

**Southwest Montana  
General Board Meeting – Via Zoom  
September 27, 2023  
Butte, MT**

**Attendees:** Sarah Bannon, Callie Aschim, Bruce Binkowski, Sam Brigham, Linda Brown, Rachael Brug, Becky DiGiovanna, Jocelyn Dodge, Lynne Foland, Mary Johnston, Rebecca Jones, Alicia Morley, Andrea Opitz, Katya Peterson, Maria Porchervina, Gay Rossow, Vic Sample, Elaine Schnell, Chiara Schober, Julie Schroeder, Mike Strank, and Dave Wyrick

**NOTE MEETING DATE CHANGE:** The October 18 meeting has been moved to November 1. Site yet to be determined.

1. **Meeting Minutes** – Rebecca Jones move to accept the minutes. Minutes were approved.
2. **Public Comment** – None.
3. **Financial Report** - Executive Director Sarah Bannon presented the financial report.
  - a. Checkbook as of 9/21/23: \$3204
  - b. Money Market as of 9/21/23: \$597,622
  - c. Membership Funds as of 8/31/23: \$597,622
  - d. Cooperative Marketing Grants: \$15,000 available. We currently have 3 grant requests totalling \$6,371.67

Vic Sample moved to accept the Financial Report; Gay Rossow seconded. Motion Passed.

**4. Executive Director Report**

- a. There currently are 3 Cooperative Marketing Grants
  - a. Boulder Chamber of Commerce for I-15 Billboard : \$2000
  - b. Discover Anaconda for Trails and Tourism Map: \$ \$1,971.67
  - c. Helena Tourism Alliance for podcast: \$2,400.00The Executive Board approved the 3 Cooperative Marketing Grants
- b. Update on the Lewis & Clark Trail
- c. Update on the Chocolate Trail
- d. Corragio Group will make a presentation on the Resiliency Strategic Plan
- e. Sarah stated that SWMT is extremely busy and she is asking for approval to move forward with hiring another SWMT employee. She currently has 2 pages of projects and there is just not enough time to get them all done. The membership felt that Sarah should put together a job description for the new position so everyone could see what the work would be.

Mike Strang moved that a committee be formed to discuss the proposed position. Rebecca Jones seconded the motion. Motion Carried. The Executive Board will act as the committee.

- f. There was a discussion of the new proposed Passenger Railroad and the possible routes
- g. There was a discussion of a Travel Writers Group
- h. There was a discussion of the Glaciers to Geysers: Jim ward is taking photos of a motorcycle rally. The photos are due by December
- i. Discussion of an “unpaved” motorcycle rally route
- j. The Anaconda Wildlife Art Auction was a very successful event – Katya Petersen was the auctioneer!
- k. Eve Byron of the Montana Historical Society told Sarah the new Museum would open in 2025

I. Jocelyn Dodge attended a meeting of the University Board of Regents and discussed offering hospitality classes and internships

5. **Call Center Report** - Elaine Schnell gave the call center report. Maria, Elaine and Sarah reported that there was a lot of problems with getting the phone system started while retaining the phone number.
  - a. Inquiries to the Call Center: 7706 YTD
  - b. The top 10 states that inquirers were from: Florida, Texas, California, Wisconsin, Illinois, Washington, Ohio, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Idaho. Montana had the highest number of inquiries
  - c. The top 10 interests: Rock Hounding, History/Ghost Towns, wildlife viewing, regional lodging, Lewis and Clark Trail Sites, Hot Springs, general family activities, hiking/biking, camping and fishing.
  - d. The top 4 sources: Southwest Website, Yellowstone Journal, Glacier County partnership, Southwest Travel Guide
6. **Travel Guide Update** – Everyone urged to check their community listings and get corrections/updates in by Oct. 15
7. **Chocolate Trail:** Gay Rossow reported they need more feedback on the event. There were 23 participants in the Chocolate Trail. She felt we needed more targeted marketing. We should add the Chocolate Trail to the Travel Guide
8. **Book Trail** – Rachael reported that she has formed a 501(c3) non-profit organization in order to make it easy to apply for grants. She has a 3 member board. There were 112 people that filled out surveys on the Book Trail experience. She also reported that 6-7 more book stores statewide are planning to join next year's event.
9. **Website Update** – Katya Petersen of Tempest Technologies gave the Website Update.
  - a. They have added photos and writeups of all the stops on the Chocolate Trail
  - b. There were 33,000 visits in 15 months. The average page time was very good.
  - c. Across the state there is a website promoting Montana Beer and Spirits. The website has prominent links to Southwest Montana.
  - d. They have posted a great video of the Augusta Rodeo
10. **Windfall** – Lynn Foland reported on:
  - a. Chocolate Trail promotional items
  - b. Improving the Ghost Map and website
  - c. They have created a 12' by 12' foot light box for display at Trade Shows.
  - d. 2024 Guide Schedule – listing deadline ASAP
  - e. TV Spots: There are 4 30 second tv spots and 1 15 second spot
11. **Cooperative Marketing** – Three cooperative marketing grants were approved by the Executive Board for a total of \$6,371.67
  - a. Boulder Chamber of Commerce: I-15 billboard (\$2000)
  - b. Discover Anaconda: Trails and Tourism Map (\$1971.67)
  - c. Helena Tourism Alliance (\$2400)
12. **Corragio Group** – Corragio Group made a presentation on the proposed Southwest Montana Resiliency Strategic plan Project
13. **Next Meeting:** The Oct 18 meeting has been moved to Nov 1 to allow planning for the proposed new job position.