**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 14, 2018 – 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

**Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument**

**756 Battlefield Tour Road**

**2nd floor – Administration Conference Room**

**Crow Agency, MT 59022**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Beth Epley; Christine Whitlatch; Dale Galland; Diane Murnion; Leslie Janshen; Mindy Kohn; Kevin Kooistra; Jeff Ewelt; Lyn Ohl; Jessica Malone; Randy Schoppe; Glenn Heitz; Sabre Moore, Doug Miles; John Laney

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

**Guests**: Kristen Sackett (Windfall Studio); Scott Woodall (Windfall Studio); Machelle Zapel (Stockman Bank – Wibaux); Putt Thompson (Custer Battlefield Trading Post & Cafe); Raymond Shell (FWP); Jenny Alexander (BLM – Billings); Wayne Challoner (Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument)

Meeting called to order at 10:34 a.m. and attendance taken.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Wayne Challoner of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument welcomed the group

and gave a short overview of the park, stating in 2018 the park had over 290,000 visitors.

**Public comments**

No public comment

**Approval of September Meeting Minutes**

Diane Murnion noted in “Other Announcements” *Roundup*, MT is undergoing lots of improvements and repairs, not *Forsyth*, MT. Jeff Ewelt motioned to approve the September minutes with noted change; Diana Murnion provided second. Motion passed.

**Committee/Task Force and Board Reports**

Upon Request due to John Brewers early departure, John Brewer and Dale Galland reported on SEMT- Billings Chamber Task Force Report. John gave a quick overview of Visit Southeast Montana and the Chamber’s partnership. John noted the current contract up for renewal has been updated and reviewed by the Committee Task Force and the most notable change is Additional Staff, outlined in Section II. Dale commented that private funds need approval when administrative costs go over budget and the added value of being under the Billings Chamber’s umbrella. John Laney and Christine Whitlatch also voiced their support of the partnership.

Jeff Ewelt motioned to approve the updated contract renewal; Leslie Janshen provided second. Motion passed.

**Financial Overview**

Brenda Maas presented September – October variance reports and financials, noting larger media buys will be paid off in the coming months. Sabre Moore moved to approve and Jessica Malone seconded. Motion passed.

**Strategic Discussion**

**Marketing Update**

Brenda reviewed the quarterly dashboard. Facebook has surpassed 20,000 friends due

to paid campaign that started in end of October. Instagram is slightly down, will plan to

strategize with Windfall. Southeast Montana.com has tripled its unique visits from this

time last year. Call Center has exceeded fulfillment and budget due to *Yellowstone*

*Journal* leads. Will hold sending guides to *Yellowstone Journal* leads for now and will

implement a call to action systems for now. Top state inquiries are Texas, Minnesota,

Wisconsin, Illinois, California and Florida. Social had a successful mini campaign, *Bring*

*Back Sunday Drives*. Will continue to create organic mini-campaigns in the future.

Image library has increase to about 80 new photos. FY20 travel guides are in

progress, focusing on revising and adding itineraries. Updates on advertising, creative,

social media, history maps and more shared. Brenda talked about the importance of FAM tours and upcoming social media influencers and the earned media from FY18 that’s starting to show up. Will continue move forward with Ongoing Initiatives, as outlined on page 6 of Marketing Update.

**TBEX Update**

Brenda provided TBEX updates, noting the value of TBEX attendees and the

impact it will have on SEMT. Brenda also shared MOTBD is a top sponsor and

outlined potential partner involvement with PreBEX, PostBEX and TBextras.

**Photo Library expansion & policy**

Brenda presents the proposed SEMT Photo Library and Photo Sharing policy,

explaining the 3 tiers that photos fall under. 1: Hero photos, 2: Main advertising, website

and paid social photos, 3: Partner photos.

Sabre Moore motioned to approve the Photo Library policy; Beth Epley provided the second. Motion passed.

**Strategic Goals**

**Produce Quality Marketing Initiatives**

**FY19 Media Updates**

Kristen Sackett reviewed ad placements and creative in print and digital; TV ad running Oct – Nov as part of Rooster Tales buy; the Facebook Likes campaign; photo and video acquisitions, travel guide cover options and travel guide advertising opportunities.

**Travel Guide – Cover Options**

Kristen Sackett presented four options for new travel guide cover. 1) Chimney Rocks, 2)

Medicine Rocks, 3) Terry Badlands, 4) Carter County.

