

Southwest Montana
General Board and Membership Meeting – Butte
Minutes - January 30, 2014

Participants – Board Members: Julie Shelton, Mike Strang, David Williams, Pat Hansen, Barb Reiter, Richard Krott, Desiree Shogren, Pamela Kimmey, Lynette Kemp, Dale Carlson, Fay Najjar, George Everett, Members and participants: Shawn Peterson, Debbie Carlson, Russ Hamilton, Linda Hamilton, John Hamilton, Brandi Jensen, Tom Lowe, Marlene Holayter, and employee Sarah Bannon

President Julie Shelton called the meeting to order at 10:38 a.m. She thanked Best Western Butte Plaza Inn for their wonderful hospitality. We went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction.

Mike Strang moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Desiree seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Since we had no public comment Sarah gave the financial report. We have \$11,989.53 in the membership account. We have \$704.83 in the checkbook and \$156,842.94 in the money market. Handouts were given out of all the revenue and expenditures. Pat Hansen moved that the financial report be approved as presented. Barb Reiter seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For executive director report Sarah talked about several different things. The audit was complete and no infractions were reported. We have a Tourism Advisory Committee meeting on February 3rd and 4th in Missoula. We have been working on the travel guide and it will be out next week. Pat Hansen did a great amount of work on the guide and we were very appreciative. We talked about a letter that Southeast Montana had submitted to TAC and regions and convention and visitor bureaus. It was asking the TAC to keep the travel guide advertising revenue with the private accounts. It was moved and seconded to write a letter asking the TAC to retain the advertising dollars in the membership account. The membership drive didn't work out too well. Mike Strang and Sarah will review and see about some new ideas. We talked about the potential of doing tear off maps for helping people to travel through the area.

For executive board updates Julie reported that we had great cooperative marketing applications and we will be going through them later in the meeting.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout sent a report on the activity at the call center. For 2013 there were 9,536 inquiries and 14,797 guides mailed out. We had 8,300 from reader service, 822 from e-mails, 410 were phone calls and 4 were letters. The interests were in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, rock hounding, and hot springs. Inquiries were mostly from California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Texas. They found us through *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Reader's Digest*, Southwest Montana website and *Audubon*.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative couldn't make the meeting but did give Sarah a report on the latest information. Our spring and summer campaign starts in March. The travel guide is scheduled to ship on Monday February 3rd. We are continuing to see growth on our Trip Advisor site. Suzanne will have updated stats at our next meeting. A question was asked about how Trip Advisor works. Shawn explained how Partners does a great job updating information, events, and pictures. Links are available to get back to the website. The traffic far exceeds the national average and it is very positive for driving people to the website.

Southwest Montana had eight requests for cooperative funds. The Madison County Economic Development was already awarded \$3875 for the Highway 287 Initiative.

The executive board had gone through the applications at their meeting. We had a total of \$25,228.59 in requests for cooperative funds. We have bumped this category to \$15,000. After much discussion, all the cooperative applications were rewarded funds but most were given half of what they requested in order to accommodate everyone.

Virginia City	Area Tour Bus Marketing	\$1000
Powell County Chamber	Promotions brochure	\$1700

Main Street Uptown Butte	Montana Folk Festival	\$5000
Old Prison Museums	Brochure design and print	\$ 950
Anaconda Chamber	Travel Advisor	\$1300
Anaconda Chamber	Brochure print and distribution	\$2200
Ennis Chamber	Travel Advisor	\$1000

The total comes to \$17,025 including the Highway 287 Initiative. We will transfer \$2025 from Opportunity to cover the fund deficit. Barb moved that we transfer the money and approve the recommendation of the executive board for the listed cooperative funds. Mike Strang seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Since we were ahead of schedule we talked about the activities in our areas. Pamela Kimmey passed around "The Loop" magazine from her area. She had been to West Yellowstone and found that their chamber and most of their shops are closed on the weekends in the winter. The place was busy with snowmobilers. We also talked how Ennis is the pilot city for the Community Tourism Assessment Program for the Montana Office of Tourism.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies is asking for events and pictures to put on the website. The more photos we get the better. Please send photos and activities to info@southwestmt.com or moreinfo@southwestmt.com to get to Shawn's office. We also need photos and information for Facebook. We want lots of scenic photos as well. Lynette Kemp reminded us that the state parks are having their 75th anniversary this year. Fay said that Anaconda has a dart tournament that draws lots of participants. We are also doing a blog and welcome ideas to blog about. Please send your blog ideas to Shawn. Richard Krott is looking for ideas for their Scarecrow Festival as they are changing it this year. Leona said that it is the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

After lunch, Shawn from Tempest Technologies talked about the videos and upgrades they are doing on the website. With the change of the domain and the duplicate content that we are importing is affecting the traffic to our site. Google is the major search engine and lots of factors affect getting the top place on the site. We need good, interesting content, unique content, and people linking to the site. David mentioned that he could send out information out for people to link back and join us on Facebook. We need incoming links. Shawn has winter video footage. He thanked Fay for the reduced room rates when Mike went out to film the area. They have footage of Mt Haggin, Georgetown, Philipsburg, and Pipestone including snowmobiling, ice skating, ATVing and cross country skiing. It is all encoded in high definition video. He will get content to Suzanne. They should be able to generate still images. For spring and summer they are looking at doing video of wildlife, Highway 287 Corridor, Dillon, biking and more.

David Williams presented a slate of officers: President – Julie Shelton, Vice President – Pamela Kimmey, Secretary – Paul Marsh, and Treasurer – Patty Cowan. He asked three times for each position for nominations from the floor. Since there were none Mike Strang moved that nominations be accepted as presented. There was a second and the motion passed unanimously.

Under other business, Mike Strang gave an annual report on the Lima Rest Area traffic. For 2012 they had 330,000 people at the rest area. For 2013 they had 390,000. They got comments on how clean and pretty the place is. The Beaverhead Chamber is struggling to get board members right now. The executive director will be done in May when she finishes with school.

George Everett asked about getting specific information at the Lima Rest Area. The Department of Transportation restricts what we can put in the rest area. Mostly just the state and regional information can go in. Shawn talked about revisiting a monitor.

We talked about a potential video at the Bozeman airport. Pamela will see what information she can get regarding the Bozeman Airport advertising.

Our next meeting will be March 13th in Anaconda. Then, we will have an April 17th meeting with location to be determined. Meeting was adjourned at 1:44.