

Southwest Montana
General Board of Directors Meeting - Anaconda
April 20th Minutes

The Southwest Meeting was held at Donivan's newly renovated restaurant in Anaconda.

Participants: Becky Henne, Bill Henne, Drew Dawson, Sally Buckles, Kerri Kumasaka, Leona Rodreick, Stephanie Munk, Ellen Baumlner, Jim Tucker, Jocelyn Dodge, Anna Strange, Melanie Sanchez, Jim Davidson, Fay Najjar, Anna Provost, Becky DiGiovanna, Kari Gagner, Kristen Swenson, Paul Marsh, Mike Mergenthaler, Julie Shelton, Jan Thorne, Cooper Fisher, Bruce Binkowski, Tempest Technologies – Shawn Peterson and Debbie Carlstrom, Partners Creative – Suzanne Elfstrom, employee – Sarah Bannon

Madame President Becky Henne opened the meeting at 10:34 and welcomed everyone. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction.

Jocelyn Dodge moved that that minutes be approved as submitted online and Kristen Swenson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Sarah had handouts for the financial report. We have \$7719.55 in our checkbook and \$113,230.41 in our money market account. We will be spending most of our money in the next quarter as most of our marketing for the summer takes place. We have \$19,357.70 in our membership account. Mike Mergenthaler moved to approve the financial report. Kristen seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For the executive director report Sarah said that much work has been going to the Request for Proposal (RFP) for an advertising agency. Proposals are due on April 27th. Also, much work is being done on the marketing plan and proposal. The Tear-Off map has been worked on and is ready for the cartographer to mock up a draft.

For the inquiry and call report, Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout submitted a report. So far in 2017, they have mailed out 1,123 Southwest Montana guides. We have had 465 inquiries at the contact center. 386 were requests from our website and the state website. 75 were phone calls and 4 were postcards from our 2015 Explore History Campaign. Most inquiries came from Montana, California, and Washington. The most expressed interest was for regional history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, and area hot springs. Our ad campaigns have just begun so these numbers should rise quickly.

We had the legislative report. Jim Tucker gave us updates on several bills. The Heritage Bill that takes .5% of the state tourism revenue for the Heritage Museum and Cultural grants is still being considered. There were two bill for this but this is the one that is still alive. The SB309 Indian Bill is back in circulation which uses bed tax funds to help the Indian Country with economic development. Paul Marsh said that there is a bill related to the Southwest Montana Veteran's Home in Butte. If it doesn't pass we will be back to square one and the present one has been in the works for 10 years. If we have an opportunity please support it. Mike Mergenthaler reported that the change in the CVB territories was now dead.

We went over the next fiscal year 17/18 marketing plan and budget. Handouts were available for this. One new potential for the marketing plan is a Motorcycle Tour. Bill Henne talked about this where we would have several different markers throughout the region for the road bikers to go to. They would take selfies and turn them in to the Southwest Montana Office. Much discussion ensued on this and it was decided to go ahead with this project since it was low cost but a great potential to get more exposure to the backroads of the region. Motorcyclists are considered high value travelers.

We also are now looking at joining Butte and Helena at the Calgary Adventure Show for 2018. Research has shown more traffic from Alberta through the region.

Another new project we talked about was having Southwest Montana partner with one of the smaller communities each year to help them establish some type of marketing. It would include monetary input and

responsibility of the smaller community and then collaboration and help from Southwest Montana to put the marketing into action. It was also suggested that maybe a corridor would be a great partnership as well. Some discussion ensued on this and it was decided to set up criteria for how this would be established.

We went through the budget for the next fiscal year. Increases were applied to online digital, print advertising, website updates and a potential event program, printed material to help establish a motorcycle route and delivery around the state and into Idaho as well. The travel show in Calgary was new, and increase in administration and in public relations. The final budget was for \$430,000. Maria Pochervina moved that the budget be approved as submitted. Fay Najjar seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

We moved on to marketing information with Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative. Sarah said that Partners Creative was not submitting for the RFP this time. Suzanne said that it takes about 300 agency hours to do this and there was not enough time for them to participate. With only two weeks from when the questions were due and with some key staff availability issues it was not going to be doable. We had a round of applause for Suzanne and thanked her for all her work with Southwest Montana.

Suzanne talked about the family social media influencer we have going on Memorial Day Weekend and on June 17th & 18th. An active mother of four will be going to Virginia City, Nevada City, Norris and take in all the activities. The next trip will be to Boulder Hot Springs, Tizer Gardens, Exploration Works, the Carousal, and Last Chance Gulch. They will attend mass at the Cathedral in Helena on Sunday and do the Gates of the Mountains tour. We are also partnering on a bicycler influencer with Dillon. They have 25 potentials and are looking at two tiers. They have 40 different routes to narrow down and shuttles to plan.

Suzanne also talked about Trip Advisor and the great potential we have to further market attractions all over the region. To do this businesses and attractions need to claim their pages on Trip Advisor. Partners Creative will draw up a letter explaining how to do this and have Southwest Montana and Chambers send it out to encourage businesses to do this. It is free and will help with great exposure to their town and area.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies gave us updates on our website. We have a challenge right now with our events. They currently are done by *Lively Times* and then pulled into the state website and then into our website. It works well with the entertaining events but doesn't display some of our events as well. We are checking into partnering with Central Montana and maybe more to see about designing our own event listings. Shawn talked about some of the video acquisition from the Ennis Fish Hatchery and is looking at more potentials. These include rock hounding, ghost towns, breweries and distilleries, wildlife and scenic shots. Much discussion ensued on several more things including lakes, fishing and boating, guest ranches and rodeos. It was also brought up about how moving cows could be a great opportunity for tourists to see.

We talked about a photo campaign and having people send in their photos. We would need to make a photo / model release easily accessible. We discussed many photo opportunities. Suzanne suggested we check on woobox.com for photo collecting. We can do that and currently we have a Barberstock Agreement for our photos and Helena and Butte are welcome to work with us on this. We will get a website committee to work with Shawn on things.

For cooperative marketing we had five applications: Whitehall Chamber – Billboard resurfacing \$450, Exploration Works – 2017 Marketing Strategy \$1250, Boulder Chamber – Rack Card - \$1472, Anaconda Chamber - \$1348 for brochure distribution, Anaconda Chamber – website development - \$1600. The total amount requested was \$6120. Leona Rodreick moved to approve the cooperative marketing applications. Kerri Kumasaka seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Under other business we talked about setting up some committees such as membership, motorcycle, and website. Our next meeting is in Whitehall on September 21st, and then in Helena on October 19th. We talked again about Google Vision. Suzanne said we could do a Demo. It can have searches by multiple hashtags.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:40 p.m.