



BIG * SKY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

MEETING MINUTES
Chamber Board
55 Lone Mountain Trail | Big Sky, Montana 59716
406-995-3000
January 14, 2013
www.visitbigskymt.com

Present: Dave O'Connor, Sarah Griffiths, Kevin Germain, Victor DeLeo, Bill Simpkins, John Richardson

Not Present: Shawna Winter, Pat Straub

Staff: Kitty Clemens, Marci Lewandowski, Danielle Miller

Public: Ryan Hamilton

Call to Order: 8:36 a.m.

No Public Comment

Visit Big Sky Liaison Report:

John Richardson, Treasurer

- Dennis Franczak from FUSE ideas will be coming to Big Sky February 24th-25th.
- VBS Board members will be getting together to meet him. The Chamber board discussed the logistics of meeting Mr. Franczak as well.
- FUSE gave us the option of renewing our contract for the next two years. Kitty believes that this is a good investment given the quality of work they do.
- A discussion on VBS's decision to use FUSE ideas took place amongst the board members.
- John Richardson noted a full management cycle from start to finish with FUSE is an advantage for the Chamber and VBS.
- Dave O'Connor commended the Chamber on its ability to hire professional help to attain its development goals.

ACTION ITEMS

- **Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion to approve minutes was made by Bill Simpkins and seconded by Sarah Griffiths.
- **Financial Report**

John Richardson, Treasurer

 - We are looking to have an amended budget this year. We also need to discuss the budget for next year.
 - It is not a problem, but a few adjustments need to be made. The overall net picture is positive.
 - The amended budget will happen in February and the new budget will be proposed in March.
 - Some of the revenue streams were not sellable so we have to adjust our expectations in other revenue streams. We need to move some line items around to adjust the budget. Some collateral items can be moved around as well.
- **Vice Chair Vacancy**
 - Shawna and Sarah have both shown interest in the position. Shawna has kept a relationship with Brian Dolan with our real estate.
 - Shawna is not present today so Dave decided to wait until both board members are present to make the decision.
 - Keeping the position vacant for the short term does not have negative consequences, but the position does need to be filled by next month.
 - Side discussion on the current lease: We are good until June 30th, 2015, but this is a big long-term issue.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- **Resort Tax Application Process**

Kitty Clemens, Executive Director

 - The board opened a discussion to decide what they will apply for. In the past, the Chamber applied for marketing; however, the Chamber is looking into applying for more infrastructure and development projects such as wayfinding, entryway and internal operations.
 - Dave O'Connor believes Chamber will be asking for more operations which will include more light poles and wayfinding signs.
 - In past, the board has calculated a budget for the operations of the Chamber. Then, they figured out the deficit and then asked for the difference through Resort Tax.

- Kitty and Dave have discussed that Montana Department of Transportation may be able to fund the additional lights. Kitty has spoken with Jeff Ebir, District Manager out of Butte, and once they have an idea of what Congress is going to give them in the next approved budget, they will have a better idea of which projects they can fund.
- Kitty believes that with the additional development in Big Sky such as the hospital, that MDT was receptive. MDT might not cover the entire process, but it could offset the costs for us. In working with MDT we have to make sure our project isn't cut with any amendments to the federal budget.
- Kitty believes we should request at least 5 lights this Resort Tax appropriation. The board believes that we should go at least to the bridge and install lights consecutively up the hill. The goal is the Chamber installs 5 this year and MDT does the next 10.
- The next 5 should cost about 80,000. In the 2013 appropriation, initially we asked for 8 lights for 80,000, but we had to adjust our expenses and then asked for private funds to make up for the difference. We would have put more money into the wayfinding and lighting, but we put \$300,000 into the entryway monument. However, we pulled that at the last minute into order to allow more community members to receive Resort Tax funds. A discussion about the entryway monument followed.
- Victor asks if we could apply for some of the money for banner ads for next year. The Chamber board will need to discuss the content of those banners.
- Last time, wayfinding cost was about \$150,000 from start to finish. It is about \$12,000 a sign. This year would be \$180,000 for signs if we install all of the signs. Another \$80,000 for the light poles. In addition to our operations budget, we are asking for \$375,000 to \$400,000 in total.
- These figures don't include the wish list for housing, which we will know at the next town hall meeting.
- A side discussion took place: How much would it cost to implement a TIFF district? Bill Simpkins believes it might be a huge game changer in community.
- A TIFF District allows local government to set up an infrastructure development plan. TIFF district property taxes stay in the district for the TIFF district to use. The cost to set it up a TIFF district is about 30,000 dollars.
- Things to be aware of: this may chip away from schools and fire departments. However, the TIFF could offset that lack of funding.
- Discussion on creating a TIFF board for Big Sky took place within the board.
- The last legislative session allowed for unincorporated towns to apply for TIFF grants.
- There is a woman out of Butte that helps with TIFF finances. She believes that TIFF grants need to have a value added component such as manufacturing or industry. However, Bill Simpkins claimed they hired a lawyer who believes that we make a strong case for TIFF funding, but we need to convince two sets of county commissioners and the department of revenue.
- Kitty points out that there are more things our community can utilize other than TIFF such as low to moderate income housing tax credits. We hope to discuss this with policy makers and advised policy makers in Gallatin and Madison County. Kitty believes that the counties must sponsor the plan and administer it.

