



**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Ennis
Minutes - October 30, 2018**

Participants: Becky Henne, Maria Pochervina, Katya Peterson, Debbie Carlstrom, Mary Johnston, Becky DiGiovanna, Gay Rossow, Karen Weik, Andrea Opitz, Mike Strang, Jim McGowan, Tia Metzger, Crystal Gluekert, Vic Sample, Kris Hauck, Leona Rodreick, Jan Thorne, Richard Krott, Dottie Fossel, Lisa Caruthers, Halley Perry, Ross Johnson, Jocelyn Dodge, Elijah Allen, Paul Marsh, Kerri Kumasaka, Bruce Binkowski, Fay Najjar, Julie Shelton, Peter Pawles, Pamela Kimmey, and employee Sarah Bannon

President Becky Henne called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction.

Minutes – Maria Pochervina moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Leona Rodreick seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - none

Financial Reports – Sarah had handouts with all expenses and breakdowns. We have \$102,071 in our checking and \$66,494 in our money market. We have \$23,463 in our membership account. Jocelynn Dodge moved that the financial report be approved. Maria seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Executive Director - We have been working on next year's travel guide; 2019 calendar of events are due on October 31st. On a conference call with the regions and convention and visitor bureaus(cvb's) we talked about how we are informed of the legislative activity going on during the legislative time at the capitol. The Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development is no longer going to doing this. Tourism Matters is looking at doing it to keep all tourism partners informed. If the state gives some money for this, it will have to be presented completely neutral. We are not sure what we will do for now. The state office of tourism is being audited and auditors will be working with all the regions and some of the cvb's. The state has had employee changes. Sean Becker was promoted to a new position Business Assistance Bureau Chief. He is taking the position of Casey who moved on to another job. Jenny Peleg took Sean's position as interim Division Administrator. We need film commission contacts from Southwest Montana to work with the film office. These people help the film office with information specific to the area. We passed around a signup sheet and people put an asterisk by their name to be contact people.

Inquiry Report – Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout sent a report from the call center. So far this year we had 30,054 inquiries and mailed 36,082 guides. This is a 71% increase this year. Most of the inquiries came from Yellowstone Journal with 18,667 inquiries. That is followed by Glacier Country with 4,883; Northwest Travel with 3,583, and southwestmt.com 1,435. Most of our visitors were interested in history and ghost towns, wildlife watching opportunities, regional hot springs and Lewis and Clark Trail. Most of the inquiries came from California, Texas, Florida, and Washington.

Travel Guide Updates – Maria Pochervina from the travel guide committee reported that we have several changes in the guide. We are using it as a facilitation piece to get people as much information as we can to get them around the area. It will include maps, a section on public lands, and the index page will be put back in the back of the guide. We are looking for quality photos to add as well.

Community Corridor Grants – Mary Johnston from the Anaconda reported on the community grant they did with Windfall. They mostly focused on the 100th year anniversary of the Anaconda Stack. The 100 Year Stack Logo worked well for the promotion, but they need one now that will work that isn't tied to the celebration. They had banner ads, but the boost didn't get them what they had hoped for. Windfall will continue to work with them on a few things. We talked about the application process for next year. Lisa Caruthers brought up that the best timing for the grants would be better in the fall when they are all planning for the next year. We had much discussion on this and it was decided that in February we would choose two from the applications for this year and choose two for the following year at the same time. The two for the following year would be contingent on approval of the next fiscal year's budget which becomes available July 1st.

Marketing update: Windfall introduced Crystal Glueckert as our new account manager. Tia Metzger presented the proposed media plan for 2019. We have joint ventures with the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (MOTBD) with Sojern and Trip Advisor. We also have regional placements with Glacier Country Travel Guide, Destination Missoula Guide, Southeast Montana Guide and True West Magazine. Our consumer placements include Midwest Living, Yellowstone Journal, Oh Ranger, Trip Advisor, and Road Runner Magazine. The total cost of placement is \$68,947 and agency services are \$39,000 for a total of \$107,947. Paul Marsh moved to approve the media plan. Julie Shelton seconded the motion and it passes unanimously.

Website, internet updates: Katya Peterson from Tempest Technologies reported that we have 16,000 people that receive our newsletter. We have a 15% open rate. We are looking at allowing advertising again on our newsletter. It would include a photo and up to 40 words for \$95. Any member would be allowed to do this but would not be able to do consecutive months. Becky Henne commented on how they loved the last newsletter. Our motorcycle promotion did not have great numbers for the first year but did have a great response with all who participated and with the motorcycle shops in the surrounding state area. We will be meeting on this and deciding how to proceed. Tempest is working on the backend of the new event program for our website. We have partnered with Central Montana for this project. To get your events posted on our social media posts please send the information and photos to updates@southwestmt.com. The Ultra High Definition Project has also been a priority. They have three in the works for November / December.

Speaker – Karen Weik from the Helena Tourism Alliance spoke about a couple of things. They work with groups and conferences. We had a missed opportunity with the Caverns Association who would have come and toured around the region. It happened because of a conflict in schedules. They will be working to secure more groups and want to work with sending the participants around the region to extend the visits. We talked about spelunking – exploring caves and how this might come around again in a couple of years. Karen also talked about Themed Tours such as Ghost Fam Tours and that she has been in touch with Ellen Baumler. We will be working with her on this. Karen has also been in touch with Mac Minard (Montana Outfitters and Guides Association Executive Director; our speaker next month) on a charity fund. They are looking at mountain bikers and back country cyclers on a trail system. Helena has a Silver Ranking on 400 miles of trails. They are working on an Act of Goodwill – Big Hearts under the Big Sky where they are working with outfitters. This is a weeklong event. More discussion ensued on this. Jocelyn Dodge said they are also working on etiquette and education on the trails.

Peter Pauwels – Camp Bullwheel is set up for adaptive fishing. They have adaptive outdoor equipment for the disabled. They work with many adaptations including for quadriplegics and paraplegics. They now have a place in Ennis that is renovated to allow for wheelchairs and more. They can take people fishing that normally wouldn't be able to fish. They float down the Madison River and have adaptive equipment that allows them to cast and reel in fish. 2018 was the first year they were able to do these trips and they hope to continue to grow the program.

The next meeting is on Wednesday, November 28th in Dillon.

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.