

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting – Via Zoom
September 24, 2020**

Participants: Sarah Bannon (SW Montana Executive Director), Julie Shelton, Patrick Fox, Rebecca Schmitz, Melanie Sanchez, Vic Sample, Mary Johnston, Linda Brown, Andrea Opitz, Neala Siegle, Erinn Donnell, Jim Tucker, Jeanette Kopf, Bruce Binkowski, Jocelyn Dodge, Anna Strange, Maria Pochervina, Debbie Carlstrom, Katya Peterson, Stephanie Sorini, Julie Schroder, Mike Strang and Kerri Kumasaka

Jocelyn Dodge called the meeting to order at 10:06 am.

Minutes – Vic Sample moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Mary Johnston seconded the motion and the motion was passed.

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

Financial Report – Sarah shared the financial report. As of 8/31/2020, we have \$135,106.58 in checking and \$111,119.19 in the money market account. The membership funds have \$187,770.30 (of this \$162,312.25 is for the safety grant we received). At the end of July, the funding came in for a grant to market safety with COVID mixed in with tourism. The funding needs to be used up by December 2020 and is part of the CARES act. Maria suggested we wait until next meeting to approve the financials. Sarah will send the financial reports out before the next meeting.

Executive Director Report

1. Sarah shared more about the Safety Grant. We are developing posters, rack cards, billboards, banner ads, videos, etc. to promote COVID safety. Tempest and Windfall have been a big help in creating these items.
2. Our bed tax monies are down about 40 to 50% due to COVID.
3. The Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) has an RFP out for strategic planning for the next 2 years focusing on economic recovery from COVID. The next TAC meeting will be in October.
4. Work is being done on the Travel Guide. A lot of ads are in. This year equipment rental such as kayak, fishing, etc. has been added.
5. Audit – Completion reports are now due in November.
6. Sarah will send out a “Doodle” for the best meeting times for SW Montana in 2021.
7. Sarah will have a conference call with Rick Graetz on Friday. Their website will be going live in October.

Inquiry Report

1. Rebecca Schmitz from Corporate Cost Control had a report on the call center. In the first months of the pandemic, there were a lot of calls coming into the call center for Travel Montana. People were calling about campgrounds and what was and wasn't open. From 2017 to 2019 most of the leads were coming in as a result on advertising in the Yellowstone Journal. Highest number of inquiries were from California and Texas. In 2020, most of the leads are now coming in from our website: southwestmt.com, and highest number are from Montanans

looking for day trips. The four top interests were area history and ghost towns, wildlife watching, and Lewis and Clark Trail and hot springs/regional lodging.

2. Tempest has been updating the website based on the information Rebecca is getting.
3. Safety guide inserts are going out with the travel guides.
4. Sarah to collect information on what is open and what isn't and what events are happening and can pass this information onto Rebecca.
5. Jocelyn to go through the website and see what information could be added about public lands.

Marketing Update –

1. Neala Siegle reported on the work that Windfall has been doing. As a part of the CARES grant, they have been doing photoshoots capturing pictures which can be used during COVID and afterwards as well. They have been working on billboards, swag and print pieces. December 31, 2020 is the deadline.
2. From October to December 2020 billboards with 50% safety information, 50% brand awareness will be set up in East Helena, Helena, Deer Lodge, Whitehall, Clancy, Basin and Butte.

Website, Internet Updates – Katya Peterson from Tempest Technologies gave a report. As a part of the CARES safety grant we received, they are creating safety videos for Youtube and gas stations. There are also items being placed on Facebook, Twitter and our blog with the message, "Travel with Care." In addition, they are working on "Our Backyard" Videos, updates to the event system and posting COVID information on our listing pages for the website.

Other Business - None.

Next meetings – The October 29, 2020 meeting will be on Zoom. There will also be a meeting on November 19, 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 am.

Meeting minutes submitted by Kerri Kumasaka.