- The workshop will bring together our partners in this project. The purpose of the workshop is to get the players together to have this discussion and see if we can work towards that. The workshop will be in February.
- In summary of this discussion: The Chamber board will ask for 5 more lights, operational costs, when we find out the outcome of the Town Hall meeting in February, we will know more about the housing funding needed. When we find the total to that, we will ask for the remainder in wayfinding to the amount of \$400,000.
- In the absence of having an entryway, more lights with banners in a good options.
- **Public comment**
Ryan Hamilton, Big Sky Town Center
 - Ryan Hamilton notes we will have more collections this year. Many corporations are already set on what they ask. Usually it's the same amount every year. Perhaps we should think bigger so that we are asking for all the money that is available in this community. He also asks if we could buy the property and then go to the resort tax for bonding.
 - Kitty stated that Shawna has been helping us work with the Brian Dolan. We need to figure out if we have a reasonable price. Then we would pursue the bonding issues.

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

- **Economic Development—VIC Report**
Marci Lewandowski, Visitor Services Manager
 - Numbers are slightly lower this December from last year, but have increased from November. We believe this is due to several factors including the visitor center closure during the holidays.
 - Website requests for OVGs are increasing. Nearly half of the requests are for summer visitors.
 - John pointed out that the difference in the numbers is something we should look into. Asks how we can give a more accurate account of factors leading to decreased numbers such as holiday closures or weather.
- **Economic Development –Membership Report**
Danielle Miller, Membership Sales & Events Manager
 - It is worth is it sit down and have the Chamber board members there to talk to some of the members especially during the Resort tax appropriations.
 - The Chamber board agrees that this is something we can do any time and that it would be a great way for members to check in with the Chamber.
 - **Total Resource Campaign:** A huge mailing was sent; one brochure is sold for June, July and September which will bring in 100 a month for the visitor center.

Each month we are highlighting a sales piece. January is the map and selling the dots. The dots also help to increase total member benefits.

- **Map Production:** We are printing a new map this year, but are adding location dots. These location dots coordinate with business names and phone numbers. We are printing 30,000 in total: 15,000 will be a tear off and 15,000 will be a tablet. We are looking to finish advertising by Friday, send it to print at the end of the month and have it ready by the beginning of February. Dots are only open to retail stores, dining, lodging, and other visitor information.

- **Economic Development—Ambassadors program**

Danielle Miller, Membership Sales & Events Manager

- We currently have 15 ambassadors, and we will cap it at 30. We hope to increase numbers in the future.
- Bigskychamber.com is now live. It has an About page, Membership, and Tools for Business Success. Bigskychamber.com sees over a hundred visits a day already. It is about 8 to 10 pages for Chamber business. Bigskychamber.com helps to promote the Chamber and retain the Chamber's own identity.
- The board suggests that bigskychamber.com lists P.O. boxes on the chamber website as well as businesses physical addresses for mailings.

- **Other Non-Agenda Items—Lee Metcalf Display at the Visitor Center**

- Kevin Germain talked to a group about having a Lee Metcalf display. The board agreed that would be a great idea.

- **Adjourn**

- Kevin Germain made the motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Sara Griffiths. With no other business the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.