

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Butte Comfort Inn
April 23, 2015 minutes

Participants: board members: Pamela Kimmey, Amber Wood-Jensen, Fay Najjar, David Williams, Pat Hansen, Judy Westfall, Cathy Smith, Julie Shelton, Carol Eichler, Paul Marsh, Mike Mergenthaler, Don Chlebeck, Kerri Kumasaka, Lynette Kemp, members and guests: Stephanie Munk, Jim Tucker, Melanie Sanchez, Brandi Jensen-Campbell, Anna Fabatz, Anna Provost, Jan Thorne, Carellen Nix, Kenzi Clark, Marlene Holayter, Trina Peterson, Partners Creative: Suzanne Elfstrom, Tempest Technologies: Shawn Peterson and Debbie Carlstrom, Executive Director Sarah Bannon

President Pamela Kimmey called the meeting to order. We went around the room and everyone did a self-introduction. This meeting was our brochure exchange meeting.

Mike Mergenthaler moved to approve the minutes. Fay Najjar seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Under public comment, people talked about what was going on in their perspective neighborhoods. Many people announced the events and activities going on this spring and early summer.

Sarah had handouts for the financial report. As of March 31, 2015 the state checking account had \$1,283.72 and the money market account had \$21,006.80. The membership account had \$9,797.26 in the checking account. Amber Wood-Jensen moved to approve and Fay seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

For Executive Director's report, Sarah brought up the Governor's Conference. Some great speakers were there and the breakout sessions were good. Pamela brought up how the blogging session was great and how she found the Southwest Montana Blog on our website. She really liked the article about Big Foot. Suzanne Elfstrom reminded us that Fairmont Hot Springs was awarded the best online campaign. She also mentioned the National Geographic discussion about "Where the locals go" where 6-7 writers will be touring Montana and writing about their travels. Amber asked businesses to put their listing on the business.visitmt.gov site. They can update their information and add pictures. Shawn Peterson explained that all if this information gets imported to our Southwest Montana site as well.

Sarah said that next year that the Office of Tourism will be offering a mega FAM tour for the Rocky Mountain Roundup International Tour Operators. Marlee Iverson will be working with some of the tourism regions to get it set up. Sarah also talked about Ed Banderob's information for the Heritage Area with the National Park Service. The theme is "Treasurers of Montana Heritage Area." He is looking for potential stakeholders such as chambers, planning departments and historical preservation groups. He also wants input for the proposed potential day trips. Several handouts were sent around the room.

We talked about membership and altering the billing for when we do the travel guide. More discussion on this will take place when the travel guide committee meets.

Mike Mergenthaler gave us a legislative update. Several of the bills were tabled in session. The Calgary Trade Office was voted down; Senate Bill 264 which had to do with the 3% tax that goes directly to the general fund; after several ups and downs this bill was voted down with a 11-9 vote. The Film credits bill was up and down as well and eventually died. This could be a major impact on our ability to bring films to the area. The liability waiver bill did get passed. Other bills were discussed as well.

The Rocky Mountain Roundup was held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Pamela and Sarah talked about working with the international tour operators. There were 40 tables and we talked about our region for 10 minutes with each one. They want more detailed itineraries and places to stay. Jim Tucker said that having different languages for the landing pages paid off for the Helena Tourism Business Improvement District. More discussion ensued regarding the international traveler.

Sarah gave a presentation on the fiscal year 15/16 budget. Our budget number from the Office of Tourism was lower this year than last year due to Dillon becoming their own convention and visitor bureau (cvb.) The proposed budget was very similar to the year before. We did add a line for billboards / out of home advertising. This was a placeholder in case we want to go into airports or test out a billboard market. Amber suggested we check into an ad campaign in the Salt Lake City Airport. Much discussion ensued around this topic. Suzanne will check into options and costs. The total budget that Sarah had was \$369,009 and the budget number from the state was \$364,240. Our budget is \$4,679 over what the state number was. Since the number is at 95% of the state's projection and with the unknown rollover numbers we felt that this was a good budget number to have. The executive board had recommended that the budget be approved as discussed. Amber moved that we accept the recommendation of the executive board. David Williams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative gave the marketing report. She had a handout for the Spring Summer Campaign. Our TrueWest.com is doing the best for us with 20,176 impressions and a .72% click through rate. Industry Standard is .15%. Madden Media and History.net are doing the next best for us. Trip Advisor is still doing well although it is down because of their rearrangement of their website. Orbitz is only at .03% and Suzanne is in contact with them about the performance. Suzanne said that Trip Advisor has expanded into 11 more countries and she is going to continue to include them in a separate report.

Suzanne talked about Philipsburg being a finalist in the municipal makeover / revision category in the *Sunset Magazine* contest. We will be sending a box of travel guides and some brochure over for the Sunset's Celebration Weekend. The Sapphire Gallery is also sending over jewelry to be given away as prizes for the event.

Suzanne also talked about the National Park Service celebrating 100 Years. They have on their website "Share Your Story" where you can upload your story about your experience. They are including the state parks in their celebration. We are all encouraged to upload our stories as it will be a boost for Montana. You can go to www.findyourpark.com and contribute your story. She also talked about the #montanamoment where people can upload their photos on the state site.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies said they are doing lots of backend work for the Southwest Montana website redesign. The website committee will be meeting the first part of May to discuss the changes. The traffic to the website is up so far 30% this April as compared to April of 2014. The traffic from an organic search has doubled. For their responsive site they would like lots more photography. They can get some stills from the videos they have shot as well. For the Audience Awards both Philipsburg and the Ski Joring videos took third place. The biking video took 5th place. The comments were very positive and the exposure for Southwest Montana was great. Mike Mergenthaler asked for Shawn to share more of the website changes and statistics at our next meeting.

Our next meeting will be in Helena on June 25th. Meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.