

**Southwest Montana  
General Board Meeting  
September 22, 2022**

Participants: Participants: Maria Pochervina, Jocelyn Dodge, Linda Brown, Katya Peterson, Melanie Sanchez, Melissa Mjelde, Mary Johnston, Tim Pool, Steve Hill, Vic Sample, Tia Metzger, Lynne Roland, Patrick Fox, Jennifer Fox, Andrea Opitz, Sarah Bannon and Kerri Kumasaka

**1. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- a. Maria made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the last General Board Meeting, Andrea seconded the motion and the motion passed.

**2. Financial Report – Sarah**

- a. Sarah reported that the balance in the money market is \$831,506.37 and the general checking account has \$45,715.80. In the membership account there is \$24,065.82.
- b. Sarah feels there might be a discrepancy in what SW Montana received and that some of the money might have been meant for Butte.
- c. Mary made a motion to approve the financial report. The motion was seconded and the motion passed.

**3. Executive Board Report - Sarah**

- a. Sarah handed out the travel guide and asked everyone to let her know if they wanted to make any changes. Please get any changes to Sarah by Wednesday. Would like to have the photos in the same quality.
- b. Also looking for photos for social and website. Send these to Sarah too.
- c. Jocelyn and Sarah met with Rhea to discuss how State Parks is moving to Outdoor Recreation. They will be handling fishing access sites, film permitting, etc. They want to have consistency with their website information and the information on the SW Montana website. The SW Montana Travel guide is being reorganized to include the fishing access sites.
- d. The State wants to do 5, 10 and 20 year plans, and as a part of this, they are doing a Resiliency Plan with the Coraggio firm – Dax will share more about this in his presentation.
- e. There was some discussion about how Boulder Creek Lodge is not getting the SW Montana Guides with Certified Folders.

**4. Call Center Report**

- a. From Memorial Day to Labor Day these were the number of inquiries:

2020	895
2021	2,098
2022	3,380

- b. In this same time period these were the number of guides distributed:

2020	1,437
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2021 3,231

2022 3,670

- c. The top states where the inquiries were coming from were: Florida, California, Texas, Wisconsin, Illinois, Washington, Minnesota, Ohio, Montana and Pennsylvania.
- d. Top interests were: History and Ghost Towns, Wildlife Watching, Lewis and Clark Trail, Area Hot Springs, Regional Lodging, General Family Activities, Rock Hounding, Hiking/Biking, Camping and Fishing.
- e. Top Sources: Yellowstone Journal, SW MT Website, Glacier Park, True West, Previous SW MT guides, In-house EES Referrals, Brand MT, SE Montana, Destination Missoula.

## **5. Presentation by Dax Schieffer – Voices of Montana Tourism**

- a. Voices of Montana Tourism is a 501(c)(3).
- b. They don't do any lobbying just education. The Travel Association does have a lobbyist.
- c. Travel in Montana started 100 years ago, ever since the railroad came in. Only the rich could travel initially and this changed in the 60's with the improvement of highways. This democratized travel and more people could travel.
- d. In the 1950's to 70's Montana was losing their market share in tourism to other states. In 1987, a 4% bed tax was create to promote Montana tourism. It has been effective. Bed tax is now 8%. 4% of this goes to State Tourism Programs (\$55.8 million), 3% (\$41.9 million) to the General Fund and 1% (\$13.9 million) to Montana's historical assets.
- e. Part of the money for Montana's historical assets is going to the MT Historical Society to build a new facility. If people are interested in a hard hat tour on a Friday contact Dax.
- f. Dax showed some statistics on the spending from non-resident tourists in SW Montana. Although the travel industry has not recovered nationally, there is an increase in travel in Montana and in 2021 there was a full recovery. More Montanans are getting out, and more bed tax is being collected.
- g. Looking at travel as an export, International visitors spent \$233 billion here in the US while US residents spent \$182 outside of the country so this is a \$51 billion surplus.
- h. Tourism is the leading industry in Montana.
- i. Dax also talked about the attitudes of Montana residents towards tourism. More Montana residents are feeling the state is becoming overcrowded.
- j. Dax shared about the Tourism Solutions Roundtable. They met to talk about the funds balance surplus in the Commerce Department. They brainstormed some ideas on what to do with the surplus:
  - 1) More money for successful areas of commerce
  - 2) To develop program support for grant recipients
  - 3) Invest in more research tools and more access to these
  - 4) Initiative to help Eastern Montana
  - 5) Promoting business travel. Increasing conventions beyond the 7 major cities
  - 6) Support the CVBs and regions
  - 7) Invest in new highway welcome signs
- k. Dax talked about the Resiliency Plan –There is a push for the state to adopt a larger strategic plan. The Coraggio Group is working on a Resiliency Plan which can help set up a future strategic plan.
- l. He also talked about MT Travel Association – modeled after the US Travel Association. There are 11 board members and Dax is the administrator. They are hiring a lobbyist.
- m. Dax shared his contact information: Dax Schieffer, PO Box 1306, Helena, MT 59624, 406-624-6617.

**6. Introductions and Announcements** – Attendees introduced themselves and announced various activities in their area.

**7. Marketing Updates**

- a. Tia went over the performance of the media campaign for FY22. Ads were placed in: the Glacier County Travel Guide (Partnership), Destination Missoula Guide, Yellowstone Journal and True West Magazine. In addition, Facebook and Instagram Ads were also placed.
- b. Tia also went over the campaign for FY23.
- c. Someone asked a question about whether we should be targeting the international audiences. We are working with the state and two coops we could look at are: Great American West and Brand USA. We don't have the funds to do our own international advertising.
- d. Travel guide schedule:
  - 1) Photo call: October
  - 2) Display ad deadline: September 30
  - 3) Listing deadline: September 30
  - 4) Choosing cover: November Board Meeting
  - 5) Projected ship date: February 2023
- e. Marketing projects:
  - 1) Ghosts: Need to submit soon.
  - 2) Creative refresh: banner and print ads. Refreshing the visuals for "The Rest is History"
  - 3) Glaciers to Geysers
  - 4) Continental Divide Map Itineraries
  - 5) Film Page

**8. Website**

- a. Katya announced there has been a 27% increase in traffic. Highest age groups going to the site are 35 to 44 and over 50. About ½ and ½ are male and female. 63.3% are mobile users. 89.82% are US visitors and 10.18% are global visitors. The top states are: MT, CA, WA, UT, CO, AZ, TX, NY, ID. Average time people are spending on various pages is:
  - Homepage: 1:31 minutes
  - Blog on Ghost Town Terror: 4:51 minutes
  - Events: 1:14 minutes
  - Order a Travel Planner: 2:04 minutes
  - Glacier to Yellowstone: 2:32 minutes
- b. Tempest is working on a location database.
- c. SW Montana has 68,386 followers on Facebook (7 to 10% increase this year).
- d. Airport displays in Butte and Helena are doing well.
- e. Katya showed a video from the "Drink it in" series featuring the Stonehouse Distillery in Winston. Next they will do a film about the brewery in Townsend.

**9. Katya showed off her newly acquired auctioneer skills and auctioned off a bag of popcorn for \$7!!!**

**The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on October 27 in Townsend.**