

**Southwest Montana  
General Board Meeting  
November 29, 2023  
Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:** Sarah Bannon, Callie Ashim, Bruce Binkowski, Megan Bland, Rachael Brug, Becky DiGiovanna, Jocelyn Dodge, Lynn Foland, Mary Johnston, Rebecca Jones, Kerri Kumasaka, Tia Metzger, Andrea Opitz, Susan Ovitt, Brendan Pendergast, Katya Petersen, Heather Phillips, Maria Pochervina, Vic Sample, Mike Strang, Elaine Schnell, Chiara Schober, Julie Schroder, Dale Siegford, Dave Wyrick

1. **Meeting Minutes Sept 23, 2023**, – Mike Strang moved to accept the minutes; Bruce Binkowski Seconded. Minutes were approved.
2. **Public Comment** – No Public Comment
3. **Financial Report - Executive** Director Sarah Bannon presented the financial report. At the November 1, 2023, meeting, Executive Director Sarah Bannon was authorized to investigate and move funds in our money market account to a higher paying account. Sarah reported that we are currently earning 3.56% on over \$500,000 in our money market account.

Sarah reported that Racene at Glacier Country is looking at a new program that may give us a better yield. Andrea Opitz stated that that program is through the Federal Reserve Bank and is offering both higher interest rates and a higher level of insurance than the FDIC. Sarah is discussing this program with Racene and will report back as it is better understood.

Dale Siegford moved to accept the Financial Report; Maria Pochervina seconded. Motion Passed

Sarah will work with the Executive Board on investing the money market funds.

**5. Executive Director Report**

- a. Sarah Bannon and Maria Pochervina attended a travel writer's conference in Butte that went well. Many good connections were made.
- b. The new PR Manager position is now open. The job search is being managed by Togethr Consulting out of Bozeman. They have already received eight applications. Togethr Consulting will screen the applicants and pass on the candidates meeting our minimum criteria.

The applicants must live in the Southwest Montana Region and be able to travel. The PR will be expected to be in Deer Lodge 1-2 days a week. Sarah estimated that the job will require at least 40% travel with peak travel in the peak tourism period.

A subset of the Executive Committee will be formed to interview the candidates and select the new PR Manager

6. **Call Center Report** - Elaine Schnell reported that phone system is finally working. However, this is our slow season and not many calls are coming in. Elaine stated that she has gotten great feedback on the Southwest Montana website.

Sarah reported that she has been receiving leads from the Yellowstone Journal

Elaine reported that she worked with Rebecca (from Experian) on sending Travel Guides out of the country. Elaine reported that sending the Travel Guides out of county is very expensive – a guide sent to Belgium is over \$20.00. Rebecca gave Elaine a contact that specializes in sending material internationally that is much cheaper than doing it directly.

Mike Strang reported that there has been a lot of traffic at the Lima Rest Area.

**7. Tempest Website Update** – Katya Petersen presented three “You Tube Shorts” videos that Tempest

is creating:

- Great Northern Carousel (Helena)
- Montana’s Birthday
- Yule Night in Philipsburg

Jocelyn Dodge asked Katya about creating a Rodeo Page highlighting the Southwest Montana Rodeos. Jocelyn found that there are 12 NRA Rodeos in Southwest Montana.

**8. Windfall Update** – Lynn Foland presented the 4 Travel Guide covers being considered for the 2024 Travel Guide.

- Lake Scene
- Stage Coach
- Rodeo Barrel Racer
- Rodeo Bronc Rider

The Southwest Montana Board voted for the Rodeo Bronc Rider (Augusta Rodeo). Windfall was asked if we could put the August Rodeo name on the cover. Windfall will look at doing that; but the photo credit and location are noted inside the Travel Guide.

Tia Troy is meeting with the Augusta Rodeo Photographer after the Southwest Montana Meeting and may have alternate photographs to consider.

**9. Consistent Dates for Southwest Montana Meetings** – Sarah reported that we have been having difficulty finding a consistent date for the Meetings. The Southwest Montana Board decided to set the fourth Tuesday as the meeting date for the months that we have meetings. The next meeting will be January 25, 2024, with the location yet to be determined.