

**Visit Southwest Montana**  
**General Board Meeting – February 27, 2025**  
**Helena Chamber**

Participants: President Rachael Brugg, Vice President Chiara Schobert, Linda Brown, Kehli Hazelett, Treasurer Jeanette Kopf, Rebecca Jones, Andrea Opitz, Ginny Sullivan, Callie Aschim, Jazzlynn Young, Ryan Hannahoe, Mike Strang, Past President Jocelyn Dodge, Jason Burnett, Ty Whitaker, Abbi Whitaker, Haley Burgess, Kerri Kumasaka, Public Relations Manager Maria Pochervina, Executive Director Sarah Bannon

President Rachael Elliot-Brugg called the meeting to order at 1:02. She welcomed everyone and we went around the room and briefly introduced ourselves.

**Public Content:** Ryan Hannahoe, Montana Learning Center, had a handout and talked about the three observatories, 32" optical scope which is the largest in Montana. They have a program with speakers July – September.

Ginny Sullivan, Montana Heritage Center talked about the Area Wide Celebration set right now for June 25-28, 2026. November 2025 will be a lower-level ribbon cutting. They are hiring a marketing person.

**Call Center** - Kehli Hazelett had a handout for the report. In January 240 travel guides were sent out. Top interests were history / ghost towns, wildlife viewing, lodging, and hot springs. They also received several calls that were meant to go to the Copper King Hotel.

**Travel Guide** – Jocelyn Dodge, gave an update and reported that she and Maria had gone through the draft, and they are changing out several photos. Haley Burgess said the biker photo was the top pick by the voters for the travel guide, but all photos were about even in the votes.

Legislative Updates – Sarah, Maria, and Callie Aschim gave the latest updates on the bills. Over 400 bills are to be transmitted by the end of the week. Legislators are quite tapped out right now. Several bills were discussed including bill affecting Commerce, Local Options Tax, Snowmobile Rentals, Short Term Rentals and Cannabis.

**Marketing Agency** – Haley reported for paid media the winter campaign is active. For warm season, they have the match with the state on Spotify, Teads, Pinterest, and online video. Everything meets industry standards. We have pulled back on Canadian Marketing for now because of some negative feedback. This has been happening all over with our Montana partners.

Glaciers to Geysers – we are now current with the hot springs, winter, and motorcycling guides.

Logo Update – They are finishing the travel guide and then, will come out with the new brand book.

Public Relations for Tia Troy – solidifying the itinerary. She went to New York to talk to Media at a conference and got more contacts for writers. Visit Southwest Montana is in the *Cowboys and Indians* magazine; for a Cowboy Mardi Gras. She is working on a St. Patrick's Day writer.

Jocelyn reported on articles on Polaris, "Jewel of Southwest Montana."

Chiara Schobert asked if we do "web crawler" and Tia Troy and Maria do get information. Abbi Whitaker, The Abbi Agency, said they also do "Muckrat".

**Website updates** – Linda Brown, Tempest Technologies, lots of videos have been taken for Alder Gulch, Bannack Ghost Town, and Folk Fest. They were going to do the Boulder Ski Joring, Mother Lode, and Myrna

Loy. They have been helping with the research on the Hospitality / Customer Service Training programs. When the new logo is ready, they will update the website and incorporate with a partial redesign.

They want you to put your events on the website (can do it through the button on the website) and include content, dates, locations and photos and or logos. The sooner the better. Include information on rodeo locations and if you have any new launchings for visitor-related activities.

**Federal Closures** – Jocelyn talked about all the closures and effects that may happen. Forest Service will be having major reduction in workforce. Other public lands as well and with all the uncertainty we will need to know how to educate people on alternative things to do. We will need to know how to provide information to frontline people. We will need to have information on access issues; plans A, B, C; and Recreate Responsibly.

Abbi Whitaker, The Abbi Agency said they do work for the State of New Mexico and have a toolkit that gives information out.

We had several Cooperative Marketing Grant Applications. All were approved for \$2000 or less for a total of \$12,145. We will accept applications again before our March 27<sup>th</sup> meetings.

Bucket List – Maria Pochervina had a handout for us all to fill out on doing a “Bucket List” in our communities.

*Minutes* – Rebecca Jones, moved to approve the minutes that were sent out. Kehli Hazlett seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Sarah had a handout and gave the financial report. Jocelyn moved to accept the report; Kerri Kumasaka seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

**Staff Updates** – Maria talked about the Frontline Tour and going to the Big Hole Battlefield, Bannack, Jackson Hot Springs and other places in the southern side of the region. She will work on a date for the tour. She gave an update on the other things going on in the region and with the state.

Officer Transition Meeting – Wednesday, March 5, at the Butte Archives.

Participants gave updates on events in their communities.

President Rebecca Jones adjourned the meeting at 3:29 pm.

Next meeting is Thursday, March 27, 2025; 1:00 – 3:30 in Butte.