

**Executive Committee Minutes**

The **MISSION** of Visit Southeast Montana is to increase visitors to Southeast Montana by increasing awareness of our region, showcasing our cultural heritage, developing memorable experiences and educating our residents about the economic benefits of tourism. [www.SoutheastMontana.com](http://www.SoutheastMontana.com)

**Tuesday, February 12, 10 a.m.**

Dial Conference number 866-876-1424; Enter Access Code 2945270

**Welcome and establish quorum**

Staff: Brenda Maas & John Brewer

Board: Chip Watts; Jeff Ewelt; Dale Galland; Dan Austin

Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m.

**TAC Research Summit**

Scheduled for Feb. 21 in Helena. Jeff to be there; Brenda will, also.

Chip suggests that ITRR contact lodging facilities about where consumers coming from.

Brenda to survey full Board about the type of research they would like to see.

**Budget Update (Brenda)**

All on track for FY18, to date. VIC grants are still in the mix.

**Travel Guide Update**

Brenda informed Executive Committee that best estimate show approximately 32,000 Travel Guides remain. Additionally, there are issues with a simple reprint, mainly because the majority of photos in the current Travel Guide were purchased (under Mercury contract) for one-time use. Those contracts would have to be re-negotiated – that is a great deal of work.

Brenda suggested using all of the remaining guides and rolling the budget into FY19, minus $10,000 that could be used to purchase multi-use images (in FY18, images to be used in the guide but also on website, in advertising and so on). Then, in July (FY19) create and print guides to last until March of 2020 (using the FY19 budget).

A very lengthy conversation ensued and included:

Dan suggested that most photographers, make them an offer or ask for a price to just own them. He thinks most photogs would appreciate the honest approach and just make an offer to own. Additionally, Dan noted that 85% of travel booked online. “We need to really re-think how these (guides) are used…need to get the website right.”

Chip agreed with less use of printed material. He also noted that 7th Ranch is way ahead of reservations compared to last year. He’s not sure that Certified Folder is best use of funds.

Dan suggested using the CF funds to optimize the website and send Travel Guide only to those who request it (the advance planners).

Jeff agreed with Dan – drastically cut the amount, but, “don’t get rid of it completely.” Makes sense…ZooMontana got rid of brochures and he was worried but it has not affected their numbers.

Chip asked: Should we consider eliminating contracts with Certified Folder and moving the call center work (Mars Stout) inside?

Dan asked: What if we completely got rid of the guide and drove all traffic to the website?

Dale asked: What does Windfall think? They are our agency.

Brenda is able to get Jim/Windfall to join the call and gave him update of conversation.

Jim/Windfall commented: For rural communities, the guide is incredibly important, there are still a lot of people who live offline that are trying to serve.

Dan: In FY17, we only pre-delivered 1,000 guides; I am the one who pushed this.

Jim/Windfall: Regarding demand for Destination Missoula and Glacier Country guides (as comp), the numbers continue to go up. “Telling the other stories is important; honestly, I am a digital guy but I would be nervous about completely getting rid of them (the guides). But I am not a fan of big inventory in racks.” And, regarding new website: “I promise that it will be a good site but I cannot give that recommendation (get rid of guide completely). Organic search is the key. Visit SEMT is lagging behind everyone in the state.”

After further discussion, consensus is to use the remaining guides and for Team Windfall to bring Travel Guide options before the full Board at the April meeting.

**Low-cost/No-cost Marketing Workshop (March 1 & 2)**

Brenda provided an update. Workshop dates and locations are set. Presenters from TripAdvisor, Google and SEMT website/Windfall (VisitMT.com). Information be pushed out.

**Update from Windfall on Sponsorships**

The following purchased “bundle” of 2 maps + microsite: Visit Billings; Visit Glendive; Prairie Unique, Miles City & ZooMontana. Also pitched to: Custer Battlefield Museum; Friends of Pompeys Pillar, Grandview Campground, Yellowstone County Museum, WaterWorks Art Museum and Big Horn County Historical Museum. Also, connecting with Holiday regarding major sponsorship.

**Other**

Change date of March Executive Committee meeting/call to 3/13.

Meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

****

Visit Southeast Montana is managed by the Billings Chamber of Commerce