**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)

**April 24, 2018 @ 10:00 a.m.**

**Best Western Yellowstone Crossing**

**205 SE 4th St., Laurel, MT**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Jeff Ewelt, Christine Whitlatch, Sabre Moore, Beth Epley, Doug Habermann, Chip Watts, Dale Galland, Lyn Ohl, Mindy Kohn, Peggy Iba, Dianna Murnion, Dennis Kopitzke, Doug Miles

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

**Guests**: Beth Frazee and Megan Richter (Windfall), Dan Brooks (Billings Chamber), Dax Schieffer (VOICES of Montana), Wayne Challoner (Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument), Dale Anderson (Our Montana), Neal Gunnels (Friends of Pompeys Pillar), Carrie Smith and Marcia Hafner (Laurel Chamber of Commerce), Alex Tyson (Visit Billings)

Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chip Watts welcomed the group and attendance was called. Carrie Smith welcomed the group and gave a short overview of Laurel.

**Public comments**

Chip Watts called for public comments. Dale Anderson informed all of a new grant funded project, Explore Yellowstone River, highlights 1,000 and one things to do along the Yellowstone River.

**Approval of January 16, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

Dennis Kopitzke moved to approve the January 16 minutes. Peggy Iba seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

**Financial Overview**

Megan Stevenson gave a financial overview (variance report and financials, January-March 31, 2018). Jeff Ewelt moved to approve. Christine Whitlatch provided a second. Motion passed.

**Strategic Discussion**

**Presentation of Travel Guide**

Brenda Maas and Beth Frazee presented two options for the travel guide which are outlined in detail, in the Marketing Plan and Budget 2018-2019, page 12.

**Option 1:** The guide has evolved from being a bi-annual guide with no advertising to a private-fund project with a sophisticated magazine-style format.

**Option 2:** The Travel Guide moved to a private fund project, thus reallocating funds into advertising and other marketing efforts.

Brenda explained that privatizing the travel guide would free up $75,000 in FY18-19. Beth outlined Windfall’s role in travel guide if the Board votes to privatize, with a $60,000 budget for printing 80,000 copies to be delivered mid-summer 2018. Windfall will produce and SEMT will continue to distribute through Mars Stout and Certified Folder.

Jeff Ewelt moved to approve Option 2, moving travel guides to a private fund project with Windfall. Dale Galland seconded. Motion passed.

Megan Richter presented four options for new travel guide cover. 1) Cowboy, 2) Camping/fire, 3) Crow Fair, 4) Makoshika State Park. Board participated in a blind vote and Crow Fair received the most votes.

**Presentation of FY19 Marketing Plan and Budget**

Brenda presents FY19 marketing plan and budget, identifying the 6 pillars, key challenges facing the region, target markets, with Destination Analytics identifying two niche markets: family travelers and history buffs, and the strategic goals, outlined in the Marketing Plan pages 9-12. With travel guides being privatized, board discussed

Option 2, on pg. 14 of the Marketing plan. Dale Galland suggested adding $10,000 back into Cooperative Marketing (Grants), with $2,000 coming out of Opportunity and $8,000 coming out of Online/Print Placement. Sabre Moore moved to approve the FY19 Marketing Plan and Budget, Option 2. Dianna Murnion seconded. Motion passed.

Sabre Moore spoke about a possible cooperative poster grant with SEMT. Will table this discussion for the next executive meeting, or sooner if need be due to deadlines.

Brenda Maas and Dale Galland also noted the need to revise the existing cooperative grant application to include specifics on reporting, timelines and frequency restrictions. Brenda to provide draft to the Cooperative Marketing Grant Committee.

**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 Parks Week, and Instagram engagement results for ZooMontana. Beth (Windfall) presented new website and the importance of accurate information on it as we move forward. Beth also provided handouts of final Travel Guide rate card and said historic maps should be done by June 1st.