Board participated in a blind vote and Chimney Rocks received the most votes and is approved to be the cover image for 2019 Travel Guide

**Travel Guide – Ad Sales**

Scott Woodall of Windfall introduced himself and presented the Travel Guide Rate Card,

explaining there are opportunities to share ad space with another partners if

needed/wanted.

**Website Updates**

Kristen states unique visitors have leveled off, content on mobile devices is displaying

more accurately, the Top 10 on the site are more in line with the season and recreation

of the moment, and Outfitters is now its own standalone category. Kristen also

reiterated to contact Windfall directly for any SEMT website updates or changes,

due to State’s site still not correctly synching with ours.

**Develop Marketing Partnerships outside the region**

**SEMT Comment to Parks in Focus Commission’s Draft Recommendations**

Brenda shared the Mission of Parks in Focus Commission, noting that she provided Comments on the Commission’s Draft Recommendations.

**Relationship building with MOTBD**

Jeff Ewelt reported strong concerns were voiced at last TAC meeting regarding lack of

representation for Eastern Montana. Brenda gave examples of content and grammar

errors on the new state map and suggested connecting with regional peers to voice

their concerns. Jeff stated action from the state is coming. John Laney suggested action

be taken if proper representation of Eastern Montana doesn’t happen in the near future.

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

**Brenda’s Report – presentations & TBEX**

Covered in Marketing Report

**Letters of Support**

Brenda presented letters of support from SEMT for the Adams Hotel Redevelopment

Plan in Lavina; Makoshika State Park fire suppression system; and Visit Billings’ bid for

the 2019 Innovate Montana Symposium.

**Support Tourism Product Development**

**Report on the Yellowstone Trail**

Beth Epley reported that with the help of grant money Terry, MT is now on the Yellowstone Trail Historical National Automobile Route map complete with signs and painted boulders along the trail.

**Committee/Task Force and Board Reports**

**Ex Officios**

Discussion revisiting Ex-officios positions; currently John Laney serving as representative for Miles City CVB. No representation from Billings CVB, BLM, FWP, NFS or NPS. Brenda to investigate.

**Board Applicants**

Recommended to accept Machelle Zapel (Wibaux County, Stockman Bank). Randy Schoppe moved to approve and Glenn Heinz provided second. Motion passed.

Christine Whitlatch announced that she has moved to Billings so no long resides in Dawson County; however, she will continue as CVB Director for Glendive for the short-term. Christine will serve as ex-officio representing Glendive CVB as long as she remains in the CVB position.

**Public Policy**

Brenda reached out to newly elected county officials to introduce herself, Visit Southeast Montana and provide a copy of our public policy.

**Other Announcements**

* **Custer County**: City’s Christmas lights were previously damaged, replaced them with vinyl banners. New TV commercial coming out promoting shop, dine, stay. Christmas stroll is set for November 30.
* **Prairie County**: Light parade will be Dec 4 and live nativity will be held Dec 24.
* **Rosebud County**: Colstrip’s holiday and craft show will be Dec 1 and Forsyth’s Day of Parades is Nov 23.
* **Fallon County**: EPEDC is assisting Richie Historical Museum with grant writing, there is an upcoming economic meeting June 5-7.
* **Carter County**: Bond was passed for new hospital, record year for MT Dinosaur Trail – 83 people have finished it and a new casino will open in Dec.
* **Powder River County**: P.R.C Centennial plans are under way and annual Christmas stroll is Nov 30.
* **Musselshell County**: 2 new restaurants have opened and annual Christmas stroll is Dec 1.
* **Yellowstone County**: Boo at the Zoo had 4,100 attendees, the bison exhibit will open end of Nov. The management agreement with SEMT and the Chamber will be finalized in December.
* **Big Horn County**: Antique quilt exhibit will be Dec 1 and the Christmas stroll in Hardin will be Dec 7.
* **Dawson County**: Holiday and light parade will be Nov 23
* Raymond Shell: Rosebud Battlefield State Park and Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area are in slow season, encourages all to visit
* Machelle Zapel: Wibaux has 1 new restaurant.
* Wayne Challoner: Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument has started a Distance Learning Program, which is an online program offered through schools to engage youth. Applications are now being taken for summer jobs, and the battlefield will have 2 positions opening in the future.

Meeting adjourned 2:32

**Board Meeting Schedule**

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

January 16 (Miles City)

April 17 (Roundup)

June 19 (Ekalaka)

Group was invited to visit the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument VIC.