

**Southwest Montana**  
**General Board Meeting – Fairmont Hot Springs**  
**Minutes - January 21, 2016**

Attendees: Board Members: Dale Carlson, Dave Williams, Paul Marsh, Kerri Kumasaka, Dale Siegford, Marlene Holayter, Leona Rodreick, Melanie Sanchez, George Everett, Ross Johnson, Mike Mergenthaler, Amber Wood-Jensen, Crystal Denton, Julie Shelton, Pamela Kimmey, Other participants: Jacqueline Lavelle, Kenzi Clark, Shawn Peterson, Debbie Carstrom, John Thompson, Suzanne Elfstrom, Rebecca Schmitz, and Executive Director Sarah Bannon

President Pamela Kimmey called the meeting to order. She thanked Fairmont Hot Springs for hosting the meeting in their new conference center. She also thanked Dale Siegford from the Sweet Palace who brought special chocolate covered cookie treats for everyone. We went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction.

Mike Mergenthaler moved that the minutes be approved as submitted online. Dale Siegford seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

Since there was no public comment we went into the financial report. Sarah had handouts for the report. We have as of December 31, 2015 \$17,981.79 in the checking account and \$148,163.55 in the money market account. We have large expenses coming for the travel guide. Our membership account has as of December 31, 2015 has \$16,022.20. Sarah also reported that we had our annual audit in December which came out clean. We will know soon our noncommittal funds and will be reported at the next meeting.

For the executive director report Sarah reported lots of work was going on with the travel guide. It has had several reviews and will be printed and delivered in early February. The Montana Tourism Marketing Division is meeting with the regions on Tuesday, January 26 to discuss marketing information and ideas. The Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation will be in Kalispell on April 10-12<sup>th</sup>. A story of interest came from Mike Strang who had called and said that Phlash from Sirius Radio on the 60's was trying to figure out where in Montana the place was with all the machines. This was video and music. Mike had figured out that Phlash was referring to the Nevada City Music Hall Museum.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout gave the telemarketing report. She had a handout that recapped the year 2015 and also compared the numbers of the last 9 years. In 2015 we had 9,970 inquiries and 14,230 guides mailed out by MARS Stout. Most people were interested in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, Lewis and Clark Trail, and rock hounding. Most of the inquiries came from California, Montana, Wyoming, and Wisconsin. Most of our leads came from Yellowstone Journal LA trade show, Southwest Montana Website, Explore History postcard, and True West Magazine.

Pamela and Sarah discussed the Rocky Mountain International Roundup that will be in Cody, Wyoming this year. It was discussed how so many of the tour operators want rates for properties and how the Southwest Montana office is not able to give rates. The rates given to tour operators is usually discounted 10% and also 10% for receptive operators who work in the states and also sometimes overseas. For properties that want to participate they need to work with the rates. It was discussed having the Dude Ranchers Association go and market our dude ranches since this is the hottest item for the foreign travelers right now. Much discussion ensued and Sarah will talk to Kristen Swenson regarding this and to Marlene Holayter who could represent the smaller individual properties that are out the way that the travelers are also interested in staying.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies showed the new design for our new responsive internet site. No matter what device whether it is a phone device, I-pad, lap top, or desktop the website adjusts to the display. The site will

be simpler and user friendly. Lots of pictures will be displayed of the area attractions and events. We will need more high resolution photos which need to be about 2000 pixels wide. The newer cell phones actually have a high resolution and can be used. Shawn will send Sarah a list of photo needs so she can get them out to the membership. It was asked if we could archive some of our newsletters on the site. Shawn is checking into this and is open to suggestions on the website.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative gave marketing updates. Trip Advisor has changed their reporting system. It is now not cost effective to have comparisons on numbers from the past. The good thing is that we can now get detailed information on the cities. This will be very helpful in determining how things are in many numerous details that weren't available before.

For public relations Suzanne talked about how they have upgraded their software to evolve with the new trends in this field. Editorial calendars aren't working anymore and people are now more into social content. What this entails is engaging a social influencer which is someone who has a large following on Facebook, twitter, Instagram etc. who comes to the area. We pay for them to come and post pictures and information about different things in the area. The purpose is to get exposure of our region and attractions to their followers. We talked about a mommy blogger and adventure blogger. We are leaning toward a mommy blogger to attract families to the area. There is a chance we might be able to do two social influencers. The trip will be about four days and experiential.

Suzanne talked about how Expedia is looking at competing with Trip Advisor and is willing to put our travel guide on at no cost. This is a great chance for us to have free publicity.

The executive board had discussed the cooperative marketing plans in the prior meeting. We had seven applications for a total of \$14,949. It was discussed and determined that we do a push for the Montana Folk Festival via Suzanne through Partners Creative and via Shawn with our website and social media. Then we went through the applications. It was unknown if Backroads to Yellowstone was still working through the Madison Valley Economic Development and was disqualified at this point. All the other applications were awarded the following:

World Museum of Mining	Television Outreach	\$2400
Exploration Works	Marketing Campaign	\$2400
Powell County Chamber	Brochure Distribution	\$1270
Anaconda Chamber	Refurbish Sign	\$1280
Powell County Prison Museums	Bill Board	\$1700

This comes to a total of \$9050 for the projects. Mike Mergenthaler moved that we approve the amounts discussed above. Paul Marsh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. We will apply noncommittal funds to for the \$4050 over the budget.

For election of officers Julie Shelton presented a slate of officers: Pamela Kimmey for President, Becky Henne for Vice President, David Williams for Treasurer, and Paul Marsh for Secretary. The floor was then open for more nominations. After no more nominations came from the floor a motion was passed and seconded for approval of the slate of officers. The motion passed unanimously.

We then discussed the meetings. The next meeting is March 16 at Ennis/Virginia City. April 21<sup>st</sup> will be in Townsend and June 16 will be at Boulder Creek Lodge.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.