**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)

**November 21 @ 10 a.am.**

**Conference Call**

**Conference Call number: 866-876-1424**

**Access Code: 2945270**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Jeff Ewelt, Christine Whitlatch, Sabre Moore, Beth Epley, Lyn Ohl, Glenda Ueland, Doug Haberman, Chip Watts, Mona Maddler, Dale Galland, Leslie Janshen, John Laney, Peggy Iba, Dan Austin, Nicole Borner, Lyn Ohl, Dianna Murnion

**Staff Present:** John Brewer, Brenda Maas, Michele Flanagan and Megan Stevenson

**Guests**: Jim McGowan, Kyle McGowan, Beth Frazee and Megan Richter (Windfall), Daniel Brooks (Billings Chamber of Commerce), Lana Johnson (Mars Stout), Dax Schieffer (MT Tourism), Steve Wahrlich (Tourism Advisory Council)

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chip Watts welcomed the group and attendance was called.

**Public comments**

Chip Watts called for public comments. Steve Wahrlich commented on the next legislative special session lodging facilities tax. Dax Schieffer expressed appreciation for SEMT’s continued support throughout the region.

**Approval of September 19, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Jeff Ewelt moved to approve the September 19 minutes. Dan Austin seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

**Financial Overview**

Megan Stevenson gave financial overview (variance report and financials, Sept – Oct, 2017). Dale Galland moved to approve; Peggy Iba seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

**MOTBD Projections Update**

Brenda reported the mid-year Projected Revenue Report by MOTBD (verbally provided by Barb Sanem) was 5-10% lower than projected. The budget will be adjusted as needed, being mindful of VIC grant funding. May hold off on these opportunities for now; Brenda to update at next meeting.

**FY18 Unrestricted Funds Budget Update**

Megan Stevenson called attention to the unrestricted (private) funds budget, noting the updated budget changes based upon Windfall’s revenue proposal. SEMT unrestricted funds will cover the balance of ~$15,262 for Administration budget that exceeds the allowable 20%. Chip Watts commented the unrestricted fund projects, 1) Corporate Sponsorship; 2) Gateway micro-site (to Visit SEMT website); and 3) Tear-off maps – total of 2, are projected to make money and therefore should move forward. Jeff Ewelt moved to approve the unrestricted fund projects, Sabre Moore seconded. Motion passed.

**Strategic Discussion**

**Corporate Sponsorship**

Brenda and Team Windfall update on unrestricted fund projects. Jim McGowen reported 6 or so solid prospects for corporate sponsorship. Will update board at next meeting.

**Micro-site for Visit SEMT Website**

Team Windfall updated board on micro-site showing drafts (provided in separate attachment) using updated photography and new campaign. Chip Watts commented he likes the looks of it and appreciates the user-friendly design. Peggy Iba reminded Team Windfall that Glendive is interested in corporate sponsorship. Sabre Moore commented that names of locations should be incorporated with each picture used on the micro-site. Brenda and Megan Richter (Windfall) will look into this, noting it was a good idea.

**Tear-off Maps**

Team Windfall updated board on tear-off maps showing drafts (provided in separate attachment). Steve Wahrlich suggested more surrounding states on the scenic map. Chip Watts suggested having Cody & Sheridan, MT along with the Black Hills on the map. John Brewer pointed out the inset of the whole U.S. map in the lower right-hand corner could be larger vs. adding additional states. Brenda and Team Windfall noted there will be two maps; 1) Scenic and 2) Historical. Both maps will have different criteria with some (minimal) overlap. The goal being that each region has some representation. Chip Watts encouraged board members to take a hard look at their regions and report to the committee put in place per last board meeting (Sabre Moore, Shyla Hadley, Mona Madler, Dale Galland and Glenda Ueland) with suggestions as to what best represents their county on the maps.

**STRATEGIC GOALS**

**Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives** Team Windfall presented web-site update. Including budget, timeline and deliverables. Micro-site to launch mid-December and full Website to launch mid-March.

**View Creative**

Megan Richter (Windfall) updated board of creative examples (provided in separate attachment), stating SEMT has a $6,500 photo budget and the importance of updated, fresh photos with a new campaign. Brenda stated all photos in SEMT’s library have been shared with Windfall.

**Marketing Update**

Brenda reports SEMT has hosted several FAM tours. International markets are focused on the relationships. A state fund media tour may be happening in the future. Randy Newberg, *Fresh Tracks* is still a valuable marketing asset. Team Windfall will tie all of this together with the new campaign.

**Trade Show Update**

Brenda updated board on Minneapolis mid-march trade show, focusing on added value. Added value being; 1) FWP representative to accompany; 2) host a seminar with a panel of others from the surrounding region; 3) connect with the media (possibly radio).

**Develop Marketing Partnerships…outside the region**

No report at this time.

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

Brenda noted that she is developing a no-cost/low-cost marketing workshop for Tourism Partners. Looking at mid-January. Will update board with details once finalized.

**Support Tourism Product Development**

John reported the General Management Plan Amendment / Environmental Assessment for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument has been released and is available for review. Michele Flanagan to email details to board.

**Committee/Task Force and Board Reports**

**Legislative Update/Tourism Matters/Voices**

Dan Brooks updated board that Special Session began Monday November 13th and concluded Thursday, November 16th. Approximately a dozen bills were passed to address the $227 million revenue shortfall and included:

* $94 million in fund transfers
* $76 million in budget cuts
* $60 million in fees/furloughs/prison funds (below)
  + $30 million fee to certain State Fund accounts (State Fund filed suit)
  + $15 million mandatory furloughs (Governor vetoed)
  + $15 million from private prison (w/ option to take up to $30 million)

Dan testified at the hearing on lodging and rental car tax increases and distributed the letter from SEMT stating favorability to a 1% increase to lodging and rental car taxes, with the additional provisions:

* tax increase is temporary, ending by Dec 31, 2019
* earmarks additional revenue specifically to cover firefighting costs
* prompts Dept. of Revenue to enforce lodging tax remittance from Airbnb
* honors existing contracts established by vendors

The lodging and rental car tax increase bill was tabled in committee.

**Other announcements**

Christine Whitlatch shared on 11-25 there will be a Lights Parade at 7:00 p.m. in downtown Glendive.

John Laney thanked all for their “well wishes”.

Suggestions that future meetings with creative content be done in person. The board to think on that.

**Board Meeting Schedule**

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

January 16 (Forsyth)

April TBD (Laurel or Billings) – note conflict with Governor’s Conference

June 19 (Broadus)

Meeting Adjourned at 11:27 a.m.