

**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, March 13, 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

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

**TAC Research Summit:**

Brenda provided a brief report. Dale noted that we need research that we can count on, and that we need information from Windfall and from our entry points (VICs). Chip suggested that we get data from lodging properties, especially to id new markets. John suggested spending time at April Board meeting asking Board for their input: What are proper methods and how do we achieve results? What is most effective and what sort of timeline and expense?

Brenda to put “holder” for Research into FY19 budget and marketing plan.

Budget Update (Brenda)

Tracking along at or near the projections. Megan, Barb and Brenda have tracked revenue closely. It looks like we’ll come in at or near budget. However, there’s lots of time between now and June and we do need to be prepared for a ‘what if’ scenario.

Regarding the VIC grants, Brenda recommended one of these two options:

1. Intentionally carry the $15K VIC budget over into FY19. Modify this year’s grant application to require more reporting from the VICs, including demos on visitors, plus change the timing of the award so that it is funded after the documentation is provided and audit is complete. This transition will be bumpy but after this year, it will be more efficient (Brenda and Megan will not need to chase down docs that are always missing and flagged during the audit).
2. Intentionally carry 50% of the VIC funding into FY19. Basically, fund ½ now and ½ in FY19. However, this process is not as “clean” as option 1.

Either way, Brenda will notify the VICs asap and potentially modify the grant application.

Discussion:

John noted that he does not see the State returning funding to VICs.

Chip: Preferred Option 1 – “I think they can carry the funds…it’s an important part of their budget.”

Jeff: Also Preferred Option 1 – “we need to think about a reserve and look at overall picture.”

Chip noted, “If we do this, we are making a commitment to fund them. This is different than the marketing cooperative grants.”

Dale: “This is a priority; however, we have to have money to cover it. We need to figure where we might take the funds away, in case we do not have it.”

John noted that the VIC funding was approved in the budget.

Dale – made motion for option 1; Jeff provide second motion and it was approved.

**Low-cost/No-cost Marketing Workshops (Brenda)**

Brenda provided report on the March 1 & 2 workshops. There were 15 attendees in Miles City and 19 attendees in Billings. All seemed to find value; Brenda has yet to review all exit surveys. Will use those to guide workshop for next fall.

**Other Updates:**

Rachel VandeVoort, new director of Office of Outdoor Recreation, will be in Billings and Fort Smith/LBBNM next week (March 21 – 23). Brenda has been in contact with Rachel on/off since October and invited her to learn more about the region. This is a great opportunity to showcase the region directly to the Governor.

Dan Brooks has a draft of the Visit SEMT Public Policy from committee to be presented at April Board meeting.

**Board Vacancies**

As per bylaws, Dan to be chair of committee + Dan and then Chip appoint (2) at large and then a past-chair for the committee. There are several open vacancies – to address, initiate the nomination process.

John announced new advertising company via RFP process is BCF advertising out of Virginia Beach, VA.

Jeff (who was on selection committee) noted: “At first I was hesitant…they had not been here. They came here, spent a week here and showcased Billings and showed it from someone who had never been here. It was humbling – we always complain about things like the refinery…such a different viewpoint and made us re-think Billings.”

**Next Call**

Tuesday, April 3 at 10 a.m. to review FY19 Draft Marketing Plan and Budget

Meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

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Visit Southeast Montana is managed by the Billings Chamber of Commerce