**Meeting Minutes for**

**Visit Southeast Montana Board of Directors**

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)

**January 16, 2018 @ 11:00 a.m.**

**Haugo Center**

**483 East Rosebud Street, Forsyth, MT**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Jeff Ewelt, Christine Whitlatch, Sabre Moore, Beth Epley, Glenda Ueland, Doug Haberman, Chip Watts, Dale Galland, Leslie Janshen, Peggy Iba, Dianna Murnion, Shyla Hadley, Dennis Kopitzke

**Staff Present:** John Brewer, Brenda Maas, Michele Flanagan

**Guests**: Beth Frazee (Windfall), Dax Schieffer (MT Tourism), Pat Doyle (Montana State Parks), Nathan Satran (Photographer), Coby Gierke (Montana State Parks), Wayne Challoner (Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument), Shari Robertson (Eastern Plains Economic Development), Doris Pinkerton (City of Forsyth)

Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chip Watts welcomed the group and attendance was called. Mayor Dennis Kipitzke welcomed the group and gave a short overview of Forsyth and updated all on the Custer Circle project.

**Public comments**

Chip Watts called for public comments. No public comment.

**Approval of November 21, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Peggy Iba moved to approve the November 21 minutes. Sabre Moore seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

**Financial Overview**

John Brewer gave a financial overview (variance report and financials, Sept – Dec, 2017). Glenda Ueland moved to approve; Christine Whitlatch seconds. Motion passed. During the discussion John noted that revenue is at budget as staff continues to work closely with the MOTBD to monitor anticipated lodging tax collections. Christine Whitlatch would like to see a future door sign for the Wibaux CVB during the winter months, directing visitors to the Glendive CVB if weather and road conditions were to be an issue for access.

**Strategic Discussion**

**FY19 Marketing Plan and Budget**

Brenda gave update on FY19 marketing plan and budget, anticipating the current $6,500 budget for purchased photos to double in FY19 stressing the importance of video and imagery. Also working to bringing social influencers to the region.

**Partner Presentation**

Pat Doyle (Montana State Parks) presented how Montana State Parks markets the 55 state parks and 7 national historic landmarks, highlighting Parks in Focus – a statewide 12-member panel to ensure the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has the resources, capacity and expertise to implement the Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

**Strategic Goals**

**Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives**

Brenda presented the Marketing Dashboard, including social media statistics, showing an increase in Twitter and Instagram engagements. She also gave quick overview of mini social media campaign, National Plan for Your Vacation Day. Randy Newberg, *Fresh Tracks* has filmed a new series in our region that will be a valuable marketing asset. Brenda updated board on upcoming Northwest Sportshow (Minneapolis) mid-March trade show, focusing on added value, including inviting a representative from FWP to the booth. Beth (Windfall) showed print and digital ad examples. Also updated board of cooperative advertising buys 1) *Distinctly MT* with Glendive and Miles City, 2) *Northwest Travel* withVisitBillings, 3) *True West* magazine with Southeast Montana.

**Develop Marketing Partnerships…outside the region**

Nothing new to report.

**Grow In-Region Partnerships…to connect to constituents**

**Workshops**

Brenda updated Board of no-cost/low-cost marketing workshops for Tourism Partners with tentative date March 1-2. Will update board with details once finalized.

**Support Tourism Product Development**

**LBBNM General Assessment Update**

Brenda and Wayne Challoner (Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument) briefed board of implementation of interim remodel of VIC to address immediate facility and visitor experience needs. Remodel could happen as early as winter of 2018-19.

**Committee/Task Force and Board Reports**

**Private Fund projects**

Beth (Windfall) updated all on microsite progress and provided handouts of latest draft of Scenic Map and finalized rate card.

**Legislative Update/Tourism Matters/Voices**

**Legislative Committee Update**

**Legislative Committee Development**

Brenda shared SEMT Legislative Call Notes

Members on call: Brenda Maas, Sandy Watts, Beth Epley and Dan Brooks

The purpose of the call was to outline some basic priorities and identify additional issues on n SEMT 2019 Public Policy Page. We will work to refine these concepts in order to guide legislative efforts during the 2019 Legislative Session and easily inform lawmakers and the public of SEMT’s positions. The items outlined below require additional vetting/adjustment but serve as a basic foundation for issues the Legislative Advisory Board would like to address.

Priorities:

1. Defending the lodging tax from increase and supporting efforts to reallocate lodging tax dollars from the General Fund to regional tourism.
2. Support funding for State Park infrastructure throughout SEMT.

Additional Issues:

1. Rural telecommunications: this issue broadly affects the business community and tourism partners.
2. TBID: defending the law and ability to create a TBID.
3. Wayfinding Signage: additional efforts/investment especially at points of entry.
4. Workforce training: grants/funding for workforce development, especially related to IT, internet training, etc.

The Committee will bring a proposal for approval to the April meeting.

**Partner Presentation**

Dax Schieffer (Voices of MT Tourism) presented tracked tourism data for 2017. He’s anticipating growth in the visitor economy due to increasing air service, private industry capital investments and strong statewide and regional marketing programs.

**Other announcements**

Christine Whitlatch shared the Glendive CVB is planning to partner with some Windfall products, increase social media and seeing an increase in new entrepreneurial businesses.

Jeff Ewalt shared ZooMontana may have a television broadcasting opportunity in the future as well as some renovations to the entrance and guest visitor center.

Beth Epley shared that Eastern Plains has revolving loan funds and gap funding for new businesses.

Doug Haberman encouraged all to attend MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks meetings.

Dennis Kopitzke encouraged all to promote Forsyth and what it has to offer.

Dianna Murnion stated there has been an increase in goose hunting in Rosebud County.

Sabre Moore shared the Carter County Museum had a 28% increase in attendance overall for the year. Also, the Annual Dino Shindig will be July 28-29.

Dale Galland shared that Terry Badlands was featured in National Geographic last year.

Chip Watts encouraged all to attend Crow Fair 2018.

John Brewer shared the American Airlines direct flight from Billings to Dallas has been successful, and the Billings Chamber of Commerce will continue to work on its community priorities.

Peggy Iba shared their local fair will move to the 3rd weekend in June and downtown Glendive is improving and encouraging tourism. Pamela Harr, artist, is showcasing her Bridger Bronze life-size sculptures.

Leslie Janshen shared Miles City has a new restaurant, Range Riders Bar and Café. Also, the Stache Bash-Bison Bar will be held Saturday, February 17, 2018.

Glenda Ueland shared tourism has improved at Evelyn Cameron Museum.

Shyla Hadley shared Fallon County won Rodeo of the Year for the 3rd year in a row.

**Board Meeting Schedule**

All meetings 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted. All times subject to change.

April 24 (Laurel or Billings – TBD)

June 19 (Broadus)

Meeting Adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Group was invited to view one of the “Custer Circle” signs at the East Rosebud River Access site in Forsyth.