

Business Issues Solution Group

Meeting Minutes of October 7, 2004

The organization meeting of the Business Issues Solution Group was held at Buck's T-4 Lodge at 6:05 pm on Thursday, October 7, 2004.

Members Present: Bob Biggerstaff, Leader, Troy Baccus, Ruby Delzer, Dorothea Jude, Michael Scholz, Denise Touhy, Eric Becker and Jim Dolan.

Also Present: David O'Connor, Jack Eakman

Bob Biggerstaff called the meeting to Order at 6:05 pm.

Bob discussed the history of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce Strategic Planning Effort that commenced in December of 2002. Bob encouraged everyone on the solution group to actively participate in issue identification and resolution. He stated that 13 persons had signed up to be involved in this solution group.

Bob asked for input on the meeting time, and all agreed that Thursdays at 6 pm was workable.

David O'Connor addressed the overall Chamber Strategy. He noted that this and three other solution groups are to discuss and identify issues, draw up action plans to address those issues and hand those over to the Steering Committee. In response to a question on funding of solutions, David stated that funding needs should be addressed in the action plan the group produces.

David went on to state the links between this and the other three solution groups. He noted that some overlap in issues will be unavoidable, and the Steering Committee stands ready to assist each group in directing flow.

Bob discussed the ground rules he sees necessary for the group to function effectively. He stated that each member is to actively participate, politely challenge each other and agree to disagree agreeably. Minutes must be produced for each meeting and agendas will be distributed prior to each meeting.

Each member then was encouraged to introduce themselves and identify their willingness to assist the group in the overall process. Each member then did so.

Mike Scholz had previously distributed his thoughts in writing as to the work of this solution group. Bob asked Mike to discuss his letter, and Mike identified the means and methods he would envision as the work product of this group. He noted the present tax structure in place, the need to improve the Big Sky business environment, the need to drive tourist traffic, and the need to monitor and impact potential restrictions on growth and development that might negatively impact businesses.

Ruby Delzer inquired about access to Big Sky, notably air traffic.

Eric discussed his White Water Rafting business as an example of a unique Big Sky enterprise and its relationship to the rest of the business community.

Troy noted how disconnected and sparse the shopping opportunities are for those that come to the community with recreation enthusiasts but do not necessarily wish to participate in those activities.

Dorothea noted that customers constantly inquire about the possibility for more things to do for entertainment and relaxation while they are here.

Denise noted the trail system in Big Sky as a huge benefit. Cross Country trails become a part of the amenity package for residents and visitors. Transportation into and within Big Sky is a constant challenge that is worthy of investigation and creative improvement.

Mike also noted that this beautiful area might think about gaining market share in the film industry by rebating resort tax to film crews, and other “outside the box” initiatives to drive clean industry.

The group then was asked to identify issues that would IMPROVE the business environment and/or DEGRADE the business environment.

Issues identified as IMPROVE were increasing tourism, a healthy business environment, filling the missing links in this ski resort such as destination facilities and services, improving transportation internally and externally, improving business activity and demographic information services.

Issues identified as DEGRADE were the current tax structure, growth and development restrictions, access to Big Sky, the seasonality of the ski and summer tourism industry, employee housing challenges, sparse/disconnected shopping opportunities, lack of some infrastructure that discourages efficient use of property, maintaining the pristine qualities of the Gallatin, and the retention of public and open space.

After much discussion, it became evident that issues in the DEGRADE column were either being targeted by other solution groups or were beyond the scope of the Business Issues Solution Group. The group thought that their work would focus on the IMPROVE column in the future.

NEXT MEETING: Marne Hayes will be invited to report on the initiative to improve demographic and business information services. October 21 at 6pm.

Respectfully submitted, Jack Eakman, Recorder.