**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)

**September 19, 2017 – 10:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**Holiday Inn Express, Conference Room**

**1919 N. Merrill, Glendive, MT**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Jeff Ewelt, Christine Whitlatch, Sabre Moore, Shyla Hadley, Doug Miles, Beth Epley, Lyn Ohl, Glenda Ueland, Doug Haberman, Chip Watts, Mona Maddler, Dale Galland, Leslie Janshen, John Laney, Amy Morin, Mindy Kohn, Peggy Iba

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

**Guests**: Chris Dantic (Makoshika State Park) Jim McGowan, Kyle McGowan, Beth Frazee and Megan Richter (Windfall), Daniel Brooks (Billings Chamber of Commerce), Cheryl Niemerg (Baker Chamber of Commerce & Ag) Sandy Watts (7th Ranch and RV) and Mayor Jerry Jimison (City of Glendive)

Meeting called to order at 10:33 a.m.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Christine Whitlatch welcomed the group to Glendive and introduced the Mayor. Mayor Jimison welcomed the group as well and gave a short overview of Glendive. Introductions made around the table.

**Public comments**

Chip Watts called for public comments. No public comments

**Approval of June 15, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Glenda Ueland moved to approve the June 15 minutes. Peggy Iba seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

**Financial Overview**

John Brewer presented June and August’s variance reports and financials. Christine Whitlatch moved to approve and Leslie Janshen seconded. Motion passed. During the discussion John Brewer asked for Board’s input regarding how to best allocate the nearly $20,000 in FY17 rollover that is uncommitted. As per Board discussion at the June meeting, priority is $15,000 go toward funding 3 VICs (Hardin, Broadus and Wibaux) and remaining to advertising. Christine Whitlatch noted traffic from Regina, Canada and asks Board to consider that market.

**Update on FY17 Audit**

John Brewer reported that there were no issues with the FY17 audit by MOTBD (completed by Barb Sanem) and noted that of the $1,500 unrestricted funds that were approved, as needed, for potential shortage in the FY17 administrative budget, only $400 was used.

**FY18 Unrestricted Funds Budget Update**

John Brewer called attention to the unrestricted (private) funds budget, noting that at the June meeting, Board tasked staff to work with Windfall to develop options to generate funds for the potential $15,000 FY18 admin budget shortfall. Brenda introduced Jim McGowan of Windfall, who presented (3) options for private revenue (all in board packet): 1) Corporate Sponsorship; 2) Gateway micro-site (to Visit SEMT website); and 3) Tear-off Maps – total of 2.

John Brewer suggested forming a committee to work with getting these private funds options done in a timely manner, as well as ensuring that each geographic segment is represented. Brenda agreed with this suggestion. Sabre Moore, Shyla Hadley, Mona Madler, Dale Galland and Glenda Ueland volunteered to serve on the committee. Dale Galland moved to approve the three private revenue strategies as presented by Windfall and Brenda Maas; Sabre Moore provided seconded. Motion passed.

**FY18 Media Plan and Creative “sneak peek”**

Jim McGowan presented the proposed FY18 media plan which consisted of MOTB Joint Ventures, Consumer Placements, Regional Cooperatives, Dallas/Fort Worth Flight Promotions, and Sizmek Tracking (third party tracking platform for all digital placements). Total consumer print and digital media proposed budget is $161,000.

Megan Richter (Windfall) presented creative marketing concepts that are in initial stages. OUT HERE, WE HAVE A STORY TO TELL is the marketing message coupled with vivid photography to promote tourism in the region.

