



**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Dillon
Minutes -November 28, 2018**

Participants: Board Members: Becky Henne, Maria Pochervina, Mike Strang, Dale Carlson, Becky DiGiovanna, Dale Siegford, Richard Krott, Mary Johnston, Julie Schroder, Melanie Sanchez, Halley Perry, Ross Johnson, Leona Rodreick, Mike Mergenthaler, Jocelyn Dodge; Members and guests: Karen Weik, Jan Thorne, Lois Volkening, Vic Sample, Diane Johnson, Susan K, Lively, Andrea Opitz; Speakers Larry Volkening, Bob Pfister, Mac Minard, Pam Gosink, Agencies: Tempest Technologies – Shawn Peterson, Linda Brown; Windfall Inc. – Crystal Gluekert, Jim McGowan; Employee – Sarah Bannon

At 10:30 a.m. President Becky Henne called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone, and we went around the room and did a self – introduction.

Minutes – Mike Strang moved to approve. Mike Mergenthaler seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment – Larry Volkening talked about biking in Montana and in the Dillon area. He talked about the “What’s Up App” for bikers. They will expect 4000 bikers through this app. Many bikers average a spend of \$75 per day. Another site to check out is “Crazy Guy on the Bike.com.” The potential is very real and much more than what people think.

Financial Report – Handouts were provided. As of 10/31/18 we have \$116275 in our checkbook and \$66,502 in our money market. Our membership funds have \$23,426. The expense breakouts were in the report. Maria Pochervina moved to approve the report. Dale Carlson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Executive Report – Sarah reported that the Research Committee met with the Institute on Tourism Recreation and Research (ITRR) in Missoula for two days. The focus was how to get the information out to all people who could benefit from it. Also discussion took place on how to get the media to focus on the intent of the information and report it as accurately as possible. The auditor for the state is coming to discuss procedures on the state tourism office. The biggest focus right now is the travel guide.

Inquiry Report – Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout sent in a report. So far, they have handled 31, 40 inquiries, (29,111 reader service leads, 1515 emails, 409 phone calls, and 5 postcards) and mailed 37,156 guides for 2018. Most of the inquiries came from Yellowstone Journal, Glacier Country warm season co-op, Northwest Travel, and our Southwest Montana website. The four top interests are history and ghost towns, wildlife watching opportunities, Lewis and Clark Trail, and regional hot springs. Most inquiries came from California, Texas, Florida, and Washington.

Lima Rest Area Brochure Storage – Mike Strang reported that the Department of Transportation only allows so much space for storage of brochures. He has checked into a storage facility and one might become available in December, but it isn’t for sure. Much discussion took place over space and places and where to have them delivered. We talked about having them drop shipped to Dillon. More information needs to be hashed out.

Community Corridor Grants – Julie Schroder from the Powell County Chamber talked about the community grant they received. They were thrilled when they were awarded the grant and looked forward to working with a professional agency. The Chamber was disappointed with the results. Although things haven’t worked out as planned; the new account executive Crystal has been great to work with the last two weeks. They have received a logo, a marketing strategy, and are working on a billboard.

Marketing Update – Crystal Gluekert, from Windfall, handed out a draft of procedures for the next community grants. We need feedback on this so we can adjust for next year. We will have the applications out late December and they will be due in late January. We will vote on them at our February meeting. Crystal presented five different covers for the 2019 Southwest Montana Travel Guide. We went through an elimination process. We asked if the one voted in can be adjusted so mountains can be seen at the top in the brochure racks.



Website, Internet, Video Update – Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies talked about how they have the website coordinated with the state. He had a handout on statistics for the website. Our users of the website have increased by 5.68% new users increased by 5.18%. Our pages per sessions increased by 6.9%. The largest age group to use our website was from the ages of 55-64 and we had an even break of 50.8 % female users and 49.2 male users. For our newsletter we have a huge increase with the number of leads from Yellowstone Journal. Because of limitations with Constant Contact and so we make sure the recipients want our newsletters we are going to a double opt-in sign-up. All our members are also encouraged to sign up for the newsletter – you can get to the signup on our website. We are always open to ideas and suggestions for our newsletters. For the event system they are planning to have it integrated into our system by the end of January. Richard Krott would like to have the May newsletter ad for the Wizard and Fairy Festival. The cost is \$95, and we allow one spot per newsletter.

Shawn had a handout for the Southwest Montana Ultra High Definition Video Grant Project. He showed what was completed for September – November. They are in the middle of creating the region-wide HDR formatted videos. For December they will be testing of the 4K playback hardware options, completing creation of region-side videos, and the billing will go out to our contributing partners. The hardware will be installed in January and February. In March they will collect initial feedback and make necessary adjustments. In April they will roll out the additional day trip elements.

Speaker: Mac Minard, executive director of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association; We have about 700 licensed outfitters in the state; 100 are inactive, 400 are hunting and fishing. Outfitting is the 4th largest in nonresident direct expenditures. They are the single most donor to nongovernmental outfitting organizations. This mostly comes in the form of donated trips. 30% of outfitter revenue comes outside of hunting and fishing. This would include educational vacations and other recreational vacations. People interested in these services need a place to go to get referrals. We need to make a list of these services readily available to moteliors and visitor centers for the travelers that request this information.

Speaker: Pam Gosink, Executive Director for the Montana Dude Ranchers Association; We first talked about Superhost Visitor Information. We have an online program with Jody Smith of the Flathead Community College. Pam also does visitor service trainings for Glacier Country frontline workers.

Pam said that we have 30 Dude Ranches in the state. The traditional length of stay has been 6 days. They now allow a minimum of three days. The two that are members in Southwest Montana are Rocking Z and Upper Canyon Outfitters. Patty Wirth from the Rocking Z explained that our travel guide is not working for the Dude Ranchers. We are making a change to add minimum stay for this year and will see how we can do more in the coming years. Pam explained what resort ranches and working ranches are. Upper Canyon is both are ranch and outfitting. Rocking Z has tour operators. We talked about FAM Tours, social media, newsletters, and tradeshow. We can work with Pam on the FAM Tours and get information on our social media, and newsletters. The website for the Montana Dude Ranchers Association is MontanaDRA.com.

Other Business: A question was asked about Far Cry and Hope County Montana. So far, we have not had the traffic we were considering. Jim McGowan from Windfall said they are making changes to the website and that they dropped the signup for the field guide and people can just get it directly off the website. Sarah will talk to Allison at the Film Commission to see if they have more insight.

Leona Rodreick announced to the board that Jackson Hot Springs is now open.

Richard Krott announced that Mike Steele, a past president and person who was crucial to starting up Gold West Country has fallen ill. Mike was a huge asset to our organization and a beloved member. Sarah will get it touch with Michele, his daughter.

President Becky Henne adjourned the meeting at 1:45 p.m. Our next general board meeting will be in February in Butte.