

**Southwest Montana
General Board Meeting
April 20, 2023
Pen Center, Deer Lodge**

Attendees: Sarah Bannon, Jocelyn Dodge, Maria Pochervina, Linda Brown, Bruce Binkowski, Rachael Brug, Becky DiGiovanna, Lynn Foland, Steve Hill, Mary Johnston, Melissa Mjelde, Gay Rossow, Vic Sample, Melanie Sanchez, Elaine Schnell, Chiara Schober, Julie Schroder, Dale Siegford, Mike Strang, Suzanne Tarkulich, Dave Wyrick

1. **Meeting Minutes** – Maria Pochervina made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting. Chiara Schober seconded the motion. Motion Passed.
2. **Public Comment** – No public comment
3. **Financial Report** - Sarah Bannon, Executive Director, made her financial report. Becky DiGiovanna moved to accept the financial report. Dale Siegford seconded the motion. Motion passed.
4. **Executive Director Report**
 - a. Southwest Montana is sponsoring a trip to Augusta and Lincoln on May 4, 2023. A motor coach has been hired for the trip. Attendees can gather at the Butte Chamber of Conference at 6:45am and at the Helena Comfort Inn at 8:00am. Everyone is welcome to join the trip. Please let Sarah know if you planning to go.
 - b. Sarah gave a recap of the Calgary Outdoors Show. There was a lot of interest in:
 - a. Motorcycle trips
 - b. Skiing
 - c. Camping/Hiking
 - d. Campground information
 - e. Bags with the Southwest Montana region maps (Maria's idea)
5. **Call Center Report** - The Butte Chamber Call Center is operational – with gratitude to Julie Schroder for helping with the transition to the Butte Chamber. Leads generated by the call center will be qualified by Windfall. Those with a true interest in visiting the area will be sent a Southwest Montana Travel Guide.
6. **Lima Rest Area Brochure Racks** – Mike Strang distributed a diagram of the design of the new Brochure Racks. They will be made of pine with cutouts allowing more of the Travel Guides to be seen. Jocelyn suggested that plexi-glass plates could be used in the cutouts. Mary Johnston moved that the Brochure Rack design be approved with a \$1000 cap on the cost. Dale Siegford seconded the motion. Motion passed.
7. **Chocolate Trail:** Gay Rossow reported that the Chocolate Trail start will be the Monday before Memorial Day. Lynn Foland, Windfall, is working on the design of the Chocolate Trail passports. The Chocolate Trail will open right before Memorial Day. Merchandise (tee shirts, etc.) will be used for prizes for the participants. Because of the passports, new stops cannot be added after the Chocolate Trail starts. In the future if we go to electronic passports there is the possibility of being able to add stops after the start of the event.
8. **Book Store Trail:** Rachael Brug reported that 19 stores state wide (7 of them in the Southwest Montana Region) have already committed to participate. Rachael has been developing QR codes

for the passports that can be used for feedback. Sarah will develop percentage of stores participating in each region and reach out to the other regions to see if they will join in funding/promoting the event. Mike Strang moved to allocate up to \$4000 for the project. Steve Hill seconded the motion. The motion passed.

9. **Hospitality Service Training Videos:** Mary Johnston, project Chair, held a zoom meeting to begin the process. The committee discussed creating a series of 10-15 minutes videos that can be viewed by area hospitality employees as time allows. Most of the videos will be general hospitality service training. There will be at least one video that covers local attractions and services.
10. **Legislative Updates –** Maria Porchovina reported:
 - a. Funding to increase film development looks promising
 - b. The bill to divert tourism funds to businesses has been revamped to a smaller amount
 - c. There is a bill to take .03% of bed tax money to reimburse hotels, inns, etc. that are used to shelter victims of abuse, trafficking, etc.
11. **Windfall Update –** Lynn Foland from Windfall gave an update. Windfall is working on the Southwest Montana bags with the region map, the Chocolate Trail, the Ghost Trail and are planning photo shoots. They are looking for bids from photographers.
12. **Website Update –** Linda Brown from Tempest gave an update: they are focused on the website
 - YouTube Shorts videos
 - Videos on the major social media sites
 - They are working on the Continental Divide Trail
 - Local and BrandMT joint project is focused on local area business
 - Crowdriff Local Stories is focused on local stories of the area
13. **FY2024 Marketing Plan and Budget -** Sarah Presented the marketing plan and budget. The budget for FY2024 is \$966,721. The Executive Board recommended approval of the budget by the Southwest Montana Board. Dale Siegford moved to accept the budget. Steve Hill Seconded the motion. Motion Passed
14. **FY2023 End of Year Budget:** Sarah reported that Southwest Montana had received an unexpected additional \$70,000 that needs to be committed to the FY2023 End-Of-Year spending. She went over the increased fund allocations. Maria Porchovina moved to accept the new EOY Budget. Dale Siegford seconded the motion. Motion passed.
15. **Community Updates/Events –** people shared about events and happenings in their areas.
16. **Next Meetings:** On May 4th there will be a trip to Augusta and Lincoln. At that time we will discuss a possible June meeting.