

**Southwest Montana  
General Board Meeting – Gunslinger Gulch, Anaconda  
November 20, 2019 Minutes**

Participants: Tricia Erickson, Gay Rossow, Katya Peterson, Dale Siegford, Susan Lively, Melanie Sanchez, Sherry, Crystal Gluekert, Richard Krott, Ross Johnson, Vic Sample, Bruce Binkowski, Andrea Opitz, Erinn Donnell, Mike Mergenthaler, Mary Johnston, Rebecca Schmitz, Mike Strang, Karen Broussard, Kerri Kumasaka, Julie Schroder, and employee Sarah Bannon

Since our President was absent, Executive Board Member Mike Strang called the meeting to order. We went around the room and each person did a self-introduction.

**Minutes** – Vic Sample moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Ross Johnson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Public Comment** – Events and activities in various communities were announced.

**Financial Report** – Sarah had handouts for the financial report. AS of 10/31/19 we have \$51,939.17 in the checking account and \$139,833.23 in the money market account. The membership funds have \$25,074.49 in the account. Jocelyn Dodge moved that the financial report be approved as submitted. Mike Mergenthaler seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Executive Director Report** – Sarah said much of her work is on project completion reports and the 2020 Travel Guide. Great Falls is hosting a BMW Rally and we have some options for marketing with them. Mike Mergenthaler moved to go with the option and to go up to \$7700 that would include a *BMS ON Magazine* Ad, our travel guides given to attendees, a landing page feature, and public recognition for appreciation of the partnership. Gay Rossow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Inquiry Report** – Rebecca Schmitz from Corporate Cost Control had a report for the call center. Through October of 2019 we had 20,850 inquiries. Most of inquiries came from Yellowstone Journal, Glacier Country warm season co-op, Southwest MT website, and Midwest Living. Most of the inquiries came from California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois. The four top interests were area history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, and regional lodging. Rebecca also had a fun list of questions they have received.

**Professor Rick Graetz, University Community Program** – this is a program that uses University students and local writers to build an ongoing educational forum in this case for the Dillon and Beaverhead County area. It will include photos, stories, newspaper articles and a website. They are wanting to work with us as an affiliation. After some discussion Vic Sample moved to have us meet with Rick Graetz and get more information. Dale Siegford seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Northwest USA Spotlight Fam Tour** – Andrea Opitz and Erinn Donnell discuss the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwest USA Spotlight Fam Tour that the Helena TBID secured through a bid process. This is a conference with 30-35 tour operators from the US and Canada that will then do a FAM Tour through western Montana. After much discussion on this Mike Mergenthaler moved that we put \$5000 toward sponsorship of the conference and tour. Richard seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Continental Divide Trail** – Mike Strang talked about the trail and how it was estimated that 400 went through the area this past year and it is estimated that 1000 will go through next summer. Jocelyn said that Butte also has a gateway and during the summer they might be monitoring with long distant hikers and segment hikers. She was talking about a reach out from an educational standpoint that included do's and don'ts and community etiquette that can be put on the Southwest Montana website. Sarah is to get information from Laurie Richard who went to DC regarding the trail. Jocelyn will also get numbers.

**Townsend Corridor Project** – Vic Sample reported that working with Windfall was great. They developed a marketing plan but had some bumps and challenges. It would have helped to have set realistic expectations with the Townsend group. Windfall got them focused. It was decided to send out a survey for the business to fill out along with the application for next year. This will help narrow things down earlier.

**Marketing Updates** – Crystal Glueckert from Windfall gave us a marketing update. She showed the different branding for Townsend and Broadwater County. She also showed the suggestions for them for marketing the area. She put up on the screen the full-page World Series ad we did. Crystal showed the different options for the BMW Rally in Great Falls. We had voted on this earlier in the meeting. She also had a spreadsheet on the screen of our media plan.

**Website, Internet Updates** – Katya Peterson from Tempest Technologies gave a report. Our website had a 20.47% increase in traffic over last year. Mobile devices were used 54.9% for access to our site followed by desktop at 32.8%. The tablet was 12.4%. The largest audience of our website were aged 65 and older followed by the age group of 55-64 years, then followed by the age group of 45-54 year olds. Most of our visitors were from some other source at 30% then from Montana at 27.2%. Utah was next at 10.8% and Washington at 6% with California following at 5.8%. Our top landing pages were Yellowstone to Glacier Itineraries, then calendar of events, then Ghost towns, followed by Crystal Park, Rock Hounding, and finally ordering a travel planner. Most of our traffic is coming organically at 61.7 % followed by direct at 16.3% and then social at 14.1%.

**Other Business** – We will be redesigning the tear-off map. Also, we will be updating the website. Anyone interested in participating on the committee please let us know. We will probably meet in Butte or Helena for the committee meetings.

**Next meetings** – January / February meeting in Butte with date to be decided; March 26, April 23, September 17<sup>th</sup>, October 15, and November 19<sup>th</sup>. These dates are subject to change depending on holidays and school schedules.

Mike Mergenthaler moved to adjourn the meeting. Jocelyn seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.