

**CENTRAL MONTANA TOURISM  
BOARD MEETING  
Thursday, April 11, 2024**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (In-Person):** BECKY MILLER, CHERI HIRST, CAROL SCHAEFFER, CASSIE COBURN, JESSE ANDERSON, SCOTT ARNSMEYER  
**PRESENT VIA ZOOM:** REBECCA ENGUM, CHANDRA MOOMEY, CONNIE JENKINS, JUDY TEMPEL, KATIE MISSICK, ELIZABETH MOORE, SAM FRENCH, JOELLYN CLARK.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** KATTIE MEYER, STEFANIE BROWN, LINDA BROWN, John Brewer (Visit SE Montana)

**Meeting called to order:** 11:04 AM.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**MINUTES & FINANCIALS:**

*Elizabeth motioned to approve the minutes from March 14, 2024, and the March 2024 financials, with corrections noted for Samantha's presence and billing discrepancies for Bannick to be corrected. The motion was seconded by Judy and was unanimously approved.*

**MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT PRESENTATION:**

John Brewer – Visit SE MT in Billings

During the meeting, there was a comprehensive discussion on the management contract structure established by the Billings Chamber and its partnership with Visit Billings. The journey began 14 years ago with the initiation of the CVBM lodging tax, which faced financial challenges at the time, prompting the issuance of an RFP by the State of Montana to identify potential partners for tourism development. It was emphasized that if Custer Country is managed, the preference is for management rather than ownership. The partnership has proven to be highly effective in maximizing visitor recruitment, with shared expenses and resources among Visit Billings, Visit SE MT, and the chamber. The agreement undergoes annual renewal, accommodating operational changes year by year. Reimbursement by Visit SE MT is based on square footage space rented and conference facilities, with an annual management fee of \$15 per square foot. Notably, John Brewer serves as president of all three entities, with directors overseeing SE MT who are also chamber staff members. The organizational structure model presented by John illustrated the management agreements, including those with the Billings Chamber for lodging tax and TBID. The Executive Director focuses on strategic implementation and day-to-day operations. No questions were raised, and John Brewer expressed openness to providing assistance as needed.

**UPDATES TO AGENDA: NONE**

**MINUTES & FINANCIALS**

During the meeting, a motion was made to correct Samantha's absence from the attendance list at the last meeting when she was there. Stefanie provided financial updates, including expenditures totaling \$12,500 for travel planner photography and \$21,250 for Bannick Design and Production for the current year. Rebecca raised a concern regarding a discrepancy in billing, noting that the bill reflected duplicate payments despite only one check being issued. She assured that corrective action is being taken with US

Bank Accounting and Stockman Bank Accounting to rectify the error and ensure proper accounting. A motion was then made by Elizabeth, seconded by Judy, and unanimously approved to approve the minutes.

#### **BOARD REPORTS:**

- No questions to agencies and partners

#### **MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT DISCUSSION:**

During the meeting, it was discussed that there is a need to issue a request for proposal (RFP) for the management agreement. Becky invited questions or comments regarding this matter. Scott inquired about the preferred approach and whether it would mirror the structure in Billings. Options discussed included full management, rent payment through the general fund, or a mentorship program. Scott expressed preference for the Billings model due to its effectiveness and sought clarification from Rebecca regarding the Billings Chamber's handling of the TBID, noting differences in structure and synergy compared to their previous arrangement. It was highlighted that the Chamber lacked the necessary structures and processes for effective collaboration, prompting the decision to seek alternative arrangements. Scott emphasized the benefits of a centralized approach, echoing Chandra's observation that the proposed agreement leans towards a silver/bronze model rather than gold (full management). It was clarified that the focus would be on pursuing a management agreement rather than a mentorship arrangement. Becky confirmed that the RFP process would accommodate all three tiers. Jessie raised a query about the RFP drafting process, to which Rebecca explained the outlined procedure in state documents, emphasizing the role of the executive committee in approval and public posting for a mandated duration. Scott inquired about the hiring process for a new Executive Director (ED) and whether there were specifications for job duties. Rebecca indicated that job duties would remain consistent with administrative aspects specified in the RFP. It was suggested that the tourism salary could be allocated from the marketing budget, with administrative support detailed in the RFP based on time spent. A motion was proposed by Chandra and seconded by Scott to draft the RFP and proceed through the outlined process, which received unanimous approval.

