

**Southwest Montana  
General Board Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

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**Participants:** Gay Rossow, Neala Siegle, Curtis Spindler, Fay Najjar, Zach McArthur, Dax Schieffer, Dale Carlson, Mike Strang, Katya Peterson, Linda Brown, Lisa Bracco, Elisa Sepulveda, Rebecca Jones, Susan Ovitt, Sheila Butts, Mary Johnston, Candi Whitworth, Vic Sample, Ross Johnson, Karena Bemis, Andrea Opitz, Melanie Sanchez, Jan Thorne, Bruce Binkowski, Maria Pochervina, Jocelyn Dodge, Julie Shelton and Employee Sarah Bannon

Executive Board President Maria Pochervina called the meeting to order at 10:35am.

**Minutes** - Jocelyn Dodge made motion to approve the minutes from February 24, 2020. Seconded by Fay Najjar and passed unanimously.

**Public Comment** - Self-introductions were made as well as updates on events, communities, properties, and the effects of the Coronavirus.

**Financial Report** – General fund: Project expenses still coming in until June 30<sup>th</sup>. The motorcycle adventure brochure is now available. We pulled back on advertising. Membership: Photos and stories for the Beaverhead County and region project moving forward thru December. Dale Carlson made motion to accept the financials. Seconded by Fay Najjar and passed unanimously.

**Executive Director Report** - Working with Neala and Katya on projects for when the COVID breaks. Revenues will be really low for the fiscal year. Sarah visited with Jan and not much as funds until October/November. More grants have opened up for COVID relief and PPE. Sarah passed around an informational piece. SWMT applied and is getting a \$10,000 grant. A meeting for the SJ24 Audit for bed tax will be today to start planning for a safety net. Sarah is learning mail chimp. A Fam Tour will be through Ennis and Virginia City for the Men’s Journal.

**Inquiry Report** – Corporate Cost Control is our call center that handles inquiries and mails out travel guides for our region. They supply us with good statistics and is our largest and most important source of inquiries. Rebecca sent her report from April, May & June 2020. They handled 782 inquiries and mailed 1,713 guides. From these inquiries, potential visitors were still interested in Montana history, ghost towns, wildlife watching, the Lewis and Clark Trail, and regional lodging choices. The majority were Montanans looking for safe day trips for their families followed by Californians, Floridians and Texans made up most of the rest. Some are planning for next year; others were thinking about visiting once we start reopening. Sarah will update Rebecca with information on events or changes due to COVID. Sarah will send out emails out to members for updates.

**Marketing updates** - Neala Siegle with Windfall gave a presentation on marketing projects as well as changes due to the impact of COVID-19. Media buys are on hold right now. The BMW Rally was cancelled. We did put a brochure together for that event so we will still be able to use that piece. Dig the Distance campaign was paused for now as well as our joint ventures thru to mid-March & April. Due to COVID-19, our “Dig the Distance Dig the Views” campaign for in state media became “When you’re Ready” for future travel. We took a risk and saw 2.4 million impressions. Print projects completed are the tear off maps and updated travel guides. Wrapped up the year with the marketing plan. The in-state campaign will continue for the new fiscal year. The 2021 media plan was scaled back with cost effective opportunities. The 2021-2022 travel guide is set to move forward.

**Website updates** – Katya Peterson with Tempest gave us an update on the website and projects. Mike is out and filming in Butte. He will be traveling all over our region and will be filming through summer. On the website, our featured video is “We’ll Be Here” which sends a message from SWMT that while right now you may not be ready to travel, we will still be here when you are ready. The website has updated COVID information for travelers on the home page. Please send updates, cancelled events, etc. so they can be changed on the website. No changes yet to the redesign. There are some funds available for partial changes.

**Voices of Montana Tourism** – Dax Schieffer from Voices of Montana Tourism was our guest speaker. Voices of Montana has been helping support the industry and outcome for strong tourism economy since 2011. He gave an overview of 2019 Montana travel information. As for 2020, he gave an update on bed tax collections for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. The state is down 12% while SWMT is down 21%. Dax talked about the reopening approach and thanked everyone for all we are doing and march forward, promote safety to this healthcare concern and be leaders.

**COVID-19 and state information** – Please see <https://commerce.mt.gov/Coronavirus-Relief> for more information from the state about COVID relief and PPE grants.

**Other Business** – Sarah will send out a deadline for this fall to update and make changes to the travel guide. Please review your board member list from your county to make sure all positions are filled.

Maria adjourned the meeting.

Minutes by Julie Shelton

**Next meeting:** September 17, 2020, Boulder Creek Lodge