**STRATEGIC GOALS**

**Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives** Team Windfall presented a proposal, on Brenda’s request, for a website independent of MOTBD. Total cost to research, develop and have online for spring of 2018 is $28,000. Funds will be re-appropriated from Niche Pubs and Advertising. They showed examples of the website with emphasis on a well laid-out landing page. John Laney commented on the importance of a functioning website; he noted the average tourist spends $200 a day on vacation and if it bring 140 tourists, the website will pay for its self. Glenda Ueland moved to approve the website, and Amy Morin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**Marketing Update**

No update presented

**Develop Marketing Partnerships…outside the region**

**Dino Trail** – Chris Dantic & Sabre Moore updated the board on the Montana Dino Trail and educated group on the Dino Trail passports. Sabre Moore emphasized the importance of marketing help from SEMT and other partners to help strengthen the progam’s momentum.

**Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail**

Brenda Maas updated the Board on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail coalition and its partnership with the National Park Service to create a geotourism website and online MapGuide. There is no cost to be included and Brenda encouraged all to nominate their favorite place of interest to be included on the MapGuide to help promote travel to the region. See lewisandclark.travel and go to “Get Involved” to nominate attraction, organization or tourism business.

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

Brenda noted that she is developing a no-cost/low-cost marketing workshop for Tourism Partners, likely to be held in the winter. More to come.

**Support Tourism Product Development**

Custer Loop – Dennis Kopitzke was not present; in his place Brenda noted that 17 signs have been installed and the project is near completion. Visit SEMT will move forward with marketing the project, including a news event in spring of 2018.

Update on Letters of Support – Brenda noted the Visit Southeast Montana received request for and submitted letters of support for the following grant applications: Huntley Project Museum of Agriculture expansion; Bucking Horse Sale bleacher additions; and, Dinosaur Trail website re-design. MOTBD Tourism grants are expected to be announced in mid-December.

**Committee/Task Force and Board Reports**

Final report on FY17 Cooperative Marketing Grants - Dale Galland/Brenda Maas reported that the FY17 grants were funded and closed with FY17 audit. The FY18 budget does not include cooperative marketing grants at this time.

**Legislative Update/Tourism Matters/Voices**

Legislative Committee Development-Dan Brooks updated the Board on development of the Legislative Committee development stating that the mission of the Southeast Montana Legislative Advisory Board (LAB) is to identify, prioritize and address issues of importance to SEMT tourism. In order to accomplish this goal, the LAB will produce a one-page public policy guide, communicating the advocacy positions and guiding the lobbying work of SEMT before the next legislative session in 2019. The recommended positions in the public policy guide will be presented to, and approved by, the SEMT Board of Directors for consideration and approval.

John Laney, Nicole Borner, Peggy Iba, Beth Epley and Sandy Watts volunteered to be part of the committee. Partners include the Billings Chamber of Commerce, Voices of Tourism, Tourism Matters, Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) and Montana Infrastructure Coalition (MIC).

Meetings -The group will meet as needed, utilizing conference calls for convenience.

Dan outlined the following timeline:

Fall/Winter 2017 – Initial meeting to begin fleshing out policy issues

*January 11 – March 12 – Candidate filing for primary*

April – Present draft of Public Policy Guide to SEMT Board

*June 5 – Primary election*

June – Finalize Public Policy Guide & distribute to legislators and partners

*November 6, 2018 – General election*

January 2019 – Start of 2019 Session

**Other announcements**

Peggy Iba shared on 10/15 at the Dawson County Fairgrounds will host a Junkapalooza and Harvest Fest.

Glenda Ueland shared on 10/21 there will be an Evelyn Cameron Gala fundraiser.

Doug Haberman encouraged people to get involved with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Dale Galland talked about the Calypso Trail which is 5.5 mile primitive road that provides accesses to the erosion-carved sandstones and clays of the Terry Badlands.

John Laney encouraged all to get the Miles City app (provided handout).

**Board Meeting Schedule**

Brenda noted next meeting is 11/21 conference call with a mid-year financial check. Other dates as noted on agenda with exception of April meeting, which conflicts with the Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Outdoor Recreation. Date TBD.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:22.

All encouraged to attend a brief tour of the Frontier Gateway Museum (Belle Prairie Frontage Rd) as part of getting to know the region.