Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau
Board Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, February 19th: 3:00pm
Grouse Mountain Lodge

Welcome
Erica Terrell, chair of the WCVB, commenced the meeting at 3:05pm.

Introductions
Board Members: Erica Terrell, Nick Polumbus, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Jake Cook, Scott Ringer, Jason St. Clair, Jennifer Fisher.
Excused Absence: Luke Walrath, Zak Anderson

Note: Quorum met with seven of nine members present.

Staff & Agencies: Dylan Boyle (WCVB Director), Brian Schott (LJ Communications), Jen Frandsen (Old Town Creative)

Public Attendees: David Randel

Approval of Minutes
Scott made a motion to approve the minutes from December 8, 2014. Jennifer seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Public Comment
There was no public comment.

PR Report
Brian Schott provided an update on the public relations efforts of the WCVB. Brian and Lisa are hosting approximately ten press trips this winter.

Recent press trips: Nina Hahn (Chicago Mag) 1/17-1/21; Heather Burke (Boston.com), 1/25-1/30; Montana Office of Tourism marketing staff (2/5-2/8); Kent and Canaan (No Vacation Required) 2/11-2/15

Upcoming press trips: Leslie Kelly (Zagat.com, Seattle Mag) 2/22-2/25; Donnie Sexton (Montana Office of Tourism) 2/22-2/25; Alaina Kaczmarski and Daneille Moss (The Every Girl - Chicago/Digital influencers) 2/21-2/24; Tia Troy, Debbie Picard, Racene Friede (Glacier Country Tourism) 2/23-2/24; Paula Arab (Avenue Magazine, Calgary) 2/21-2/23; David Goodman (The Boston Globe, other major outlets) 3/5-3/12

Marketing Report
Website Report
Jen Frandsen provided a copy of the latest website report from Old Town Creative to the WCVB Board. She noted that website traffic has increased after a decrease on the last report at the December meeting. The report also included numbers related to online travel guide requests.

Campaign Update

Jen Frandsen provided an update on the winter digital and print campaigns. She noted that WCVB advertising consistently outperforming the travel and tourism industry standard CTR of .07% on the majority of media buys. Jen did suggest that representatives from the WCVB Board present these types of success stories to the Whitefish City Council on a more regular basis.

Spring Opportunities

Jen Frandsen provided the WCVB Board with the FY15 Spring Media Plan. The opportunities on the FY15 Spring Media Plan came from the recommendations of the WCVB Marketing Committee at their February 5th meeting. Jen is waiting to hear back on the cost of three listed opportunities before the total for spring advertising commitments will be finalized.

New Business

ED Insurance Reimbursement

WCVB Hiring Committee (Erica, Rhonda, Jake, Nick) recommended to the WCVB Board that Dylan Boyle receive monthly health insurance reimbursement, retroactive to February 1, 2015. This recommendation came from a letter drafted by Dylan Boyle requesting monthly reimbursement.

MOTION: As the only full-time staff member of the WCVB, Scott Ringer moved to approve a $350 monthly health insurance reimbursement for Dylan Boyle, retroactive to February 1st. The amount of $1,750 for FY15 will be moved from an excess in the Administration Budget (Payroll Expenses) upon bookkeeper confirmation of adequate funds. If adequate funds are not available in the Administration Budget, the funds will be taken from WCVB Retained Earnings. In addition, this monthly health insurance reimbursement will be figured into the FY16 WCVB Budget. Nick Polumbus seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

ED Performance Review

The WCVB Hiring Committee made a point of clarification that the annual review for Dylan Boyle, Executive Director, will occur at the end of June in accordance with the end of the WCVB fiscal year.

Whitefish Restaurant Week

Erica reported that she has spoken with a few local organizations regarding the potential of creating a Whitefish Restaurant Week. A discussion ensued on the most advantageous timing for the event. Some board members felt that early June, just prior to the beginning of the summer season, would be a good start. If the event was successful, a winter event would be a natural progression. Dylan will work with Erica to start with the restaurants to get their opinions on timing and gauge the level of interest.

FY16 Marketing Plan

Dylan provided a handout of the timeline for the FY16 WCVB Marketing Plan. Here are the most notable dates.

