

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting
February 24, 2022**

Participants: Sarah Bannon (SW Montana Executive Director), Rick Graetz, Rebecca Jones, Victor Sample, Pam Sample, Mary Johnston, Linda Brown, Andrea Opitz, Jeanette Kopf, Jocelyn Dodge, Maria Porchervina, Mike Mergenthaler, Lisa Bracco, Becky DiGiovanna, Jan Thorne, Susan Ovitt, Tia Metzger, Gail Plovanic, Tammy Mattson, Isabelle Bonney, Chiara Schober, Melanie Sanchez, Milo Root, Ruth Moen & Kerri Kumasaka

Minutes – The meeting minutes from the January Board Meeting were approved.

Public Comment – Someone asked about Cloud Bed (a reservation system) and a discussion ensued.

Financial Report – Sarah shared the financial report. There was a budget increase this year (to \$781,493.42. Some projects were held over due to COVID. There is currently \$25,586.67 in the membership account. The financial report was approved.

Executive Director Report

1. Dan from Certified Folders needs more birding brochures. More will be printed.
2. The travel guides will be late due to paper shortage. Will come out in late-April. Usually come out in February. Sarah suggests we do the brochure exchange in May. We received a waiver from the state to not have to use recycled paper. The cost of this would've been \$30,000 more.

Call Center Report - Rebecca Schmitz from Corporate Cost Control was not present so Sarah shared some information.

1. Most of the leads have come from Yellowstone Journal.
2. The top five interests were:
 - a. History and Ghost Towns
 - b. Lewis and Clark Trail
 - c. Wildlife Viewing
 - d. Lodging
 - e. Rock Hounding
3. From July to January the states from which we had the most inquiries were:
 - a. Texas
 - b. California
 - c. Florida
 - d. Ohio
4. We are getting good results from True West and Birder's Digest

Tourism Advisory Council and Brand MT (Formerly the Office of Tourism) Update

1. The Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) just met. They are updating their rules and regulations and are making changes to the marketing plan. The Governor appoints people to the TAC. They oversee how the Bed Tax dollars are spent and meet every quarter.
2. There are some films and TV shows that have been and are being filmed in the area. Jocelyn was the location manager for a film called, "Last Survivors." The film was shot in Butte and was a lower budget film (1.1 million). Two thirds of this money stayed in Butte. The film premiered two weeks ago at the Mother Lode. The film can be seen on Amazon Prime and Dish on Demand. Butte instituted a film permit process which can be seen on the Butte-

Silverbow website. 1883 (the prequel for Yellowstone) will be filming in Nevada City. "Big Sky" is a series set in Helena. It premieres tonight at 8 pm on ABC. They filmed mainly in British Columbia.

Governor's Conference on Tourism – will be held in Billings April 17 – 19.

Website Update – Linda Brown from Tempest gave a report:

1. Tempest is working on the redesign of the website. The redesign should be done by June 1. They are working with Rick to incorporate some of his photographs.
2. They have been making videos with the theme "Tasting Tourism" – these focus on breweries and distilleries in SW Montana (and Central Montana).
3. Some of the top places people are going to on the website are: Yellowstone to Glacier, Rock Hounding, Haunted Places, Places to Visit and Order a Travel Planner. Someone asked how many travel guides are left. There are currently about 16,000.
4. Social Media: There was an Elf on the Shelf project in December on Instagram where they showed an elf in different locations in SW Montana.

Cooperative Marketing Grants – will be due next month.

March Retreat

1. The format of this will be to create some itineraries to keep people in this area longer. Pam Gosink will be asked to facilitate the retreat. She was the Director of Sales at the Best Western in Helena and worked for Travel Montana. In addition, she was the Executive Director for the MT Dude Ranch Association and she led Super Host trainings.
2. Some other possible issues to discuss at the retreat: regional partnerships, researching own areas, connecting the gateway communities, getting information into the Yellowstone gift shops, marketing which offers people alternatives to Yellowstone and Glacier.

Membership Committee

1. They are looking at making the membership form easy and also having an intranet sight. Sarah and Maria to talk with Shawn about creating a log on for the membership site.

By-laws Committee

1. Jocelyn and Mike Strang are on the By-laws Committee. They would like others to join the committee. Tami volunteered.

Brochure Exchange – Moved to May.

Photography – We are getting great photos from Rick. Please send photos from events and activities to Katja at Tempest. The colors red, yellow and blue pop in photos and we don't want to have any brand names in the pictures. There are some guidelines on the website. We could bring a list of ideas for photos to the retreat.

Election of Officers – The following slate of officers was approved:

President: Jocelyn Dodge

Vice President: Andrea Opitz

Co-Secretaries: Tammy Madsen and Kerri Kumasaka

Treasurer: Julie Schroeder

Presentation by Rick Graetz, U of M Community Outreach – Rick shared about the project he is working on to profile each of the communities in southwest Montana. He showed pictures and talked

about the Crown of the Continent. Some of the things he shared: There are 238 miles of the Continental Divide and most of it is in southwest Montana. One of the oldest trails is in southwest Montana (the Great Northern Trail). McDonald Pass is the southern-most part of the Crown of the Continent. There is a 13 mile long limestone "Chinese Wall" which can be accessed from Augusta. He would like to see overpasses and underpasses on the highway to create one gigantic wildlife corridor which would have economic benefits.

Community Events and Updates - Events and activities in the various communities were announced.

Next meeting – The next meeting will be the Visit Southwest Montana Retreat on March 24, 2022 at The Forge in Anaconda.