

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

September 19, 2018 – 11:00 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Wibaux County Exhibit Hall
7900 Hwy 7
Wibaux, MT

Board Members in Attendance:

Beth Epley; Chip Watts; Christine Whitlatch; Dale Galland; Jeff Ewelt; Lyn Ohl; Peggy Iba; Jessica Malone; Randy Schoppe; Glenn Heitz; Sabre Moore, via phone; Doug Miles

Staff Present: Brenda Maas, Michele Flanagan

Guests: Kristen Sackett (Windfall Studio); Kyle McGowan (Windfall Studio); Sandy Watts (7th Ranch); Renee Nelson (Wibaux Chamber); Dave Bertelsen (Wibaux Chamber); Darlene Brown (Wibaux VIC); Shanny Spang (SMART – Baker, MT); Donna O'Connor; Machele Zapel; Susan Joy

Meeting called to order at 11:04 a.m. and attendance taken.

Welcome and Introductions

Renee Nelson of the Wibaux Chamber welcomed the group and shared the town's history, noting both the town and county are named after Pierre Wibaux. The Pierre Wibaux Museum is a great draw and tells the complete story of his life.

Public comments

No public comment

Approval of June Meeting Minutes

Christine Whitlatch motioned to approve the June minutes; Sabre Moore provided second. Motion passed.

Financial Overview

Brenda Maas presented June and August's variance reports and financials. Peggy Iba moved to approve and Beth Epley seconded. Motion passed

2019 Administrative and Unrestricted Budgets

The state allows for 20% of new collections to be used to administer the region. The Billings Chamber is under contract to manage the region. This year we trimmed the budget by about \$8,000 from last year but allowable funds are being reduced by \$17,000. There is a deficit of \$14,062 anticipated. The Billings Chamber board has agreed to reduce the rent and management fees by \$4,000. Discussion occurred about relocating offices to a less expensive option. It was argued by the board that both organizations receive significant benefit from the contract and co-location. There is also benefit with co-location of SEMT and Visit Billings. Jeff Ewelt motioned to accept the Administrative and Unrestricted budgets. Seconded by Dianna Murnion. Motion passed.

Audit Update

Brenda reported that the FY17 audit has been completed by Barb Sanem, MOTBD Compliance Officer. SEMT has \$41,292.64 of committed funds.

Strategic Discussion

Marketing Update

Brenda reviewed the quarterly dashboard. Call center inquiries are slightly below last year most likely due to web site challenges. Top state inquiries are Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. Social media is tracking ahead of last year. Image library is increasing with a photo shoot scheduled for hunting/fishing images the following day with Windfall team and Nathan Satran. Travel guides were delivered to all fulfillment centers beginning of August. Updates on advertising, creative, social media, history maps and more shared. Tourism-facing website (funded with lodging tax) is moving forward with more accurate/up-to-date information, but still a work in progress. During the discussion Christine Whitlatch talked about geo fencing the Billings Hill Climb as an experiment and its success. She recommends exploring this further.

Windfall Update:

Kristen reviewed recent ad placements and creative in print and digital. We are involved with many co-op and partnership ads with Glacier Country, Visit Glendive, Visit Billings and others. This significantly expands our budget. Web site discussion on need for regional tourism entities to provide content, calendar info etc. Jessica Malone expressed concern regarding the State's site not feeding correctly into ours. Kyle fielded the question, stating in the next 6 months or so that should resolve on the State's end.

FY 18 Media Final Reporting

Kristen Sackett of Windfall detailed the FY18 media plan final reports, divided by print and digital. With nearly 8M impressions and 0.19% CTR and \$4.13 average CPC for digital. While print is more difficult to measure, campaign generated an estimated 5.7M impressions. Performance summaries were provided in Board Packet.

FY19 Media Plan

Kristen Sackett of Windfall presented the FY19 media plan, which builds off the successes of FY18 (included in Board Packets).

Chip Watts motioned to accept the FY19 Media Plan. Seconded by Sabre Moore.
Motion passed.

Rollover & FY19 Budget Allocation & Opportunity Presentation

Brenda Maas shared news about a new convention coming to Billings, 9/11-13 of 2019, called TBEX, which stands for Travel Blog Exchange. She explained that ~600-650 attendees, including ~450 bloggers, photographers, videographers, social media influencers and other content creators will be in Billings for 3 days, plus days before and after the conference. Visit Billings is bringing the convention and Visit Southeast Montana will assist. On average, attendees spend 7-10 days on the ground (based on previous TBEX conferences).

As part the adjusted budget, Brenda outlined recommendations on how to allocate the \$41,000 uncommitted rollover from FY18, including \$15,000 into Opportunity to sponsor TBEX (budget in Board Packet).

Jeff motioned to accept the Rollover & FY19 Budget Allocation and Christine seconded. Motion passed.

Strategic Goals

Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives

Kyle (Windfall) presented website updates noting from June – Aug, which totaled 23,188 unique visitors. This is the number of unduplicated visitors to the website.

Windfall continues to add content noting the more use the website gets the more refined it will become. Brenda encouraged board members to add their events.

Kristen (Windfall) presents a sneak-peek of future video.

Develop Marketing Partnerships...outside the region

Nothing new to report

Grow In-Region Partnerships...to connect to constituents

Brenda states she plans 3 workshops in FY19 and asked board's input on subject matter. Guest Susan Joy stated she enjoyed the Digital Marketing workshop that Brenda put on in FY18 and would send her employees to that again. Jessica would like to see small town customer service offered.

Support Tourism Product Development

Nothing new to report.

Committee/Task Force and Board Reports

Dale reports Southeast Montana renewed its contract with the Billings Chamber of Commerce with a few changes to the terms. New updated document forthcoming. No motion passed, tabled until November board meeting.

Revised Cooperative Marketing Grant Application

Chip proposed to Board that cooperative marketing grant application policies will change in the following 1) all paperwork will need to be satisfied before funds are

dispersed; 2) grant reviews will take place 3x year. Christine moved to approve, seconded by Jeff Ewelt. Motion passed.

Other announcements

- Broadus: Promoting more networking and gatherings.
- Glendive: Makoshika is largest state park. They continue to seek utilities at the campground for the park for increased camping. Upcoming events are Barbeque in the Badlands, Badlands Woman's Expo and the Junkapalooza/Harvest Fest is Oct. 21.
- Ekalaka: 480 people attended Dino Shindig, more lodging was added to the town, and they now have a repository on BLM land.
- Big Horn: Big Horn County Museum is adding Introduction to Genealogy to their programming
- Musselshell: Forsyth is undergoing lots of improvements and repairs.
- Prairie: Terry, MT – Fall Fun for All is Sept. 29 at the Prairie County Fairgrounds and the Prairie County Museum is closed for the season.
- Yellowstone: ZooMontana's net profits are up 130% largely due to special events. The Billings Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting had 600 attendees.

Board Meeting Schedule

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

November 14 (Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument)

January 16 (Miles City)

April 17 (Roundup)

June 19 (Ekalaka)

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Group was invited to visit the Wibaux VIC.