

WHITEFISH

• MONTANA •

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 8, 2025
2:30 pm - 4:30 pm
Location: Whitefish City Hall

1. Call to Order

- Time: 2:32 pm
- Chairperson: Mariah Joos

2. Attendance

- **Board Members Present:**
Edna White, Kim Wortman, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Jessie Farnes, Matt Gebo, Kent Taylor, Mariah Joos, Lauren Oscilowski, Erica Terrell
- **Explore Whitefish Staff/Partners-Agencies/Guests and/or Non-members Present:**
Zak Anderson, Nicole Schmid, Lilian Bassett, Sara Knight, Brian Schott (PR), Mary Angelo (DVA), Jen Saucier (Web Management)
- **Community Member(s) in Attendance**
- ~~Absent:~~ Nancy Schuber →
- Quorum met with 9 out of 9

public attendee

3. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

- Motion to Approve: Edna W
- Seconded by: Matt G
- Approved (Y/N): Y

4. Public Comment:

Nancy Schuber: Minutes not listed on the website. Lost sight of responsibility to the community by not placing the CSF on the receipts. Needs to be a separate line item on the receipt. Lodging is expected to be compliant. If we cannot be honest with the customers there will be a lobby to bring attention to those businesses.

5. Reports

A. Agency Reports

- **Public Relations:** Presented by Brian Schott
Summary: Presented slides
Outside and Freelance individuals that were on a Visit MT press trip already in August-came to Whitefish and Brian took them around. Reaching out to journalists expect 1-5 participants for the 3 planned group press trips. Have the fall press trip scheduled.

Board Comments:

MJ: Do you need support with the press trips?

BS: will finalize the itinerary but always if people have availability. Reach out to Brian if you want to join.

A. Agency Reports

- **DVA:** Presented by Mary Angelo
Summary: Presented slides/ recap
Key takeaways, booking clicks/ ADR doing better in Aug v last year, starting to work on winter plan- will review with BOD in Oct meeting

Board Comments:

B. Staff Reports

- **Marketing Manager:** Presented by Lilian Bassett
Summary: Presented slides
Social media updates, top content, over 1.6 million impressions in Aug. Hootsuite doesn't have archives but compares data in the ways we can, and goes over age engagement on different platforms.

Board Comments:

RF: comparison with Jackson and other larger areas vs just regional

- **Membership Director:** Presented by Sara Knight
Summary: Presented slides
Membership update and moving into the Travel Guide, bringing in Wellness Month in October, want to bring in a broader membership base.

Board Comments:

RF: what are we trying to achieve and how will we measure Wellness Month. It is a big cost for tiered membership v CSF. Is this worth it/ ROI? Will this be bringing people to town?

ZA: this is a test

RF: do these members have any reach outside of the community?

ZA: encouraging them to market themselves.

- **Executive Director:** Presented by Zak Anderson
Summary: Presented slides
Started Marketing Manager search- job is posted, bringing in Asana and Crowdriff, domestic travel is up more than Canadian visitation is down. WF is doing better than the rest of the state. // Updates with STR's and how they function/ Hotel online booking.
STMP meeting in Oct 29, 2025

Board Comments:

MJ: Are you referring to places like the highline?

ZA: yes, smaller eastern towns.

RF: with VDI data how much of this is inflation v actual increases? Does this include gas and grocery and can we exclude it?

ZA: we can market segment out but we don't have the specific data

MJ: Can we check if we can parcel this out? Gas v the rest?

MJ: We can look at general increase and consumer price index 2.7% and how much % increase in spend.

EW: they do not include the hotels advanced payments only if card swipe happens on site.

C. Committee Reports:

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

Board Comments:

RF: the lodging spreadsheet, is there a way we can get those numbers what quarter was being paid. What quarters are applied to what payments and how the over/ under payment worked and what those funds are/ why they are not posted.

Approval of Financial Reports: _____ Jessie F _____ motioned to approve the **August 2025 financial reports as presented. Motions were seconded by:** _____ Rhonda F _____, motion passed unanimously.

5. New Business:

Tuesday or move a week to next Monday- move it a week!
Check out the venue- notify BOD!

6. Old Business:

7. Announcements

8. Board Roundtable

Marketing Committee:

Met with Mike Bento to do a deeper brand review (3 levels of engagement), Mary Angelo gave options with a separate option with future parameters.

