

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Dillon Forest Service Building
Minutes – November 20, 2014**

Participants: Board member: Pamela Kimmey, Mike Mergenthaler, Ellen Baumler, Kerri Kumasaka, Richard Krott, Dale Siegford, Don Chlebeck, Lynette Kemp, Dale Carlson, Paul Marsh, David Williams, Jason Wood, Julie Shelton, and employee Sarah Bannon, Members and guests: Tom Lowe, Debbie Carstrom, Shawn Peterson, Leona Rodreick, Kristen Swenson, Suzanne Elfstrom, Lori Warden, Belva Lotzer, Kenzi Clark

At 11:06 President Julie Shelton called the meeting to order. She thanked Leona Rodreick for hosting the meeting and providing treats for the meeting. Julie also thanked Dale Siegford from the Sweet Palace for the bags of taffy that we circulated at the meeting. We went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction.

A move to approve the minutes was made and Mike Mergenthaler seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Under public comment Julie Shelton talked about the Montana Recreation Protection Act (MTRPA.) It has to do with no waivers and it will be looked at in legislation this year. Information can be found at www.mtrpa.org.

Sarah had handouts for the financial report. We have \$7453.51 in our private account. We have \$26,114.73 in our state checking account and \$100,978.16 in our money market account. We will soon be having a budget to actual report that is set up through the state. Mike Mergenthaler moved to approve the report and Dale Siegford seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

In the executive director's report, Sarah reported on the Lewis and Clark cooperative. The National Park Service wants to partner on a marketing push in Minneapolis for the Lewis and Clark Trail. If we get six partners for our state it will cost \$2667 per partner. Yellowstone Country is in and so is Missouri River Country if the rest of the partners are participating. After much discussion, Paul moved that we fund this project up to \$2667 as long as all the other partners contribute as well. Ellen seconded the project and it passed unanimously.

Julie Shelton gave some updates on Southwest Montana. We have been working on the birding brochure and met in the morning to go through the latest draft. The travel guide committee and the website committee also met. We will talk about the progress as we go through the meeting.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout sent a call center report. For October and the first three weeks of November, they have handled 114 inquiries for us. Our website brought in 61 inquiries for the two month period, Yellowstone Journal brought in 19, Better Homes and Gardens had 13 inquiries while 7 inquiries came from miscellaneous unknown sources. Most people were interested in wildlife watching, regional history and ghost towns, Lewis & Clark Trail, and rock hounding. The inquiries for this seven week time period were from Montana, California, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies reported on the website. He talked about the highlights and the focus on the redesign of the website. They are going to simplify the site and make it easier to navigate. We will go more into a horizontal design and add more imagery. They are working on the community pages and improving the old photo gallery. Tempest will work on making interactive mapping and adding additional history content. Google Analytics will be enhanced. For the new responsive design that we requested and for more photos Tempest Technologies is asking for \$14,915. Dale Siegford moved that we approve the \$14,915 for the responsive site and photos. Pamela Kimmey seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

We moved on to the travel guide cover. Partners Creative presented seven different front covers. In the end, we went with the photo of Helena City front cover with the foxes in an inset picture.

We had gone through the birding brochure at the executive board meeting earlier. We had a list of changes proposed by Birder Gary Swant and from board members at a discussion at another committee meeting. Partners Creative asked to discuss with the executive board the previous changes. At this executive board meeting the changes discussed were: add the symbols to the Lewis & Clark Caverns and Tizer Garden section. Add the relevant state parks, don't need to label forest land, don't need to add hot springs or Tizer Gardens. Colors are fine. Certain maps need to show more information. Add the Warm Springs Ponds on the map, have the maps coincide with the towns where appropriate, move the owl up so it shows when put in the rack. Put "Birding in Southwest Montana" on the front. Put "Experience a Big Sky Alive with Birds" where it says "Get ready to lengthen your life list." Change "sprawling" to "located", leave pelican picture, label Bob Marshal and Scapegoat Wildernesses.

We discussed the travel guide and the page count. Partners showed the community sections with a list of attractions in a grid format. More pages were needed for the community sections and for some ads. After some discussion, Paul Marsh moved that we go up to 80 pages to accommodate for the extra space needed for the communities and for the extra ads in the travel guide. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative presented the proposed media plan. The plan included Montana Office of Tourism co-ops, online and print advertising, and Missoula Airport for out of home. The MTOT Co-ops included *LIN Digital*, *Nature Conservancy*, and *Orbitz*. Online included *HistoryNet.com*, *Trip Advisor*, *True West*, *Madden Media*, and *Nature Conservancy*. Print / Direct Mail included *American History*, *Birder's Guide*, *Explore History direct mail* and *True West*. Total budgeted amount is \$75,031.52. We discussed the "Birder's Guide" and came to the conclusion that we get a better audience with "Nature Conservancy" for birding and didn't need to do both magazines. Dale Siegford moved that we approve the plan without the "Birder's Guide" as was discussed. David Williams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Julie Shelton appointed Mike Mergenthaler to the nominating committee. He will need to choose someone to help on the committee. If anyone is interested in running for office please let Mike or Sarah know so your name can be added to the ballot.

Under other business Richard Krott said that the "Back Roads of Montana" filmed at the Tizer Gardens. We can look for it to air on PBS sometime next year.