February 26: Marketing Meeting (3:30p.m. – Rocky Mountain Lodge)

March 19: Marketing Meeting (4:00p.m. – Rocky Mountain Lodge)

March 26: Board Meeting (3:00pm – TBD)

March 31: Send final marketing plan to Necile Lorang and Chuck Stearns to include in Council Packet. In addition to the plan, letter from Board Chair should be included along with a one-sheet on successes and samples of work.

6: Presentation to Whitefish City Council
Board should be present for this meeting.
• Dylan and Erica to present plan to council for adoption.

May 1: FY16 Marketing Plan sent to Montana Office of Tourism

After some discussion regarding the general direction of the FY16 Marketing Plan, it was requested that the narrative of the plan is reflective of the Mike Bento Branding Workshop, which the WCVB Board of Directors participated in during the fall of 2014. This includes highlighting Glacier National Park as one of our primary winter activities.

Old Business
No old business was mentioned.

Director Report

2014 Lodging Tax Revenue (Whitefish)

1/1 - 3/31	$115,571	(+11%)
4/1-6/30	$140,398	(-1%)
7/1-9/30	$445,697	(+3)
10/1-12/31	$97,699	(+4%)
Total	$799,924	(+4%)

The Department of Revenue reports statewide collections are up 9% from calendar 2014

2014 Resort Tax Revenue (Whitefish)

October 2014	$121,519	(+2%)
November 2014	$129,917	(-0.3%)
December 2014	$201,446	(+13%)
Total FY15	$1,295,252	(+6.37)

Financial Compliance Reports

- FY15 Quarter 2 Completion Report submitted and reviewed by MTOT.
- FY14 Marketing Completion Report submitted to MTOT

Newsletter & Fulfillment Update

- Consumer and weekly member newsletter redesigned
- "This Week in Whitefish" produced weekly and displayed in kiosks
- New WCVB promo video at airport kiosk
    - Jess Downing has taken over WCVB video project

MTOT Update

- Redesign complete for intranet site (tourism.mt.gov)
- Launch of new consumer site (visitmt.com) in late February

Financial Report
Rhonda reported that the P&L report is accurate and that the WCVB is on track to meet the FY15 TPA collections goal of $400,000.

MOTION: Nick made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Scott seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Other

State & Local Legislative Update

SB264: Dylan presented information on the proposed "Best Place First" bill designed to appropriate 60% of the annual sales & use tax revenues from accommodations and rental vehicles (also commonly known as the 3% of the lodging use facility use tax which goes to the General Fund). With a fiscal note of $15 million, the targeted portion (60%) of the annual sales & use tax revenue would be distributed to the following tourism partners

30% Infrastructure Investment

- MT State Parks, MT Historical Society, MT Heritage Commission, MT Arts Council, Heritage & Historic Properties Statewide

30% Promotion

- MT Office of Tourism, Regions and Visitors Bureaus

The WCVB would stand to gain approximately 20,000 from SB264. Although the WCVB Board is unanimously in support of having funding for our tourism partners, the WCVB Board will not take a position on this bill. The WCVB Board has concerns that the funding distribution formula for SB264 is designed to be revenue neutral with statistics provided in the talking points for the bill indicating that state tax revenues of greater than 2-to1 will be generated for every tourism marketing dollar spent. The WCVB Board is concerned because there is a potential that the WCVB would need to demonstrate that $40,000 of state tax revenue came from the approximately $20,000 of extra funding provided to the WCVB as part of SB264.

City of Whitefish Resort Tax

Dylan reported that the Whitefish City Council voted on February 17th to create a special ballot initiative for April in which the votes of Whitefish will decide if an increase in Resort Tax (from 2% to 3%) will be the funding mechanism in which the City will use to pay for the conservation easement in Haskill Basin to protect the municipal water supply.

The WCVB will not take a position on this proposed measure but instead will use the opportunity to educate WCVB members on the value of the voluntary 1% TPA and how it is and will continue to be used to drive nonresident spending to local businesses in Whitefish.

Jake moved and Scott seconded a motion to adjourn at 5:25 pm.

The next meeting will be at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 26th. Location: Rocky Mountain Lodge

Signature: Erica Jewell **Date:** 3/26/15