

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Boulder Creek Lodge, Hall
Minutes -September 15, 2016

Participants: Heidi O’ Brien, Drew Dawson, Marlene Holayter, Rebecca Schmitz, Crystal Denton, Melanie Sanchez, Richard Krott, Mike Mergenthaler, Paul Marsh, David Williams, Kerri Kumasaka, Shawn Peterson, Leona Rodreick, Debbie Carlstrom, Patrick Fox, employee -Sarah Bannon

The meeting was held at Patrick Fox’s Boulder Creek Lodge which includes camping, cabins, and RV hookups. It has a great restaurant and a nice little gift store.

At 10:45 a.m., Secretary Paul Marsh called the meeting to order. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction.

Sarah had emailed out the minutes and Dave Williams moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Leona seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Under public comment we talked about several events coming: Pumpkin Sunday at Grant Kohrs Ranch, Fall Color Festival at Tizer Botanical Gardens, Living History at Bannack, Haunted House at the Territorial Prison. Leona Rodreick announced that the Beaverhead Deer Lodge National Park was using heavy equipment at Crystal Park to make it safer for digging for crystals. Boulder Hot Springs is actively working on Community Improvement.

Sarah had handouts for the financial report. As of August 31, 2016, we have \$27,191.69 in our state account and \$108,161.45 in our money market. We had \$14,079.70 in our membership checkbook. Mike Mergenthaler moved to approve the financial report and David Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

For the executive director’s report Sarah said Main Street Market Montana was in Missoula. They had brought in some speakers and had breakout sessions. The Lewis and Clark Trail between the parks is moving forward and we have a State Parks Heritage Stakeholders Workshop next week. The National Youth Summit is an offshoot of the National Parks and focuses on preservation. They brought in teenagers from the region and held a summit at Grant Kohrs Ranch. It was an interactive, intensive workshop involving teenagers who did reports and worked on problem solving. The teenagers stressed the need for interactive things to do for their age group to stimulate interest and get them involved. Sarah reported that travel guide membership forms and advertising forms will be going out next week. They will be due in October. We will be requesting updates to the travel guide as well.

Sarah said that the preliminary bed tax numbers were down for the first two quarters across the state with a 2% decline. It is unknown at this point why but it may be because not all bed tax dollars have been reported as of yet. Heidi O’Brien said they are further looking into the numbers. Campgrounds have been way up. (As of this written report most numbers are now above normal.)

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative gave updates on our marketing campaign. The campaign had print, digital and out-of-home media tactics that ran from January through the end of October. Our primary geographic target audience resides in Washington, Alberta (Canada), California, Idaho and Wyoming. Our secondary geographic focus was Utah and Oregon. Our psychographic focus was history and cultural enthusiasts, outdoor recreationalists, scenic drivers, experiential travelers and repeat travelers to Montana.

For our Online Advertisement Totals we had Impressions - 11,814,746, Clicks - 21,303, and average click-through rate of 0.18%. Our average click through rate was above industry standards.

For Print Advertisement Totals we had: Distribution (copies of publication): 2,384,600, Readership: 7,933,920

For Retargeting display ads we had: Impressions: 422,577, Clicks: 1,184, Click-through Rate: 0.28%, Average time on page was 1 minute 5 seconds.

Our National Parks article had: Impressions: 3,178,259, Top performing headline: "Between Glacier & Yellowstone: The Most Unusual National Park," Clicks: 7,715, Click-through rate: 0.25%, Average time on page was over 15 minutes, with a very low bounce rate of 7%.

For our Mommy Blogger Influencer we had: Facebook = 6,105, Twitter = 18,400, Instagram = 12,100, Website = 50,000 unique monthly visitors, Traveling Mom = 190,000 unique monthly visitors

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout gave a report on the call center and added a fun list of questions from our callers. For the summer they had 1,956 inquiries for Southwest Montana. They mailed out 3,342 guides to individual travelers, visitor centers, lodging facilities, UFFS ranger stations, and Chambers of Commerce. Most of our inquires came from the April issue of Better Homes & Gardens, our Southwest Montana Website, orders from state parks, national forests, RV parks etc. People were most interested in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, regional hot springs, and Lewis and Clark Trail sites. Most of the requests for travel guides came from California, Florida, Montana, and Pennsylvania.

We broke for lunch.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies said they are updating video display on the website. They are embedded video to the content pages. The newsletter now has 16,000 subscribers. We have 2000 following us on twitter and 45,000 on Facebook. We discussed the events we download from the Lively Times export. We may consider in the future working on a different system. Debbie Carlstrom talked about the photo management system. It is on a subscription basis with BarberStock.com. We will be a pilot project with a much reduced cost thanks to some great finagling. They are working together right now and will extend the administrative rights soon. We will have statistical data for our next meeting.

Under other business we talked about the tear-off map and adding shading for forest service and other public lands. Also, we talked about expanding the map to include more area included in the scenic tours. A question was asked regarding an interactive map and Sarah is to bring more information to the next meeting.

Our next meeting is in Helena on October 27th.

After the meeting, Patrick Fox gave a tour of the Boulder Creek Lodge, cabins and RV campground.