

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting via Zoom
Thursday, January 21, 2021
Minutes**

Participants: Dale Siegford, Kerri Kumasaka, Mike Mergenthaller, Jeanette Kopf, Neala Siegle, Dale Carlson, Mike Strang, Rebecca Schmitz, Katya Peterson, Linda Brown, Lisa Bracco, Susan Ovitt, Mary Johnston, Vic Sample, Ross Johnson, Andrea Opitz, Melanie Sanchez, Jan Thorne, Bruce Binkowski, Brenda Maas, Chantelle McDuffie, Debbie Carlstrom, Erinn Donnell, Julie Croglio, Julie Schroder, Megan Richter Bland, Tia Metzger, Becky Di Giovanna, Patrick Doyle, Jim Tucker, Ryan Hannohoe, Jim McGowan, Rhea Armstrong, William Rosbolt, Jessie Broksle, Maria Pochervina, Jocelyn Dodge, Julie Shelton and Employee Sarah Bannon

Executive Board President Maria Pochervina called the meeting to order at 10:08am.

Minutes – Dale Siegford made motion to approve the minutes from November 19, 2020. Seconded by Jocelyn Dodge and passed unanimously.

Public Comment – Self-introductions were made as well as community updates and events.

Media plan, marketing, other – Tia and Neala from Windfall shared a presentation for the media plan recommendation for the fiscal year. Below is the proposed budget:

Print Media	\$18,250
Multimedia	\$20,263
On-line Digital	\$18,000
Out of Home	<u>\$11,764</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$68,277</u>

Print Media:

Oh Ranger: Yellowstone National Park & Glacier National Park Guides with national interest for those planning trips to the parks. They circulate 400,000 and we would have full panel ads in both. This has already been approved and the ad has been secured.

True West Magazine: National audience interest with a 2-page spread, map/content, digital banner ad, featured article, e-newsletter, social content promotion. This would include 75,000 impressions. (Cost: \$11,170.59)

Bird Watcher's Digest: National audience interest, 2-page spread with full map to be in the May/June issue. Circulation of 25,000. (Cost: \$11,170.59)

Multimedia Marketing:

Yellowstone Journal: National Audience. Full page ad/map, custom content, email leads, 4 boosted Facebook posts, E-newsletters & banner ad. This would include 300,000 impressions (Cost: \$13,752.94).

On-line Digital:

Sojern: Very targeted opportunity. A direct buy with placement in May-June. Targeting on national level to those interested in travel. This would include 2,100,000 impressions (Cost: \$9,995.00). We usually do this as a part of the Montana Joint Venture program which is not available this year. We did some Sojern ads with the Safety Grant.

Social Media Advertising:

Facebook and Instagram ads: Ads targeting Montana, Idaho, Washington & Oregon. 1,000,000 impressions would be \$4,000. The story format ads can rush traffic to website. Facebook Likes Ads would be \$2,000 for

300,000 impressions. Jocelyn asked about whether they have thought about targeting Texas, Missouri and California. Tia answered that the advertising in Sojern, which has a national audience, is reaching some of those people. With the social media marketing they want to focus on the regional and drive markets.

Out of Home:

Gas station TV ads: Placed in more targeted locations such as the Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park corridors in highest traffic stations. There are 21 stations/264 screens and will run 14 weeks, April – Mid July. They will be 15-30 second ads depending on the creative; 400,011 impressions would be \$11,764.71. Jocelyn mentioned it seems like April is too early since the parks will not be open at that time. We discussed and formally approved moving the time frame to mid-May- July. Windfall will make that change.

Motion was made to accept the proposal with changes by Dale Siegford and seconded by Jocelyn Dodge and passed unanimously.

Travel guides: The committee has been working on final changes and will be meeting with Windfall on this coming Tuesday. More updates at the February meeting then will be on track for guides to be delivered in April. The ads available in the guide are full page ads which the membership voted on a while ago. Tourism related listing are in back of the guide. With that, please make sure you are on the states data base. Email Sarah with any questions. Sarah will need everyone’s events right away.

Sarah thanked Windfall and Tempest for all their help with the Cares grant projects.