Megan (Windfall) provided hard copies of cooperative advertising buys 1) *Distinctly MT* with Glendive and Miles City, 2) *Northwest Travel* with Visit Billings, 3) *True West* magazine with Southeast Montana and presented warm season campaign.

**Develop Marketing Partnerships…outside the region**

Brenda spoke about agritourism and the importance of fostering those partnerships with the state. Chip Watts to connect with Jan Stoddard. Brenda also spoke about the Montana Film Office and getting ambassadors in the region in the near future.

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

Brenda updated board on Digital Marketing workshops that took place in March. A brief survey after the workshop showed our tourism partners found the workshops beneficial. Brenda plans more workshops in the fall, emphasizing social media and to grow our Tourism Partners list.

**Support Tourism Product Development**

Brenda spoke about the new Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, including Rachel VandeVoort, director of Montana’s new Office of Outdoor Recreation, and the value of getting partners connected.

**Partner Presentation**

Alex Tyson (Visit Billings) presented Visit Billing’s Inspirational Video and updated board on their marketing strategies and the importance of TBID dollars. John Brewer encouraged all to use Visit Billings as a resource to grow SEMT’s TBID dollars as well.

**Committee/Task Force and Board Reports**

Dan Brooks updated board on legislative priorities in order to guide legislative efforts during the 2019 Legislative Session and easily inform lawmakers and the public of SEMT’s positions. Legislative Committee proposes moving forward on:

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.

More specifics on the one-sheeter, which was including in the Board Packet.

Sabre Moore moved to approve. Dennis Kopitzke seconded. Motion passed.

**Open Board Positions**

John Brewer updated all on upcoming Board positions. Glenda Ueland and Dan Austin will term out June 30th. Amy Morin and Mona Madler resigned due to changes in professions.

After a brief discussion, Diana Murnion and Mindy Kohn serve on the Nominating Committee.

**Other Announcements**

Christine Whitlatch shared paddle fishing season opens May 15, Glendive will have 2 fairs this summer and BBQ in the Badlands will be on Sept. 29.

Jeff Ewelt shared ZooMontana’s gift shop renovation is done, they have a new bison exhibit coming soon and June 2-3 is the Annual Renaissance Fair.

Doug Habermann stated that the Governor-appointed Parks in Focus will meet in Glendive at Makoshika State Park, Sept. 27-28.

Dennis Kopitzke shared that Forsyth is working on a guide of historic homes, as well as working with the Silver Jackets to get new river danger signs posted this summer.

Sabre Moore shared Archeology Month just finished up; June 9 is Ekalaka’s 1930’s Style Rodeo; the Dino Shin Dig is July 28-29; the Carters 89 Fair is Aug 9-12; and the coffee shop now delivers pizza.

Dale Galland shared that Fallon has a new bar/restaurant, and Terry has a new BBQ restaurant. Also, there will be several rodeos this summer and a corn hole toss on July 28.

Chip Watts encouraged all to attend Crow Fair 2018, LBH Days in June and the Hardin PRCA Rodeo.

Peggy Iba shared the Miss Montana Scholarship Pageant & Outstanding Teen Preliminary Contest will be in June. Also, Glendive is working with the Silver Jackets to get danger signs up this summer along the Yellowstone River.

Lyn Ohl shared Roundup has recently done a Main St. store front cleanup and are getting ready for their annual 4th of July rodeo.

Neal Gunnels reports Pompeys Pillar VIC will open on April 28, June 2 is National Trails Day and July 25 is Signature Day Event. New highway signs will be going up soon, they have a new AV system showing movies as well as having viewing binoculars installed on the pillar.

Marcia Hafner states they are getting ready for the Laurel 4th of July Celebration.

**Board Meeting Schedule**

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

June 19 (Broadus)

Meeting Adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Scenic maps were distributed and group was invited to stop at the Canyon Creek Battlefield Nez Perce National Historic Park north of Laurel.