



**MISSION –** To generate room nights for lodging facilities in the city of Billings by effectively marketing our region as a preferred travel destination.

**TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
MARCH 12, 2015  
BILLINGS CHAMBER BOARD ROOM – 8:30 AM**

*Other than the meeting starting time, any time listed is approximate and agenda items may be rearranged.  
Action may be taken on any item listed on the agenda.*

- I. Call to Order – Steve Wahrlich.....8:30
- II. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda  
(Comments limited to 3 minutes per speaker)
- III. Approval of January 8, 2015 Board Minutes-pages 2 - 5.....ACTION
- IV. Approval of January Variance & Financial Reports- M. Stevenson pages 6 - 7.....ACTION
- V. New Business – S. Wahrlich/S. Mann.....8:35-9:20
  - a. MetraPark Partnership.....Discussion
    - i. Guest General Manager Bill Dutcher
    - ii. Guest Marketing & Sales Director Ray Massie
  - b. TBID Board Position.....Discussion
  - c. TBID Treasurer Position.....Discussion
  - d. Montana State Parks.....Discussion
  - e. YCLA.....Discussion
- VI. Old Business – S. Wahrlich/A. Tyson.....9:20-9:40
  - a. Logan Airport (interior) Update.....Discussion
  - b. 2015 Legislative Session Update.....Discussion
  - c. Current Bids – Update.....Discussion
- VII. Marketing/PACE Tyson/McCandless/Austin.....9:40 – 9:45
  - a. Staff Update- pages 8 – 15
  - b. Grants – Follow up
- VIII. Adjournment

**Future Meeting Dates:**

- March 12, 2015
- April 9, 2015
- May 14, 2015
- June 11, 2015

Managed by the Billings Chamber of Commerce



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES – FEBRUARY 12, 2015

---

**Board Members Present:** Steve Wahrlich, Shelli Mann, Ron Spence, Joyce Bratland, Ben Kearns, Ginny Hart, *LaReil Baldwin*

**Board Members Absent:** *None*

**Ex-Officio member Present:** *None*

**Staff Present:** Alex Tyson, John Brewer, Kelly McCandless, Megan Stevenson, Andy Austin, and *Faith Gerdes*

**Others Present:** *Councilman YAKOVITCH (?)*

### Call to Order

Steve Wahrlich called the meeting to order at 8:27 a.m. in the Billings Chamber and Visit Billings Board Room.

### Public Comment

None

### Approval of Board Minutes

Request for motion to approve the January 8, 2015 board minutes

*MOTION: Shelli moved to approve the minutes; Ron seconded; motion carried*

### Approval of Financial and Variance Report

Alex clarified that a lot of the budgeted money isn't being utilized, some due to timing. Waiting for Big Sky state visit, some budget items didn't come to fruition, some things may not happen at all ( and if so, that money goes to Goldwing). Alex thinks we shouldn't use full amount in 2015 heading towards Fiscal Year 16, 17 (F16, 17), which are big event years; start saving now. Staff expenses were also significantly under budget; Alex recommends we continue to save this money and put it towards F16 and Goldwing contract.

Steve asked if the restricted funds should be directed to Goldwing, Alex said it wasn't necessary and funds will be where TBID wants them at the end of the year; will save money without impacting any budget line item. As of July 1, reserves will be \$150,000, as directed at start of reserve bill (set six years ago).

Ron questioned the \$1500 actual re: postage for the month; zero was initially budgeted. Megan explained that TBID takes out an advance to pre-pay for postage, avoids paying all postage at the month's end. The \$1500 actual is pre-paid postage sitting, and available, in the postage account.

Megan gave 4th quarter collections: \$345,556 total in December, missing three properties (Megan contacting Matt for names/contact info). Fourth quarter collections up \$40,000 from last December (\$345,556), even with three missing properties. Steve clarified that this overage will show in 2016.

TBID [income] assessments are over budget, but after seeking guidance on how to budget, went conservative and took budgets for the increase. Overall, assessment is very conservative, which is good because it's been a decent year, re: occupancy. First quarter in F16 will see a significant jump in [TBID income assessments]. This is beneficial for other things, which will help budget better for F17.

Request for a motion to approve the January Financials and Variance Reports

*MOTION: Ron motioned to approve the financial reports; Ben seconded; motion carried*

### New Business

**MetraPark Partnership, guests: *Bill Dutcher (General Manager), Ray Massie (Marketing & Sales Director)***

Steve introduced Bill and Ray, who were asked in November to speak in a meeting about a partnership with Visit Billings TBID. Partnership would work well because MetraPark brings large events to Billings, benefits Billings economy (and Billings TBID) through money spent on gas, food, hotels, etc. Ray and Bill hope to partner better in-season, while still growing in the off-season.

Ray explained that he pursues events in terms of what value he thinks they will bring to Billings; event should generate enough business in town to make it worth initial expense of bringing in event. Thinks concerts, not necessarily sporting events, are big ticket items for MetraPark.

Overall goals: would like operating expense and revenue dollars even, eventually O higher, so not using tax payer dollars. Would like to book more long-term events, which benefits MetraPark and surrounding community; more events in December/January, specifically. Ray would also like to advertise Billings as *the* city to stop in; not much else goes on here, so any event at MetraPark will draw a bigger crowd, no other events to “steal” the crowd.

Difficulties in bringing events to MetraPark: how the show fits into the building. Example: Motley Crue will bring in a lot of people, but stage space will also eliminate a lot of in-house seats. Shelli said she thought we (Billings) were losing events because of finances. Ray said this is true, but also due to some other elements, i.e. town support/involvement, building size/capacity, audience interest.

Finances, Percentage (38%) fund operating expenses; Ray wants operating expenses and revenue numbers even, and, in the future, eliminate the use of tax payer dollars.

Headed to a conference in Nashville next week, which is the biggest meeting for [event] promoters. Would like to be more aggressive in making bids, negotiating with show promoters.

Alex affirmed, said she appreciates the partnership. Both organizations work hard to reach goals for both the community and individual business: Sell billings. Visit Billings and Metra Park balance the same things.

#### **TBID Board Position**

*Steve asked Ron/Ginny if they would like to enter/run for another term.*

Shelli asked if the Billings TBID should do away with [YCLA] recommendations and let individuals apply as qualified. Alex pointed out that this recommendation process is listed in the bylaws (4.6, pg. 3, section 2.4), but the committee has the option of omitting it. Shelli asked how others felt, no discussion ensued. Shelli recommended [the omission] be recommended several times in meetings and emails, but skip the vote now and reconvene at a different time. Alex suggested the discussion continue in March board meeting.

#### **TBID Treasurer Position**

Shelli announced some concern re: YCLA treasurer position; process has been lax in the past few years because there is no designated treasurer, and it's a lot to ask of members who are already running/managing hotels. She would like to hold an executive committee meeting to discuss how to get back on track. They have not received a [monthly] financial statement since May. Shelli suggested the use of OneNote, which would create some continuity, and the purchase of a company QuickBooks, so it's easier to pass between YCLA members.

LaRell suggested hiring an outside accountant; Steve suggested the YCLA look into hiring a [part-time] bookkeeper. LaRell affirmed this, said to not invest in Quickbooks, but hire a bookkeeper from outside. Steve said he would recommend some names.

#### **Montana State Parks**

Steve said that Chaz put forth a refreshing plan for state parks, and would like to start a foundation. Steve suggested partnering with area state parks, specifically Pictograph Caves; maybe offer to sponsor something at the park, award grant for improvement, or provide merchandising options. Having large events at the park would provide the opportunity for guests to stay longer in Billings, lead to more overnight stays. Shelli showed support, said she sends lots of guests to Pictograph Caves. *Alex said she was approached about possibility of opening area at Pompey's Pillar for overflow camping due to BMW MOA.*

#### **YCLA**

Shelli said that YCLA is all up to date on taxes. Was not a smooth transition between treasurers in 2012, they've been behind ever since. Dan Miller is currently handling the situation.

Shelli would like to see more excitement/awareness about YCLA organization. Thinks this can be done through promotion re: YCLA speakers. If people know who will be [speaking] at the meeting, they may be more inclined to attend.

## **Old Business**

### **Logan Airport (interior) Update**

Alex announced that the bid to fix was higher than anticipated, \$314-\$320 sans furniture; back to square one. Ron added that the TSA is looking at fixed one-way exits, and won't allow any permanent [interior] changes for now. Shelli asked about a time table, Ron responded with 5 years.

### **2015 Legislative Session Update**

*Wanted to take 3% tax and put it to promotion; resurrected that this year, handed out best Place First Funding (SB 264). It's done more than anticipated; went back to 3% towards accommodations, 4% rental car.* Instead of 100% to general fund, only 40% to general fund; other 60% is split, goes to MT Department of Tourism and partners (arts council, state parks, historical society, etc.).

Montana's brand cannot afford to be tarnished; the state looks at value season travel, too and partners are valuable tools to instate residents who travel frequently.

Would like to provide funds on an ongoing basis; we want to leave initial money in general fund (started in 2003/2004), which will continue to grow. State of MT is currently #18 for most money spent on marketing/promotion; with new numbers, MT could rise to #10, and at least 5 states within top 10 cannot be beat.

Steve said government sounded in favor of the bill, although could not be confirmed on the record. Bob Keenan is carrying the bill; he also carried the legislature on the 3% accommodation tax. Shelli asked about the standing of local representatives, Steve said he wasn't sure, but the most effective way to find out, and support, is to be there.

Alex asked if anyone would be willing to represent Billings to testify in favor of the tax next Thursday (February 19), for testimony and secondary hearing. Need at least one to two representatives from Billings Lodging partners. Shelli, John, and Alex will all be unavailable. Ron said he would ask Jeff to go and represent. Ben said he may be available to go.

### **Current Bids Update**

Alex said that all is going well with BMW MOA; tool kit is done, 2-4 week process being communicated. Kelly shared about the call to action to local businesses, sending out postcards to raise awareness and get involved. Shelli said that she knows a local guy who will lend a vintage BMW motorcycle to display at the hotel for promotional purposes.

Ron suggested flagstuffs for promotional purposes, with Goldwing or BMW logo on ever light pole. Alex said she already have numerous billboards and skybridge banners prepared; no flags yet, but liked the idea and would look into it. Shelli thought it would be a good idea; could purchase the hardware and change out the flags as different events pass through town.

### **Marketing/PACE Update**

#### **Staff Update, pages 8-15**

[Visit Billings] website numbers are up substantially, due to key promotional placements at a national level. Ad increases in January, and regional advertising is better and more strategic.

New campaign launching: selected a family from Saskatchewan for a winter campaign; follow them for a PR story. Andy is working on the social media awareness.

Would like to make Billings a place for bikers, especially in light of Sturgis 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Vicki-Lynn currently feeling out situation/possibility.

Alex announced that Visit Billings made *SportsEvents Magazine* and placed a horizontal, eye-catching eye in [XXXX magazine](#).

### **Grants, follow-up**

(passed out TBID project travel report)

Ron said that Jeff approached him with the possibility of funding state soccer. School districts are currently \$2200 short of doing all that's needed for the event, was wondering if soccer could have the money TBID won't be using for basketball next year. Alex called it a "no brainer," said they would be more than willing to help out.

**Adjournment**

MOTION: Ron motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ben seconded; motion carried  
Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Submitted by Faith Gerdes

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT VARIANCE REPORT

---

### TBID Board of Directors As of February 28, 2015

Year to date revenue over expenses is \$227,937 over budget.

Revenue is \$90,962 over budget from TBID assessments and interest income.

Total expenses are \$136,975 under budget.

- Staff Expenses are \$23,397 under budget from anticipated staffing changes.
- Administrative Expenses are \$9,542 under budget from the following:
  - Computer expenses are under budget \$2,108.
  - Equipment & Repair expense is under budget \$1,436 from office equipment.
  - Meeting expenses are \$1,730 under budget from various meetings.
  - Newsletter expenses are under budget \$3,500 from timing of the stakeholder newsletter.
  - Office Supplies are \$2,177 over budget due to the refresh of business cards for the new Visit Billings look.
  - Postage is over budget \$2,080 from large demand of visitor guides and CVB mail.
  - Professional Training is under budget \$5,090. These funds will be used in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.
  - Legal & Accounting is under budget \$1,018 from the annual review fees paid to Schafer & Associates.
  - Telephone Wireless Equipment is over budget \$1,537 for TBID's portion of the office phone lines.
- Marketing Expenses are \$104,036 under budget from the following:
  - Advertising is under budget \$44,311. This is due to timing.
  - Opportunity is under budget \$28,186 for General Opportunity and Grants. This will change with the Big Sky Conference site inspection 3/26 and other Opportunity budget items/projects underway.
  - Printed Materials is over budget \$4,127 from the Meet Local campaign and timing of the Brewery Map.
  - Publicity is under budget \$2,360 from the TTA Program and Sponsorship opportunities. The TTA program is set for May. These funds will be utilized, with some savings expected.
  - Sales Expense is under budget \$3,952 from the monthly Sports Sales, Sports Recruitment, Sports Fams, Sales Missions and Instate Sales. This is a timing issues.
  - Tradeshows & Conventions is under budget \$8,965 from anticipated registration fees and travel expenses.
  - Website Expenses are under budget \$10,894 due to timing of when work is performed and necessary.



