

Southwest Montana General Board Meeting November 17, 2022

Participants In-Person: Participants: Maria Pochervina, Jocelyn Dodge, Jeanette Kopf, Mary Johnston, Vic Sample, Becky DiGiovanna, Gay Rossow, Chelsea Paschall, Eve Byron, Bruce Binkowski, John O'Donnell, Dave Wyrick, Debbie Carlstrom, Callie Ashim, Lynn Folland, Sarah Bannon and Kerri Kumasaka

Call to Order – Jocelyn called the meeting to order at 10:38 am.

Introductions - Attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of the Minutes – A motion was made by Jeanette to approve the meeting minutes from the September 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Gay and the motion passed.

Financial Report – So far the expenses have been \$21,586.15 which is 2.5% of the total budget. As of 10/31/22, there was \$24,065.82 in the Membership checking account. Maria made a motion and Andrea seconded the motion to approve the financial report. The motion passed.

Executive Director Report

1. Sarah reported that Windfall is working on the travel guide, and that today the group will be choosing the cover.
2. Everything is in for the audit.
3. We will be discussing forming a membership committee later.
4. Frontline Tour is being planned for the spring.
5. Jan Stoddard has more money for research which needs to be spent by the end of December. She is working with the Regions and CVB's.
6. LOCL – is a joint venture with the State creating dashboards for us. This will do well for individuals and businesses. Need to make sure you update your Google listings and Google Maps.
7. Coraggio Group is working on the Resilience Plan which is another joint venture with the State.

Call Center Report

1. Experian is getting out of the tourism business so the State has an RFP out for another call center. The call center makes a big difference. Their contract with Southwest Montana ends on February 28, 2023, so we will need to find another company to do this before then. If anyone has any ideas, please let Sarah know.
2. From January to October, there have been 10,294 inquiries with 11,883 guides sent out. The highest number of inquiries have come from Yellowstone Journal, the Southwest MT website and the Glacier Country Partnership.
3. The top five interests (for October and Year-to-date) were: History/Ghost Towns, Wildlife Viewing, Hot Springs, Lodging and Lewis and Clark Trail.
4. The states we had the most inquiries from (for October): Florida, Texas, California, Minnesota, Montana and Pennsylvania. Year-to-date: Texas, Florida, California, Wisconsin, Illinois and Washington.

Website

1. The film site is live now on the website.
2. First edit was done on the filming of the Canyon Ferry Brewery.
3. The elf (Tana) will be on again. Her name comes from the last part of Mon-tana.
4. Keep sending in events for the website. Need pictures to go with the listings.
5. Someone asked about whether the update suggestions for the State website (made at the meeting in Anaconda) had been completed. Doesn't look like these updates have happened yet.

Other Business

1. There was some discussion about how the new legislative session may affect tourism.
2. The impact of films on tourism was also discussed. A suggestion was made to have a link on our website giving the locations of where different films were shot.
3. The question was raised about whether a membership committee should be formed. Such a committee could write a letter about what Southwest Montana can do for various businesses. Everyone was encouraged to think about 3 reasons that it is beneficial to be a part of Southwest Montana.
4. It was also suggested that a meeting be set up in December either by Zoom or in-person to discuss strategic planning for 2023.

Windfall Report

1. The media plan was discussed. It was proposed that placements be made in Oh, Ranger (Yellowstone and Glacier guides), the Southeast Montana travel guide, True West, Bird Watchers, Destination Film Guide, Yellowstone Journal, Brand USA Inspiration Guide, Brand USA Canadian Multi-Channel, Facebook and Instagram, as well as joint ventures with Brand MT with placements in Sojern, Jun Group and Teads. Jeanette made a motion to approve the media plan. Andrea seconded the motion and the motion passed.
2. Cover Design – Windfall presented five options for the cover of the Southwest Montana Travel Guide. Goals for the cover: that visitors pick them up and be inspired and want to flip through them, the cover photo location should be somewhere safe and accessible, the photo should feel iconic to the region, and the cover should also be timeless and vibrant. Only the top 1/3 of the cover will be seen in racks. The group decided on the cover design.

Voices of Montana

1. Dax Schieffer shared that the Montana Travel Association is meeting two times per week. They have adopted by-laws and have an RFP out for a lobbyist.
2. There are some general threats to funding for tourism.
3. There is proposed legislation to change the Tourism Advisory Council from 12 members to 9 member, to raise the tax credit limit for filming from \$12 million to \$30 million, to create an annual fee for electric vehicles – to help cover road improvement costs, and other legislation which might affect tourism.

Resiliency Plan – Coraggio Group

1. Ninwa Hanna and Jennifer Grey-O'Connor from the Coraggio group collected information from the group to be incorporated into a resiliency plan.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on February 23, 2023 in Butte or Anaconda.