Financial Reports – Sarah shared the financial reports. The state account shows funds from the CARES Grant. We are sitting pretty well but will have our largest expenses at the end of the fiscal year. We also received a Social Services Nonprofit Grant of \$36,000. As of 12/31/20, the state account checkbook has \$18,485.30 and the money market has \$351,177.76. The membership account has \$18,726.97 as of 12/31/20.

Dale Siegford made motion to accept the financials. Seconded by Jeannette Kopf and passed unanimously.

Executive Director Report – Sarah has been working on grants with Tempest Tech & Windfall. The travel guide has been an undertaking and discussed adding events by month to our calendar and events section since dates can change quickly during this time. Rebecca said this past year travelers were used to influx and a one month notice for events is a good timeframe. It was confirmed to list events by month for the event but not the days. Sarah will email out a form right away for 2021 events which needs to be returned by Friday, January 29, 2021. With that, the events need to be put on the website as well. Sarah will include a link with her email. Sarah has been on a lot of zoom meetings. She has visited with the Crown of the Continent. They will be reprinting 90,000 and will be asking for funds like last year of \$1,000. Cooperative applications will be opening up. There will be a final discussion with the Executive Board to clear up signing agreements.

Inquiry Report – Rebecca with Corporate Cost Control shared her report with activity from the call center for 2020. They received 2,904 inquires and sent out 4,574 guides. Below is a comparison to years 2018 & 2019.

	2020	2019	2018
Inquiries	2,904	21,000	32,000
Guides	4,574	26,000	38,000

Top sources of inquiries were Southwest Montana website, Glacier Country Partnership, Yellowstone Journal and referrals from MOTBD.

Top interests were History and Ghost Towns, Wildlife Watching, Lewis & Clark Trail and Regional Lodging.

Top states of inquires came from Montana, California, Texas and Washington. Montana has never been #1 but with changes due to COVID-19, data shows more locals are exploring the state.

COVID-19 Discussion – There is some legislation to remove the liability off of businesses if someone gets COVID at that business. The speculation is that once this legislation goes to the Governor, he will sign the bill and then remove the mask mandate.

Legislative Updates

1. Three thousand two Hundred bills have been drafted. If you want to testify on any of the bills, it is recommended that you register by 12 noon the day before.
2. Senate Bill 65 is the legislation that would limit liability to businesses if someone gets COVID at their establishment.
3. Senate Bill 52 would look at how and by whom the Bed Tax is collected. This may bring in more money into the General Fund for the State as Air B&B's and VRBO's would also need to collect the Bed Tax.
4. Senate Bill 73 would funnel 3% of the Bed Tax money (currently going into the general fund) into the towns and counties for property tax relief and infrastructure. Two-thirds would be applied to property tax relief and one-third would be for infrastructure. If people are not in an incorporated city or town the money would go to the county. It is not clear whether Governor Gianforte would approve this bill since his budget would be affected and he is already looking to reduce the state budget by \$100 million.
5. The Governor wants to meet with the Department of Commerce. The Office of Tourism is included in this.

Website, Internet Updates – Katya Peterson from Tempest Technologies gave a report.

1. Katya showed a video entitled, “Augusta in Winter”.
2. Two hundred photos were submitted for the photo contest. The prizes included lodging, restaurants, etc.
3. There were 12 blogs leading up to Christmas. Some of the photos from the contest were used.
4. Tempest has been updating the area pages on the SW Montana website.

Election of Officers - The slate of officers proposed were:

President: Maria Porchevina
Vice President: Jocelyn Dodge
Secretaries: Julie Shelton and Kerri Kumasaka
Treasurer: Julie Schroeder

Sarah called for other nominations three times and hearing none, she closed the nominations. Ross Johnson made a motion to approve the slate of officers and Mike Mergenthaler seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

Other Business – Opportunity funds are available, and Maria shared the idea of promoting filming in Southwest Montana as it was discussed at the Executive Board Meeting. Having a resource list with possible locations, props, people, equipment, etc. could benefit everyone. Sarah will try to set up a Zoom call with Allison with the Montana Film Commission. Sarah and Maria have discussed sending our old guides to tour operators.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be on February 18, 2021 at 10am via Zoom.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:40am.

Minutes by Julie Shelton