how to proceed.

We have experienced lots of computer and phone problems going on at the office. The computer is slowing up and locks up when we are using QuickBooks. The internet had several problems but Century Link has since put in new lines and that is working. The computer is still having shut downs and slow response rate due to a glitch in the CPU. The phone system does not have a way for a voice mail to accept calls when the phone is in use. After much discussion with Century Link it was determined that there is no way for voice mail to pick up the call when the line was busy. It instead just lets the phone continue to ring without a busy signal and no way to get to a voice mail. Because of this we are making the switch to Charter. Sarah is to check into getting bids for a new computer.

Elections for board members will be next month. Cooperative Marketing applications will be due by the first week in January. Sarah will send out a notice with the application.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout sent a call center report. With two weeks left in November, they have handled 9,889 inquires which is composed of 1,070 emails, 7,750 reader service leads, 414 phone calls, and 655 postcards and other pieces of mail. So far for 2015, 14,147 travel guides have been mailed. Most inquiries came from Yellowstone Journal, southwestmt.com website, and the Explore History postcard. Interests were history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, Lewis and Clark Trail, and rock hounding. Inquiries came from California, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado.

For Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) updates, Amber Wood-Jensen talked about the brainstorming session with the regions, cvb's and the Montana Office of Tourism to reduce duplication of efforts. An example was combining efforts for photo libraries.

For the travel guide, Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative had seven options for the cover. A draft of the guide was presented with the new layout. Discussion took place on colors, the placement map, and the visibility of the travel guide from the brochure rack. A vote took place on the cover and Suzanne will make a few options available with different tweaks on the cover.

Dick Gibson from the Butte History Museum spoke about the evolution of Butte from the beginning to now. Many interesting facts and pictures kept us fascinated at the stories and the uniqueness of Butte. Dick easily conveyed his love and respect for Butte and the surrounding area.

For marketing updates Suzanne had a handout of the past media campaign. We had great results with our online campaign beating average click through rates on all of the placements. Suzanne has been working with Trip Advisor to get better year to year tracking as they have changed their reporting.

Suzanne presented a media plan for fiscal year 2016. For online she is looking at Madden Media, Trip Advisor, True West Magazine.com, and Sizmek. For the bicycling campaign we have a Montana Office of Tourism Grant and the plan is yet to be finalized. For out of home we have the potential for the Missoula Airport Backlit Sign. For publications we are looking at *Better Homes and Garden*, *Go Ranger! National Park Guides*, *Northwest Travel*, and *True West Magazine*. We are also considering an MTOT Co-op with the *Nature Conservancy*. The marketing committee will discuss this further at a later date. Suzanne also had a handout that graphed out the placement of the media and the months that the advertising covered.

We discussed and set up the next few meetings. On January 21, 2016 we will meet at Fairmont Hot Springs. We will meet on March 16 at a location yet to be determined. On April 21st we will meet in Townsend. And we have June 16th scheduled for the Boulder Creek Lodge. Another date to keep in mind is the Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation in Kalispell on April 10-12.

At 1:25 p.m. Kristin Swenson moved to adjourn the meeting and Amber Wood-Jensen seconded the motion.