

Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Lewis and Clark Caverns
October 23, 2014

Participants: Board members, Julie Shelton, Carol Eichler, David Williams, Fay Najjar, Paul Marsh, Shirley Beck, Dale Siegford, Lynette Kemp, Mike Mergenthaler, Amber Wood-Jensen, Pamela Kimmey, and Executive Director, Sarah Bannon

Members and guests: Tempest Technologies -Debbie Carlson, Leona Rodreick, Rhea Armstrong, MARS Stout – Rebecca Schmitz, Partners Creative – Lori Warden and Suzanne Elfstrom, Brandi Jensen-Campbell, Anna Fabatz

President Julie Shelton called the meeting to order. She thanked Lewis and Clark Caverns for hosting the meeting and having such a nice setup for us. She also thanked the Sweet Palace for the bags of taffy they brought for us to share at the meeting. We went around the room and each of us did a self-introduction.

Debbie Carlstrom from Tempest Technologies gave us a handout on the “Top 20” for the website. It had from our website: top 20 countries, top 20 referring sites, top 20 landing pages, top 20 states and the top 20 cities outside of Montana. This will be attached in a separate attachment. Debbie said our Facebook has 23,000 likes and 61,000 visits, and 172,000 page views. This is second for the regions next to Glacier Country. The mobile site has 33,583 visitor session year to date. Debbie then showed some pictures that were taken from video that was created during the summer and fall. Many biking pictures that we can use for our other venues were showcased. Debbie talked about the schedule for the website for the coming year. Tempest has been focusing on filming in the summer, will work on the website redesign this winter. If you see a website that you like or have ideas let us know so we can see about incorporating them. More information was talked about with the social medial, video ideas, and the photo gallery. Suzanne asked about making the website responsive. The website committee meets on November 5th at Tempest Technologies. They are always looking for pictures for Facebook.

Suzanne Elfstrom from Partners Creative talked about Trip Advisor. The 3rd quarter was up by 19% in page views over 3d quarter in 2013. The click-through and interaction was down 26%. Suzanne explained how this is due to a change in the way Trip Advisor now works with us. She said this is the way it will be and they are working on compensation of \$6600 for this next year.

Lori Warden from Partners Creative talked about the travel guide. She had a handout on the proposed community information. A sample of the Helena area set up in a grid like manner to list all the area attractions was passed around. We will look at travel guide covers at the next meeting. Shirley Beck talked about the importance of how the top 4” of the front cover have to be eye catching for them to be really successful in the brochure racks.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout gave a handout on the call center activity. Our inquiries for the calendar year are 3510 and 7932 travel guides have been sent out from the call center. Most inquiries

came from the *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine and the Southwest Montana Website. For location interest, Anaconda had the most interest with 140. For activities, history followed by wildlife viewing and rock hounding had the most requested information. Most inquiries came from Montana, Illinois, California and North Carolina. Rebecca explained more about the inquiries and how AAA Living goes out to the Midwest and is different for the regions.

A Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) meeting was held on October 5 – 7th in Miles City. Amber Wood-Jensen gave a recap of the meeting including information on the Institute for Research and Recreation who does research on tourism issues. She also talked about the marketing information and the work that is taking place on the redesigned website at the Montana Office of Tourism. Miles City put on a great social for all that attended. On that note, Mike Mergenthaler explained how the TAC meeting schedule is changing and that they will have the next meeting in Helena and then not again for a while as it was in the past. Mike is planning a TAC social that will be in the basement of the Brewhouse and will include a comedian and dinner. Townhouse and Northwestern Energy are helping to sponsor the event. He asked if Southwest Montana would be willing to help with the social. Fay Najjar moved and Dale Siegford seconded the motion that we take \$1500 out of private funds for the social. Motion passed unanimously.

Amber moved and Brandi Jensen-Campbell seconded the motion that the minutes be approved. Motion passed unanimously.

Under public comment we talked about the Warren Miller film and how nine minutes of it is on Discovery Basin. It is showing this weekend in Helena, Bozeman, and Missoula. Shirley Beck said that they had an exceptional September. Butte also had a great September. David Williams from the Powell Country Chamber said that the Prison Museum will be having their haunted house. It will be more interactive this year. Mike Mergenthaler said that on October 30th, Helena will be celebrating their 150th birthday at the Performance Square. Ellen Baumler will be there with her new book and a new mural will be displayed. Carol Eichler said on November 14th there will be a Four Georgians Banquet. This only happens on rare special memorable occasions.

For the financial report Sarah had handouts. We have \$10,253.51 in the private account. We have \$6,741.65 in our state account and \$135,952.21 in our money market account. We also had our audit and have about \$38,000 in uncommitted funds. Much discussion took place regarding the funds, particularly for cooperative marketing. Amber moved that we put \$6600 toward Trip Advisor for the communities, \$3000 toward the birding brochure, \$5000 to Administration, and the rest in Opportunity Funds where we will allocate more cooperative funds if needed. The motion was seconded and it passed unanimously.

Mike Mergenthaler talked about the Folk Festival and would like us to be mindful of the event that is such a great benefit to us all.

Our next meeting will be at the Dillon Forest Service on November 20th.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.