

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Helena Chamber
Minutes – November 16, 2017**

Many of us went to the National Tree at the Capitol Celebration prior to the meeting. We put our signatures on the signs, donated to the Food Bank and enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies.

Participants: Becky Henne, MaryEllen Schnur, Anna Strange, Maie A. Lee Jones, Julie Shelton, Mary Johnston, Kerri Kumasaka, Ellen Baumler, Becky DiGiovanna, Jan Thorne, Jocelyn Dodge, Kyle McGowan, Taylar Robbins, Erika McGowan, Jim McGowan, Megan Richter, Linda Brown, Debbie Carlstrom, Dax Schieffer, Sharon Ellis, Jan Stoddard, Jacque Lavelle, Julie Schroder, Mike Mergenthaler, Bruce Binkowski, Richard Krott, executive director Sarah Bannon, Speaker: Allison Whitmer, Film Commissioner at the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development

President Becky Henne called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. We went around the room and did a self-introduction.

Jan Thorne moved to approve the minutes. Julie Shelton seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Sarah gave a handout for the financial report. We have \$51,883.96 in our state account and \$226,268.39 in our money market account. We are building up our funds to get ready for next spring and summer. Our state account has \$18,125.20 in it.

Under public comment, Dax Schieffer from Voices of Tourism gave us some updates on the latest on the bed tax. At the legislature the bed tax was left untouched and other means were used to work toward balancing the budget. When asked about the Air B& B (bed and breakfast accommodations) collections, he said that revenue is going to look at that. It would add up to about \$3 million that would be in collections. Dax gave us updates and is willing to come to any of our communities to discuss the importance of tourism. People are encouraged to sign up for the newsletter at VoicesOfTourism.com. Also, you can friend him on Facebook.

For the Executive Director Report, Sarah said pretty much the whole focus has been on the 2018 Southwest Montana Travel Guide.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout sent a written report on the activity at the call center. So far since October, we have had 1,551 inquiries and mailed 1,650 travel guides in October and November. People found us through the Yellowstone Journal, southwestmt.com., Sunset Magazine and in-house MOTBD (state tourism) referrals. The most requested information is for regional history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, rock hounding, and Lewis and Clark Trail. Most inquiries came from California, Florida, Texas and Pennsylvania.

Taylar Robbins from Windfall Inc. talked about the travel guide. A revised layout for the community pages was handed out. The "Dig Deeper" theme was used on the page of photos with a new easier to read layout on the information pages. Megan Richter presented five front cover options for the 2018 Southwest Montana Travel Guide. All were well received. We passed them around and will vote later in the meeting. Megan had touched up or logo to include a more complete Montana outline around the bottom of Southwest Montana. She tweaked up the "visit" to be more in line with the rest of the font.

Taylor then talked about the “Sled the Burn” Lincoln Disaster Relief Grant Plan. She handed out a schedule of promotions with Glacier Country and Southwest Montana for Lincoln, Ovando, and Seeley Lake. It includes promotion packages already put together for Ovando and Seeley Lake. To be in line with the packages for these we will work with Lincoln to create a promotion giveaway as well. Southwest Montana will contribute a \$200 cash giveaway to go with a weekend package offer. Jan Stoddard, MOTBD Bureau Chief of Industry Standards and Outreach, talked about how hard hit the communities have been by the fires. Some businesses are now gone and many are struggling. We gave a round of applause for Windfall for the “Sled the Burn” and the travel guide covers with the new logo.

Allison Whitmer, Film Commissioner with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development talked to us about some potentials in our region. *The Ballad of Lefty Brown* is a western that was filmed in Virginia City and Bannack. The release date is December 15, 2017.

The Far Cry 5 Video is due out in February and is based out of Hope County, Montana. This is a fictitious county but really somewhat copied out of an 1880's Ranch out of Anaconda. The Far Cry 4 game sold over 45 million copies and these gamers are known to go visit the places where the games are set. Most places have been exotic. The video set in Montana includes (besides the shoot 'em up game) fly fishing, tractor riding, 4-wheeling, bow and arrow shooting, etc. Maie A. Lee Jones, from the film office has set up some sample itineraries. We watched a You Tube video that discusses the game from the creator that Kyle McGowan put up on the screen. Much discussion took place regarding the potential for this project. Even if .001% of people who bought game 4 would come out that would be 4500 people. Windfall and Tempest Technologies will be coming up with some ideas for how we can capitalize on this as well as to how to shuffle people around to different areas.

Allison also talked about another film prospect that will be determined in the next couple of months. It would involve a TV famed person and an ongoing project maybe up to six months. As we know more we will let everyone know. The potential is huge for this project as well.

Debbie Carlstrom from Tempest Technologies talked about the website and projects. They have Lincoln linked in on the homepage. They are putting more on Pinterest including Main Streets in the region.

Anyone that has events and photos please submit them to: updates@southwestmt.com. Ellen Baumler had submitted information on Nevada City that got over 500,000 likes on Facebook.

Jim McGowan had a draft outline for the for the community / corridor project. We will work with either a community or corridor that gets chosen through an application process. Some of the requirements will include: have one lead person to work with us, have a list of people who will serve on your team, put forth \$1000, describe how you will follow through on the project, describe how success will be measured. Southwest Montana will put forth \$5000 or more toward this project.

We voted for the front cover of the next travel guide. It took a couple of rounds and next year's front cover will be of Bannack State Park.

Our next meeting will be at Fairmont on January 25th. This has been **changed to Wednesday, January 24th**.

At the end of the meeting Anna Strange from the Helena Tourism Business Improvement District took us on a tour of the historic buildings and the phone app that goes with it. When pointing the phone at the building it shows how it looked historically.