ET: Is anyone concerned about moving forward with Mike Bento's team/ services?

EW: Wants to understand what our goal is with MB

JS: wants to have a dedicated team to work with him instead of people jumping in/out

ZA: that would be the marketing committee

RF: wants to see both Jen and Brian should be involved on that team in addition to the marketing committee.

JS: has questions to flush out before we get too far. It's important to meet and answer questions. What issues are we looking to solve?

MJ: Do we need to engage in the idea that our brand needs to be reevaluated?

RF: This is why we started and think it's important. We have to see if what we are saying/

offering is still valid.

LO: how frequently have we done this in the past? "For the Love of the Wild" came from Mike and the state did an eval previously.

MJ: It's been about 10 years. Continuing to answer questions about this is important. If we're going to spend money on a new campaign, we should do the brand work prior.

MG: thinks that DVA has a handle on our demographic v new campaign. The cost is too expensive so we are already paying for DVA.

RF: not sure we need a new campaign.

LB: state did a rebrand in May- will check where the stats came from

ACTION: Zak reaches out and finds the answer to the questions about data.

MJ: we have money in the restricted funds to go over this.

MG: understand the money is earmarked but the marketing committee wants to put it elsewhere. Is concerned about the amount of money Mike Bento will take and if it's worth it.

MJ: was a marketing rollover from covid years.

ZA: \$60-70k mark to do the research regardless. Do research, put money in paid media- can we do all the things but break it up?

RF: we can wait on the new campaign

LO: how long do campaigns usually last?

JS: campaigns last short or long term pending. I think it speaks closely to the brand.

ET: likes the relation to the The love of... other things and how that is going and is new and fresh and related to the love of the wild.

-Should the campaign be redone or not?

-Need to do research first.

ZA: wants to increase our research spend

ACTION: what is the restricted v saving amount in our accounts

ET: what is the total of restricted to put additionally toward marketing- \$276k

MJ: we can agree that we need more money in the marketing budget

-yes

MJ: We don't agree on the level of research and spend part of this? Can the finance committee reallocate the funds to the marketing committee and the marketing committee can come up with the plan with the money.

RF: We should step back, take time and see what the balance is?

MJ: finance committee will tell them how much funds we have

KW: should there be some sort of suggestion to spend money for the finance committee to review?

ET: any and all money will be used and never too much. I need a number from finance.

ACTION: October FinCom will sort out and approve how much money Marketing has to spend from restricted funds. The finance committee can allocate 50k to marketing.

ZA: will talk to DVA and let them know they have 50k-65k to spend on marketing.

MJ: Unpredictability we should put the money in now so we can still stay relevant and on top of the downturn.

Matt Gebo made a motion to move \$5,000 from retained earnings to the marketing budget in the fall media campaign. Motions was seconded by Kim Wortman, motion passed unanimously.

LO: Is there a time limit on the research?

RF: suggested lesser of Mike B options.

EW: wants some clarity on p 66 mike bentos info and how that is happening. I need more info.

RF: paraphrase: goes to identified customers and then dives into focus groups. They are repping the visitors we have decided on. Destination analyst: broad panel of just people who have traveled away from their home last year. Mike screens for the correct visitor vs the broad public.

EW: After MB research what do we hope to do?

JS: are we correct on our 3 pillars, how we present ourselves, how language and image is developed. Test the new learnings with a group of people.

ZA: We talk scalpel but walk shotgun. How can our work be more focused?

Rhonda Fitzgerald makes a motion option 1 engage strategies with further development with mike on how to spend up to 67400?? but hopefully we would get this down to what we want at a lower price. Erica T Lauren O

-Matt G opposed

-Edna W is on board with doing the research only

ET: will mike bento include our current campaign. Could we use our content for some of this research?

ZA: will ask for a discount on services and more specifics.

9. Adjournment

- **Next Meeting Date:** The next WCVB board meeting will be held on Monday, OCTOBER 20, 2025. Location & Time: Whitefish City Hall, 2:30pm - 4:00pm.

Motion to Adjourn: Matt G

Seconded by: Jessie F

Time: 4:27 pm

Approved (Y/N): Y

Signature: _____



Date: _____

10-20-25