#### **FY25 PLAN AND BUDGET:**

During the meeting, Lorraine provided a breakdown of the FY25 Plan and Budget, discussing proposed, updated, and final figures from the previous year. She highlighted consultations with agencies to incorporate feedback, with adjustments made by the Executive Committee. The administrative breakdown accounted for various expenses including wages, director costs, rent, accounting/payroll/taxes, software, and office supplies, in consideration of the management agreement. Stephanie noted an inaccuracy in the budget, indicating that \$7500 should be adjusted to \$4500, with Rebecca clarifying that it would be allocated from agency funds as a whole. The Co-Op was temporarily dropped from the budget with plans to incorporate it using rollover funds. It was mentioned that the Joint Ventures campaign would roll out in mid-May, with budget allocations made to sustain it. Additionally, funds were expected to roll over for Paid Media. Economic Development Administration funds were allocated at \$250k each, with no questions raised during the discussion.

## **MARKETING PLAN:**

During the discussion on the Marketing Plan, there was a focus on incorporating stewardship goals over the next 2-3 years, with an understanding from the state that immediate achievement of all goals may not be feasible as long as they are outlined as objectives. Kattie expressed concern regarding a proposed 200% increase, deeming it potentially unattainable. She suggested evaluating current metrics, although Lorraine had not sought this input. It was noted that the plan needed to be submitted by May 1st, but Rebecca assured the possibility of arranging a special meeting if necessary. Workshops and educational items outlined in the plan were not reflected in the budget, which raised concerns. Rebecca emphasized the flexibility of adjusting the plan throughout the year to ensure alignment with objectives and budgetary constraints. Chandra proposed tabling the approval of the marketing plan and budget for FY25 until a date before the May 1st deadline, with any changes to be submitted to Becky by April 17th for review with Lorraine and the Executive Committee. The motion, seconded by Scott Arensmeyer, received unanimous approval, and thus was carried forward.

## **CO-OP MARKETING APPLICATION:**

- Chandra asked if there was a committee recommendation. We do this for Lewistown every year. Sherry motioned to approve and Scott seconded. Unanimous approval.
- Kattie said we could expand it out next year to include more smaller communities.

## **DESTINATION MONTANA RESILIENCY PLAN:**

- Motion made to Acknowledge attached Resiliency Plan covering Central Montana to implement the elements that show up in our strategic plan without adopting the resiliency plan itself. Scott motioned, Sherry Seconded. Unanimous approval.

## **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:**

- Three main committees: Organizational Governance Committee, Regional Marketing Committee, and Destination Development Committee.
- For Marketing Committee duties our new ED would take on a lot of those but for now would be committees and chairs. Chandra wanted to ask to add to these to Aid the Executive Director in these duties. Chandra said it shouldn't be the idea that we keep changing the document based on who we hire but should be a guiding principle we look back to from a 30,000 foot view. We have to have flexibility to be able to pivot. Rebecca stated it is just outlining the roles of each committee.
- Jessie – Motion to accept committee structure with the understanding all committees will include aiding the executive director in all items: Seconded by Sherry. Unanimous approval.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT:**

- Reviewed all items discussed today and arranging to get storage unit cleaned out.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- Elizabeth Moore – Lewis and Clark Foundation Fundraiser
- Samantha French – Yellowstone Kelly Exhibit (life and legend of Yellowstone Kelly)

**Meeting Adjourned:** Meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm.