

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Dillon Comfort Inn
Minutes - November 16, 2016

The meeting was held at the Comfort Inn in Dillon.

Participants: María Pochervina, Crystal Denton, Pamela Kimmey, Noelle Meier, Paul Marsh, Melanie Sanchez, Kristen Swenson, Anthony Wagner, Becky DiGiovanna, Becky Henne, Ellen Baumler, Dale Carlson, Mike Strang, Tom Forwood, David Williams, Gary Provost, Anna Provost, Lisa Bracco, Suzanne Elfstrom, Mark Lundburg, Sarah Bannon, and speaker Dax Schieffer

President Pamela Kimmey called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. She thanked Crystal Denton and the Comfort Inn for hosting our meeting. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction.

The minutes were emailed out to all members. Becky Henne moved to approve and Kristen Swenson seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Since there was no public comment we went on to financial reports. Sarah had handouts for the report. We have \$38,920.30 in our state account and \$83,180.16 in our money market account. Our membership checkbook has \$19328.45.

For the executive director's report, Sarah reported that we have been working on the travel guide. Much discussion ensued regarding the "Ghost" section of the travel guide. We talked about the overload of travelers in Yellowstone Park and how we are targeting the people already in Yellowstone and getting them to move through the region.

We talked about the online Bed and Breakfast and the effects on the bed tax. Camping sites are being affected as well now too. The RFP for a new travel agency is coming up for the next fiscal year. Sarah will start on the process and we will discuss at our next meeting. Cooperative marketing applications will be due in December and January. Sarah also reported that the scanner on the copy machine no longer works. It is now outdated and will need to be replaced.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout, our call center, submitted a report on the Southwest Montana activity. They have handled 9,151 inquiries and mailed out 12,729 travel guides so far for the region. *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine had 4,591 inquiries, and My Yellowstone Park Seattle Road Trip Sweepstakes had 3,368 inquiries. The travelers were most interested in area history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, Lewis and Clark Trail, and rock hounding.

We talked about the cooperative marketing grant that we had this past year with Exploration Works. It was their first time getting a grant and they had a great extensive marketing campaign. Part of it was with a brochure which didn't include the required language. They have been in transition with their marketing person. Since we will be fined for this we discussed paying the amount out of the membership funds for \$299.50. Maria moved and David Williams seconded the motion that we pay for the cost of the brochure out of our membership funds. Motion passed unanimously.

We discussed the Southwest Montana Tear-off Map and decided to add the surrounding areas and public lands. Sarah will talk to Maria Pochervina and Noelle Meier about the mapping potentials available through their sources.

We discussed Montana's Cultural Treasures. We had been approached to do a \$500 sponsorship ad on the double full-page map in the magazine. Much discussion ensued regarding this and in the end it was decided that we would not do this.

The National Park Service is turning the Lewis and Clark Tear-off map into a brochure. They will pay to have Certified Folder distribute to visitor centers and campgrounds during the summer months. This is a multi-state joint effort. The Montana partners are Missouri River - \$2500, Central Montana- \$2500, Billings Visitor Center- \$2500, and Southeast Montana - \$3000. The Park Service will also distribute more of the Lewis and Clark Brochures. We were asked to help sponsor this also for \$2500. A motion was made and seconded that we sponsor the Lewis and Clark Trail for \$2500. It passed unanimously.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative presented the travel guide front covers. A couple options had horses in them and were discussed. This brought up the subject that many travelers would like to go horseback riding but just for a day or part of the day. We have a need for this type of service and a way for people to get the information to the visitors. We continued to discuss several of the cover options and decided to wait until later in the meeting to vote. She talked about the ghost section and about the Comet Ghost Town. We also talked about the ATV section. They will send out a draft of the travel guide in the coming weeks.

Suzanne talked about Trip Advisor updates and the changes that are going on. We had been grandfathered in on the \$6,600 for communities and the \$6,600 for ad buy. The rate for what we have now would be \$32,000 for someone new to come on board. The current communities now involved are Anaconda, Butte, Deer Lodge, Dillon, Ennis, Helena, Philipsburg, and Virginia City and Nevada City. The price for us for 2017 will be \$16,000. Suzanne had a proposal for the communities with and without custom events. The custom events would be Helena - \$2,775, Butte-\$2,227, Virginia City - \$1,171, Ennis - \$755, Anaconda - \$674, Dillon-\$521, Philipsburg-\$518, and Deer Lodge-\$518. Much discussion ensued regarding Trip Advisor, Becky Henne talked about how it was good for the businesses online. It was decided to go ahead this year and pay for it all out of bed tax and think about the communities for next year. Maria moved and Anna Provost seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Suzanne talked about the marketing campaign planning. She talked about the Yellowstone marketing campaign and content amplification which would include several articles that would target individuals searching for information on the park on travel websites. She also presented banner advertising that would prospect and retarget ads with catch copy that list "5 things to do Outside Yellowstone National Park." They would devise a custom landing page for this as well. She also discussed TrueWest Magazine and the bicycling.com campaign. We felt that we could do all of this for our marketing campaign.

Dax Schieffer from Voices of Tourism talked about visitation, trends and revenues related to the bed tax. He had a handout that had the following facts: in 2015, 11.7 million visitors spent \$3.66 billion, supported 63,360 jobs statewide, generated \$201 million in state and local taxes, and lowered taxes on each Montana household by over \$492.

We revisited the travel guide cover. People really liked the color on the Bannack photo that was on Suzanne's presentation and will consider something similar next year. A fall scene with a road and mountains in the background was the chosen cover for the 2017 travel guide.

Our next meeting will be in February in Butte.