

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Butte Chamber of Commerce
February 16, 2017 Minutes**

Participants: Board members: Becky Henne, Richard Krott, Marlene Holayter, Crystal Denton, Dale Carlson, Melanie Sanchez, Leona Rodreick, Ellen Baumler, David Williams, Fay Najjar, Julie Shelton, Mike Mergenthaler, Maria Pochervina, Jocelyn Dodge. Members, guests and contract workers: Bill Henne, Jan Thorne, Kari Gagner, Ali Amoroso, Debbie Carlstrom, Anna Fabatz, Brandi Jensen-Campbell, Rhea Armstrong, Bruch Binkowski, Rebecca Schmitz, Anna Provost, Suzanne Elfstrom, Shawn Peterson, and Employee Sarah Bannon

At 10:35 a.m. Vice President Becky Henne called the Southwest Montana general board meeting to order. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction.

Mike Mergenthaler moved to approve the minutes as submitted online to everyone. Anna Provost seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Since there was no public comment we went into the financial report. Sarah had handouts and reported that as of January 31, 2017, we have \$18,677 in our checking account and \$148,211 in our money market account. We still have some big bills coming this month. Our membership account has as of January 31, 2017, \$19,357. We also had our audit and noncommitted funds from increase income and some eliminated projects we had \$28,490. These funds went to \$17000 to administration with the idea that some can go to potential projects. The redesign of the Tear-off map \$7000 and \$4000 for the frontline fam tours. All of this will be reviewed at our fiscal year 17/18 budget /marketing meeting in April in Anaconda.

Potential projects included photography, birding brochure reprint, biking research, pull-up screens of the map of Southwest Montana for some neighboring visitor centers, tradeshow booth, and marketing options. We talked about the biking research in Helena with ITRR but no action was taken at this time. Marlene Holayter moved to approve the financial report. Fay Najjar seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For the executive director's report, Sarah said that we have been working on the travel guide and the advertising for Southwest Montana. The ITRR Research committee met and Sarah reported the different projects which was also presented at the Tourism Advisory Council Meeting. The Governor's Conference on Tourism and Business Development is in Helena on March 12-14. Mike Mergenthaler said that there will be several tours on Sunday for those who are interested. Sarah has talked to Pam Gosink, the new executive director for the Dude Rancher's Association. They are redoing their website and just getting their feet on the ground. We will have the new fiscal year 17/18 marketing plan and budget coming up at our next meeting. We are still working on the RFP application and will send out for responses by the end of the month.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout gave the call center inquiry report. Rebecca had a handout with a summary of 2016 and some comparisons from the last several years. We had 9241 inquiries and mailed out 12,808 guides. 8019 were reader service, 822 were emails, 385 were phone calls and 15 were postcards and letters. People were mostly interested in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, Lewis and Clark Trail, and rock hounding. Hot springs is usually in the mix too. Most inquiries came from Washington, California, Texas, and Florida. They found us through Better Homes and Gardens, My Yellowstone Park Road Trip Sweepstakes, our southwestmt.com website and in-house Montana office of Tourism and Business Development referrals.

We talked about the legislative session and a variety of bills affecting tourism and the bed tax. A few bills are out that will affect state parks, the bed tax, and the gas tax. We passed around a pamphlet of the bills pertaining to the tourism industry. Much discussion ensued around the bills.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative talked about the travel guide. It is out and being delivered as we speak. Mike Mergenthaler asked about the ATV section and if we could get some more contact information. Suzanne and Joycelyn Dodge talked about this section and some of the legalities with land issues. It will be evolved for our next travel guide. Most people can get necessary information through the forest service.

Suzanne had a power point of our media plan and advertising. We are using "Think Outside the Park" for our headline on most ads. For digital advertising, we have content amplification, display ads, and sponsored content. They will be retargeting people who have showed an interest in our region. For print we are doing *Go Ranger!* in Glacier National Park, *the National Park Maps*, *Sunset Magazine*, *TrueWest Magazine* and *Yellowstone Journal*. Suzanne showed the artwork for our print ads and our digital ads.

We broke for lunch which was catered by Gamers.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies gave an update and statistical report on the website and internet activity. For 2016 we had 129,684 sessions, 107,244 users, 303,814 pageviews. Of the traffic to our website 51% came from desktop computers, 37 % came from mobile phones, and 13% came from tablets. Our largest age category of users were ages 55-64, then 45-54, followed by ages 35-44. Most people got to our website through Chrome, then Safari, and Internet Explorer. Most users get to us through an organic search 58%, then by referral at 16%, then by directed sites at 13%.

Most of our website users, by almost triple, are in Salt Lake City, followed by Dallas, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Boise, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Spokane, and Portland. Our top referring sites are stateparks.mt.gov, m.facebook.com, destinationmissoula.org, visitmt.com, press.southwestmt.com, facebook.com, virginacitymt.com, and tripadvisor.com. Most people come for the calendar of events, articles between Glacier and Yellowstone, videos, Crystal Park, bikebeerrepeat.aspx, ghost towns, and travel planner.

We had only one application for cooperative marketing. Powell County Chamber applied for funds to help with brochure distribution through Certified Folder for \$1310. Mike moved that we approve the application and Fay seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. This year we will take applications at our next meeting in April.

Under other business Mike Mergenthaler from the nominating committee thanked Pamela Kimmey for her great service as president. She did a great job for us and enjoyed working with everyone. Mike presented the slate of officers as: Becky Henne – President, Maria Pochervina – Vice President, Paul Marsh – Secretary, and David Williams – Treasurer. He asked three times for any more nominations. No more nominations were made. A motion was made to accept the slate of officers as presented. A second was made and the motion passed unanimously.

Our next board meeting will be Thursday, April 20th in Anaconda. Our other meeting dates for now are set as Thursday, September 21, Thursday, October 19, and Thursday, November 16th. Whitehall is checking on availability for one of the open meeting dates.

Becky thanked everyone for coming and Maria for hosting the meeting. Since there was no further business Becky adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.