

WHITEFISH

• MONTANA •

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 10, 2020
2:30-4:30 pm

Location: Whitefish City Hall City Council Chambers

Meeting called to order at 2:35 pm by Zak Anderson of the WCVB Board of Directors

Introductions:

Board Members in Attendance: Erica Terrell, Edna White, Nick Polumbus, Zak Anderson, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Jenny Cloutier

By conference phone: Jessie Farnes, Mariah Joos, Luke Walrath

Absent:

Quorum met with nine of nine members.

Staff & Agencies: Dylan Boyle (WCVB Executive Director), Dan Hanson (WCVB Marketing & Sales Coordinator), Sarah Stewart (WCVB Office Manager), Brian Schott (LJ Communications)

Public Attendee(s): Cari Klepper

Approval of Minutes

Erica Terrell motioned to approve the June 15, 2020 minutes. Motion was seconded by Jenny Cloutier - passed unanimously

Public Comment: No public comments made.

Guest Presentation: *Cari Klepper, Whitefish Songwriter Festival* Originally scheduled for Sept 2020, but has been rescheduled for Sept 2021, the festival focuses on the songwriter (vs the song performers). There is a similar festival held in Red Lodge (that has also been postponed). They used our grant funds to update their website. A lot of the songwriters have Montana connections and the festival is being held at local venues and restaurants. They are a 501(c) 3 – goal is to raise money for music education locally.

Agency Reports:

Agency DVA report

Media Update : Web traffic & conversions are up significantly YOY and MOM. Organic traffic is up too. 70% growth in web traffic YoY for July 2020. Big jumps in the Book & Reserve Now clicks. We installed better trackers to get more accurate info. Top geo sources: Whitefish, Kalispell, Seattle, Dalla and SLC. Organic traffic made up 60.7% of the traffic.

PR Report - LJ Communications

Public Relations Report: Brian Schott - messaging is pushing responsible and safe travel. Donnie Sexton wrote a nice piece about the Last Chair. Travel media is just starting to

inquire about new things (like new restaurants). There were some nice stories about Bar W & WF Bike Retreat as well. We are tracking Covid stories as well. Rail passenger association visited Whitefish for 2 nights, to advocate for keeping up Amtrak service. 1 press trip from American Airlines magazine. They are working on strategies for Fall and Winter press trips. They are trying to gauge what Winter press trips are going to look like and the news doesn't look too good – writers are not getting the travel assignments. Preparing for arm chair reporting. A lot of wait and see.

Committee Reports:

WCVB Finance Committee:

EIDL – Rhonda explained that we submitted an application for the EIDL – we did a grant for \$3000. She got info that we've been approved for an EID *Loan*, it's a 30 year loan and you can start paying after a year of receiving the money, (the 2.75% interest starts accruing immediately however). She received a call from the SBA who said they were reviewing our application. She received an email to sign to just "stay in the queue" but the money got deposited into our account. (Rhonda thought we were just staying in the queue.) Rhonda thinks we should keep the money for a few months to see how our TPA collections are going. The money can be used for any operating costs. Will keep on the agenda to discuss at future meetings.

WCVB Marketing Committee:

Summer Plus media plan was presented. Spring media plan was cut due to Covid. DVA is recommending a content forward approach. Website traffic has been driven a lot by SEO (vs. paid adverts). Strategy is to utilize the new content created to increase SEO ("Fall for Whitefish", "Wander Again" "Gravel Guide" - 6 pages are where we're going to send ads to, instead of the homepage). Flyfish Journal will be content generation from a third party, produced now, but not pushed out until next year. Content is "inspirational", not a hard sell. Continuing with a regional drive market. Branching out to DEN, SLC was also discussed by the Marketing Committee. Staff and DVA recommend adding DEN/SLC. A lively discussion ensued about whether to branch out to DEN/SLC If we didn't spend the money now it would roll over to Winter marketing.

Rhonda Fitzgerald made the motion to stick with option "A" (not to include DEN/SLC) and for \$11,426 to be rolled over to Winter marketing. Erica Terrell seconded it. Motion passed with 7 for the motion, 2 opposed.

STAFF Reports:

Marketing & Sales Report:

Dan Hansen : Social media – Instagram annual growth is 31.3% and Facebook up 14%. We had some paid ads (\$600) in boosted posts. Organic impressions were up on Facebook, engagement is also up. Top posts on FB and Insta featured Glacier & Downtown Whitefish. Almost 1 million impressions on Instagram for the time period of 6/1-7/31/2020. Reaching almost 3,000 people per Insta story. Dan updated the website with a lot of new content to increase SEO. The Peloton Photoshoot was also shown, 150 photos is what we will end up with. We can use their content on our site, it will be released in the Spring of 2021. Sent out a consumer e-news in July, our Aug one will be Fall heavy.

Director's Report:

Dylan Boyle: Montana Aware Campaign – Safety messaging coming from the Governors directive. Through a grant program the State has contracted with CVBs and regional marketing entities (like Glacier Country) to promote safe travel protocols. We can take our Clean Careful Connected and integrate it with the State messaging. There are 3 parts to the grant: Information Distribution, Marketing and Joint Ventures with other entities. We can use some of the money for staff time. Rhonda suggested that we tweak our CCC messaging to coincide with the State's messaging especially emphasizing mask wearing first.

Sustainable Tourism Management Plan – Council will have a work session in the Fall to go through the action items.

Lodging report looks grim. Occupancy and ADR are both down for the FY20. De-boardings are down significantly from the same time last year. GNP was down 63% for recreational visits in June vs 2019. Nick said that Christmas reservations at the WMR are very similar to last years. A lively discussion ensued about the Canadian Market. The trend of the short booking lead time is still in effect.

New Business

Old Business

Thank you letter to the Governor for setting up the National Guard to test at Airports & Train Depot – this hasn't been done yet.

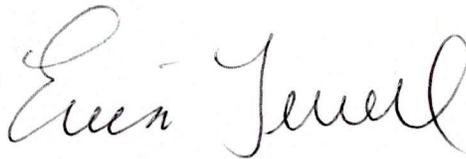
Board Member Round Table:

Thoughts were shared by the board about this year's Summer tourism season and how Covid-19 has affected each of their businesses/industries.

Zak Anderson made a motion to adjourn at 4:50 pm, Nick Polumbus seconded the motion – passed unanimously.

The next WCVB meeting will be held starting at 2:30pm on Sept 14, 2020 at Whitefish City Hall Council Chambers.

Signature:



Date:

