

# WHITEFISH

• MONTANA •

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Board Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 10, 2025  
12:30 pm - 4:30 pm  
Location: Whitefish City Hall

## 1. Call to Order

- Time: 12:40 pm
- Chairperson: Mariah Joos

## 2. Attendance

- **Board Members Present:**  
Mariah Joos, Jessie Farnes, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Matt Gebo, Kent Taylor, Edna White, Lauren Oscilowski, Erica Terrell, Kim Worman
- **Explore Whitefish Staff/Partners-Agencies/Guests and/or Non-members Present:**  
Julie Mullins, Nicole Schmid, Zak Anderson, Lilian Bassett, Brian Schott- PR, Mary Angelo (DVA)
- **Community Member(s) in Attendance:** None
- **Absent:**
- **Quorum** met with 9 out of 9

## 3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

- **Motion to Approve:** Jessie Farnes
- **Seconded by:** Matt Gebo
- **Approved (Y/N):** Y

## 4. Public Comment: None

## 5. Reports

### A. Agency Reports

- **Public Relations:** Presented by Brian Schott  
Summary: Winter press trip update. Help from Glacier country paid for plane tickets so we could make it happen. It went well and skiing was fun. King 5 was a big account that worked out. Spring skiing weather but works well for scenic nature.  
Update on press releases: Green Business Award/ Housing WF contributions.  
Press trip article: WF: Skiing like it used to be, like it should be. Update on interviews with Canada keeping our messaging positive.  
25% reduction in budget from FY24-FY25 we are getting tight on PR budget.

Board Comments:

RF: The blog article was fantastic and truly got 'us' and what we are going for.

**B. Staff Reports**

- **Marketing Manager:** Presented by Lilian Bassett

Summary: Presented slides-

Feb recap click now bookings down but still up overall. Likely seeing winter fatigue with old campaigns. With the launch of the spring skiing campaign we should see that go up again. DVA pulling Calgary targeting out of spring skiing even though we weren't seeing a decrease in feb bookings. Over the last week we were getting serious trolling. We'll keep an eye on this moving forward if anything changes.

Board Comments:

EW: Calgary visitation was up last year. Looks like some people are still interested.

MA: We pulled out where people can comment, not the targeting.

ET: Would like to see some of the comments.

MA: It is not Whitefish itself but the state of politics. NO negativity to WF just in general.

LILIAN: Presented slides. Impressions up, more content was posted to maintain consistent presents. Engagement is strong. Event's posts doing well. Did a post for national park navigation. Freeze is over and they are hiring park employees. Important that visitors still want to come.

MJ: Are you finding that pulling from Calgary the blocking rate was increased?

LB: There hasn't been blocking necessary. They are not mad at WF they are mad at the US Gov.

JM: More local blocking for anti visitation people not visitors themselves.

Spring Media Plan:

Marketing committee approved. Seattle Met content package, 425 Magazine, South Sound Magazine, 2 Field to Friday. Retargeting programmatic. Putting money into rest week and run some promotions regionally \$25k toward digital media

JM: We have extra funds in PUB Opportunity Marketing and moving to rest week funds- we have public fund support.

RF: we might need to put some of these out of private instead of public. Not sure if we can apply rest week.

**MOTION to approve spring media plan as presented with the removal of Calgary: Matt Gebo motion to approve FY25 Spring Media Plan was seconded by Jessie Farnes, motion passed unanimously.**

Lilian: DAM photoshoot. Lifestyle shoot last week. Spring skiing deals launched, 6 mo contract with Maggie V. has some fun plans for winter and summer. Heavy on shoulder seasons with Maggie.

Travel Guide update: did not come out looking good. Jen and Lilian are updating pages.

- **Executive Director:** Presented by Julie Mullins  
Summary: You will find in your packet the important upcoming bill and full summary of the bills to have on our docket. STR and Cannabis bills.  
 GNP update: Had a great call with Flathead Tourism community. GNP is trying to be a good partner to their community. Changes have made everyone uneasy.  
 Authorized to hire more staff- they will go to Washington DC. Have not reached 325 for full operational staff. Will function as close to biz as usual, all things considered. Placing priority to campgrounds, water, and waste.  
 Messaging: never going to share bad news. Assuming biz as usual. Visitors may have to be more self reliant than in the past.  
 We can: reach out to representatives and let them know how important this is to our community.

Spring/summer outlook: not everyone has reports in yet. Down in April/May. STR bookings are up in bookings. Believes people are waiting to see what is going to happen with the park. We have to remain nimble.

Board Comments:

RF: We need to figure out how we can help GNP with with funding delays.  
 JM: email/call with further discussion.

- **Director, Member Relations:** Presented by Zak Anderson  
Summary: Presented Slides.  
 Member Renewals/ updating the process for next year, New businesses and prospects.  
 Alcohol to CSF, Big Mtn resort tax pitch/ meetings to keep in the loop. Working on Meeting and event digital guide in the works. Looking into tournaments and visitation around events like these.  
 STMP committee- put out the survey via the city will run through April.

Board Comments:

LO: Friend found the roundtable for restaurants was received well and wanted to know when the next one was.  
 ZA: after rest week we can check in.  
 ET: Worried they will relate WF Rest Week and Food and Wine Fest.  
 ZA: we will be careful of how this is marketed so people don't get confused.

**C. Committee Reports:**

- **Finance Committee:** Presented by Nicole Schmid  
Summary: Presented slides

Board Comments:

**Approval of Financial Reports:**     Rhonda Fitzgerald     motioned to approve the February, 2025 financial reports as presented. Motions was seconded by:     Matt Gebo    , motion passed unanimously.

### 5. Old Business:

Chamber of Commerce Update

JM: MOU discussion of partnership. The agreement has been declined and we will not be working with the chamber moving forward. Will continue to be "official visitors bureau"

JM: working on VIC in the airport so we are feeling hopeful this will not be a problem. Working with other DMO's. Will capture more visitors.

RF: afraid that our members have to belong to the chamber in order to have access to the VI center. We should be looking for a new office space.

JM: we plan to have summer staffing at the airport VIC. Interpretive and interactive signage, etc. electronic screens and pamphlets.

MJ: Do we inform the state that the chamber will not be the VIC anymore? They are receiving funds for this.

JM: We receive lodging tax so cannot receive VIC funds but we can notify.

EW: will we be looking for another VIC in the DTWF area?

LO: dosen't think its worth it.

Staff: has been looking for rental opportunities.

### 6. New Business:

### 7. Announcements

### 8. Adjournment

- **Next Meeting Date:** The next WCVB board meeting will be held on Monday, April 14 , 2025. Location & Time: Whitefish City Hall, 2:30pm - 4:30pm.

**Motion to Adjourn:**     Rhondnda Fitzgerald    

**Seconded by:**     Erica Terrell    

**Time:**     2:13    

**Approved (Y/N):**     Y    

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4/14/25