

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Deer Lodge
Minutes 4/25/18

Participants: Becky Henne, Bill Henne, Candi Whitworth, Paul Marsh, Crystal Thorpe, Dale Siegford, Kerri Kumasaka, Dale Carlson, Julie Schroder, Melanie Sanchez, Mike Strang, Leona Rodreick, Kari Gagner, K Mita, Anna Provost, Bruce Binkowski, Pat Doyle, Ellen Baumler, John Thompson, Halley Perry, Lauren Dillon, Becky DiGiovanna, Kay Rossow, Gay Rossow, , Fay Conway, Jan Thorne, Brenda Dixon, Tempest Technologies: Debbie Carlstrom, Katya Peterson, Shawn Peterson, Windfall Inc.: Taylar Robbins, Kyle McGowan, employee Sarah Bannon

President Becky Henne welcomed everyone and thanked Deer Lodge for hosting the brochure exchange meeting.

Minutes – Mike Strang moved that minutes be approved as sent out and Dale Siegford seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment – Leona Rodreick from the Forest Service had an article in Via Magazine that showcased Wade Lake. She said Wise River is open and Thompson Park would be open May 1st. They are hoping the Pioneer Scenic Byway will be open May 15th. Mushrooms - particularly Morels will be out. There had 80 miles affected by fires and many trails must be cleared. A freelance writer for an RV Magazine will be writing on Coolidge. A meteorologist predicted another busy fire season.

Ellen Baumler, speaking for Mike Mergenthaler who couldn't be present, said that Helena will be hosting the Tourism Advisory Council meeting in June. It is the first time they will have had it in the summer. Mike is planning a Gates of the Mountains trip and pitch fork fondue. He is asking the Southwest Montana Membership to put \$1500 toward the event. Mike Strang moved that we sponsor the event for \$1500. Kerri Kumasaka seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ellen Baumler announced that this would be her last meeting as an employee of the Montana Historical Society Museum. We had a round of applause for her. She is working on a \$50,000 film project about a story of a lady at the Old Montana Prison. She has received funds from Greater Montana, Montana History Foundation, and Pearl Jam. Dale Siegford moved that we approve \$4000 of opportunity funds toward the film project. Crystal Thorpe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Brenda Dixon said that Anaconda will have a week-long celebration in August of the 100 Year Anniversary of the Anaconda Stack.

Financial Report – Sarah had handouts of all the expenses for the financial report. As of March 30, 2018, we have \$19,478.78 in our checking account and \$246,395.09 in our money market account. Sarah reported that we had spent about \$100,000 in April that isn't on the report until next time. We have \$26,924.46 in our membership account. Dale Siegford moved to approve the financial report and Anna Provost seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Report – Sarah reported that at the Calgary Travel Show many people were asking for brochures on camping spots. At the International Travel Show, tour operators were asking for itineraries, accommodations, and camping. We talked about the Governor's Conference and the one keynote speaker that talked about triggers that help make an experience worth a great memory and how it helps bring about more positive exposure to your business. Mr. Mita from Ennis reported that the speaker's name was Jay Baer, President from Convince and Convert was the speaker. Sarah also reported that she has been in contact with an Outfitter from Lincoln and with the Montana Outfitters and Guide Association. Lincoln's Sculpture in the Wild new brochures were out. We talked briefly on the project and the events going on there.

Inquiry Report – Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout submitted a report from our call center. So far in 2018, they have mailed 12,579 guides and received 10,953 inquiries. Of those 10,254 were reader service, 581 email, 115 phone calls, and 3 were postcards. Most people found us from Yellowstone Journal, Northwest Travel Magazine,

southwestmt.com website, and in-house MOTBD referrals. Most inquires came from California, Florida, Texas, and Minnesota. The contacts were interested in regional history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, area hot springs, and the Lewis and Clark Trail.

Lima Rest Area - Mike Strang gave us an update on the Lima Rest Area. Shawn from Tempest had been out there, and they measured an area and looked at a potential for a side wall for the HD monitor. They will need to work with the DOT on this as well. Mike said that the lady at the rest area wanted to charge \$12,775 per year to put the brochures out in the racks. After much discussion it was decided to let Mike find some other options that would work for putting our travel guide in the racks. It was mentioned that we also get larger racks.

We also talked about the idea Mike had for swag. The state tourism office is no longer doing a "Get Lost in Montana" sticker. Mike discussed the idea of coming up with our own sticker as so many of them are picked up at the rest area and all around the state.

Bill Henne talked about a great book "Montana Historical Highway Markers." He is setting up a motorcycle tour and working with Tempest Technologies on it.

Marketing Update - Taylor Robins from Windfall Inc. gave a marketing update. She brought the latest printing of the birding brochure. They are working on the regional Southwest MT map. The Far Cry 5 video game has done very well. It was the top box office hit over the Black Panther. They have been doing a social media feed. She has been working on the Andy Austin photographer influencer that takes place in June. He is also working on the community / corridor projects. Sarah is to send out the information on Hope County and the frequently asked question sheet.

Speaker - Pat Doyle from Montana State Parks gave a presentation on the Montana State Parks. We have 55 state parks in Montana and seven National Historic Landmarks. He talked about their strategic plan from 2015 -2020. They have a statewide Montana State Parks Foundation. The Milltown state Park will open May 22. If you are interested talk to Pat about photos and video. People are encouraged to sign up for the Montana State Parks newsletter.

Website / Internet - Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies also talked about the Lima Rest Area. They have been going back through the archives and are getting the videos sorted out for the HD Monitors going in around the region. A couple will be done by mid-June. He talked more about the process and timing of the videos. Shawn also updated the event system. They are in the process of integrating it and will do search engine optimization for main events. He met with Jocelyn Dodge from the forest service to talk about the challenges of the website of with the Forest Website. They are figuring out how to use the Southwest Montana website to help the forest. They have a trial project with the Continental Divide information.

They are working on a new front page for trip itineraries. They will supplement with images and photos, adding content on quilting, rock hounding, ghosts, and park to park itineraries. He also had a handout of the visithopecounty.com website. 2/3 of the traffic is coming from mobile devices. We had 1840 unique visitors and 2,148 visits. Average visit duration is 1:09 minutes.

Marketing Plan/Budget - We talked about the marketing plan and budget for fiscal year 2018 / 2019. The executive board had gone through the budget by line item in the previous executive board meeting. We are looking at adding the swag for Southwest Montana. The total budget proposed was \$467,022 which includes an estimated \$33,000 of travel guide ad revenue and \$19,800 of potential rollover. Leona moved that the budget / marketing plan be approved, and Anna Provost seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Other Business - We are still looking at having a meeting in May regarding grant writing. Sarah will get a few dates that will work with Carol Crockett and will send out the information. We talked about having a meeting in June at Virginia City. That is yet to be determined. Our fall meeting will be September 19 at a location to be determined. Townsend and Ennis have expressed interest in holding a meeting.

Ennis talked about a conference of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition Conservation. They also mentioned Cycle Greater Yellowstone and a vehicle support system with motorcycles.