

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Townsend
Minutes - September 19, 2018**

Participants: Rebecca Schmitz, Mike Strang, Paul Marsh, Melanie Sanchez, Gay Rossow, Becky DiGiovanna, Jenni Bonser, Selan Renner, Lauren Dillon, Vic Sample, LaRinda Spencer, Pam Sample, Bruce Binkowski, Jim McGowan, Debbie Carlstrom, Linda Brown, Shawn Peterson, Ross Johnson, Maria Pochervina, Sarah Bannon

Townsend had beautiful fall decorations and honey for all who attended.

Vice President Maria Pochervina opened the meeting and we went around the room and did a self-introduction.

Minutes – Mike Strang moved to approve the minutes as were submitted via email. Paul Marsh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ross Johnson welcomed us to Townsend. We talked a bit and found out that there is high class rock climbing in the area. They also have a Fall Festival coming up that is a huge event for Townsend.

Sarah had handouts for the financial report. As of August 31, 2018, our state checking account had \$125,162 and our money market had \$66,485. We are still finishing up projects for fiscal year 2017/2018. Our membership account had \$23,463 in it. Sarah reported that the noncommittal funds of \$28,000 for 17/18 were put toward opportunity funds for corridor grants and upcoming projects. Becky DiGiovanna moved that the financial report be approved. Melanie Sanchez seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

For the executive director report Sarah said that we have been working extensively on the travel guide. A committee has been meeting for most of two months. The audit follow-up is almost finished. We are doing a Midwest Living ad this year based on a very good opportunity.

Rebecca Schmitz from MARS Stout gave the call center report. From Memorial Day to Labor Day we had 9,983 inquiries handled by MARS Stout, a 50% increase over 2017's numbers of 4,963. We received a lot of inquiries from reader service from Yellowstone Journal, Glacier Country Co-op, and Northwest Travel. We also got many inquiries from our southwestmt.com website. Most of the inquiries came from California, Texas, Florida, and Washington. The top four interests were from regional history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, area hot springs and Lewis and Clark Trail. Rebecca also included several interesting questions from calls in to the call center.

Mike Strang said that they had 323,974 visitors through the Lima rest area. Adjusting for numbers based on last year they should have well over 400,000 for the end of the 2018 year.

Mike had brought and distributed the states new travel guide. It is a thin pamphlet where they partnered with Outside Magazine. It offers six scenic drives but leaves out many places. Dillon, Anaconda, Deer Lodge, and Ennis / Virginia City are completely left off the map as well many other places. Much discussion ensued on this and it was decided that we write a letter to the office of tourism stating how we feel about it.

Maria Pochervina gave updates from the travel guide committee. We are adding back in the maps of ghost towns, hot springs, and several more. We are putting back in the index page and adding a Lewis and Clark section as well as a public lands section. For next year we want a good scenic front cover or a lively history photo.

Jim McGowan gave the marketing update from Windfall. Jim had reports that gave the statistics on ad placements and banner ads. True West Magazine had the best click through rates for us at 2.68% for Facebook posts and at 3.1% for Native article. Yellowstone Journal targeted Facebook posts and E newsletter

which featured 1 sponsorship did well for us. Roadrunner had a .47 click through rate. The overall performance was \$231,039 value versus actual spend of \$142,614. (40% savings.) Impressions were 7,986,564 (963,768 added value impressions.) Average click through rate was 322% (against .06%-.12% benchmark); Average cost per click is \$6.88 (hit between the \$6 - \$7 benchmark goal.)

Far Cry 5 placements had 843,913 impressions, 11% click through rates and \$5.36 cost per click.

Community Corridor projects. Gay Rossow and Becky DiGiovanna reported that Virginia City had placemats made for the Vigilante Trail. They had window clings made that eventually were remade with a different background to allow for better readability. They felt the project got off the ground too late since they were not able to get away after Memorial Day to explain the placemats to businesses. West Yellowstone and other major places needed more of an explanation to get the placemats in use. The places that did use them found that the paper was too high quality and kids weren't able to color on them. Also, people felt they were too good to throw out. They plan on having the placemats made on lower quality paper and getting out to the partners earlier to really get the project promoted before the season begins next year.

Bruce Binkowski of the Jefferson County Corridor had marketed four major events that took place. He felt that Windfall did well for them and that Taylor was easy to connect with for his projects. His events went okay and hopefully will continue to grow for next year. The one event in Boulder did get rained on in the beginning but turned out okay.

Shawn Peterson from Tempest Technologies gave us a website / video report. They have been updating different parts on the website and adding new information.

They have made tremendous progress on the UltraHD project. They are currently in the process of building out the local area and regional video presentations. These include 4K footage, a map element and they have now added a brief description providing more information about the business/attraction/event being highlighted. The plan is to start rolling out the units with the initial version of the software in late fall/early winter. They anticipate that there will be a second version of the application including a stronger emphasis on day trips that will be deployed in the spring prior to the travel season.

They purposely decided to delay that summer deployment in order to capture additional regional and area specific footage and to incorporate new High Dynamic Range (HDR) capabilities into the system. Tempest Technologies captured a significant amount of footage this spring and summer primarily focused on Virginia and Nevada City, Anaconda, Butte, Deer Lodge and nearby areas.

The new 4K displays that are optimized for HDR provide a significantly improved image that promises to create more excitement and focus on the Southwest Montana footage when deployed. To take advantage of these cutting-edge technologies Tempest decided to upgrade their editing suite and master the content for the UltraHD project in an HDR format. While this delayed the production and deployment by several months, they believe that the end result will be well worth the wait. All additional costs required to produce and deploy HDR 4K footage are being absorbed by Tempest.

At this point they are anticipating deploying 55" HDR Compatible monitors in all locations except for the Lima Rest area. This location will have a smaller monitor optimized for the front of building location selected for the display.

Tempest Technologies is also programming for the new event project. We will have a website committee meeting once the travel guide committee is through for the 2019 travel guide.

Vic Sample captivated us with his historical information on small towns and not so small towns in the past. Broadwater County has so much interesting history that we were all enthralled with his enthusiasm and love of the area.

Our next meeting is on October 24th in Ennis and our November 28th meeting is in Dillon.