

**Montana Lodging and Hospitality Association
Board of Directors Meeting
Jorgenson's Inn & Suites, Helena, MT
January 7, 2015**

Members Present

- Scott Arensmeyer
- Karen Baker (via phone)
- Tony Brown
- Robert Carette
- Carol Eichler
- Tim Giesler
- Trevor Haar
- Sandra Johnson-Thares (via phone)
- Maclaren Latta
- Paula Ruark
- Andy Sabatini
- Matt Sease
- Michelle Skinner
- Steve Wahrlich
- Joe Wilson
- Amber Wood-Jensen

Members Absent

- Bryce Baker
- Blair Hope
- Alex Tyson

Others Present

- Stuart Doggett
- Mike Garcia
- Charlotte Lauerman

Call to Order and Announcements

The meeting was called to order by Chair Paula Ruark at 2:24pm. Introductions were made.

Agendas / Approval of Minutes

Motion: It was moved to accept the consent agenda as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

Motion: It was moved to accept the minutes of the October 26, 2014 Board of Directors meeting. Motion was seconded and approved.

Financial Reports (Attached)

Stuart presented highlights of the actual expenditures versus approved budget and reviewed income and expenses versus the previous year.

He reviewed the convention financials and was pleased to inform everyone that the convention made around \$4,500 and attendance was up from the previous year.

Motion: It was moved to accept the financial report. Motion seconded and approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hospitality and Tourism Alliance, Maclaren Latta

Maclaren discussed how she talked with Victor at the Montana Office of Tourism about a session idea for the Governor's Conference. She'd like to have tourism related businesses (non-lodging) discuss challenges within Montana. The session will be monitored by Alex Tyson.

Mike Garcia discussed potential sponsorships for the Governor's Conference from Voices, MLHA or a combination of both, but stressed that he won't know if it is financially feasible for Voices at this time. Maclaren suggested we sponsor a networking break right before the above mentioned session so we can get people to attend and learn more about the Hospitality and Tourism Alliance.

Motion: It was moved to sponsor a \$750 networking break at the Governor's Conference, possibly upgrading to a \$2,500 if Voices of Montana Tourism funding is more stable in the near future. Motion seconded and approved.

Executive Committee – Paula Ruark & Stuart Doggett

It was noted that this topic was already covered.

Membership / Non Dues – Matt Sease, Stuart Doggett

Matt talked about our new membership coordinator's (Nick Matthies) efforts and how it was slow going given the difficulties of talking to a property's decision maker directly. The board brainstormed ideas with Nick to help the process. Members were asked to get their community's TBID contacts to Nick. Matt will spend time with Nick in Bozeman and Belgrade next week. Board members were asked to get Nick any new construction properties they know about and Nick will solicit these members as well.

Matt mentioned offering larger properties a membership for 18 months for the price of 12 months as a push to get new members. He also noted how Steve mentioned it might be beneficial to offer a few free memberships to get potential members into our association with the thought they will remain with a paid membership after the free membership expires.

Matt said the current recruitment/retention plan of 190 members by the end of 2015 is still obtainable and we will continue with our current 3rd quarter goals:

- Continue to steward and contact members
- Provide frequent legislative updates and coordinate communication efforts between members and legislators
- Plan and have staff attend two local meetings & do member calls in the area with local board members

It was also suggested that we look at additional benefits to offer our members as well as promote our current ones.

Robert Carette will work on a letter that will go out to smaller properties that are not members to try to encourage them to join. He'll explain the value of membership as a fellow small lodging property owner.

Legislative / PR – Steve Wahrlich, Stuart Doggett, Mike Garcia, Jeri Duran

Jeri let us know that the industry legislation is coming together and there have been good legislative discussions.

Steven mentioned the MLHA bill, Best Place First, and the handout that Stuart provided at the lunch with the Legislators. He encouraged everyone to send an email to those Legislators in attendance to thank them for coming and listening.

Convention / Education – Michelle Skinner, Charlotte Lauerman

Michelle noted that the committee went over last year's agenda and potential speakers. The convention will be sports themed and Michelle encouraged everyone to come up with a slogan. Mac Beldsoe was recommended as a speaker by Karen Baker and Charlotte will look into his costs. Avitus Group, AHLA, and FVCC (Flathead Valley Culinary School) were also mentioned as possible speaking sessions. Trevor Haar has a connection with Phil Jackson and will check to see if we can get him as a possible Keynote speaker.

Social media was referenced as a possible way to get members more engaged and more likely to attend with "September Madness" like contests on Facebook with potential free registration as a prize.

Andy noted his observations from what he heard after the 2014 meeting: we need to focus more on vendors, possibly shorten the time of the convention, and maybe add one convention registration cost to all memberships at a future time.

AH&LA, Steve Wahrlich, Stuart Doggett

For AH&LA, Steve noted that Pam Inman left and Matt replaced her. AH&LA has over 50% of rooms in their membership now – it has never been that high. Forty-one states have the same agreement we have. Steve mentioned a large strategic plan will be rolling out soon.

Steve attended the Fall Conference in New York where he determined AH&LA has become more of a lobbying entity with three points:

1. Work force,
2. Technology and distribution, and
3. Travel and tourism promotion.

Stuart attended the ISHAE meeting in Arizona with 30 other executives. Highlights included:

Sales Council, Carol Eichler

Next Meeting/Adjourn

The next meeting of the MLHA Board of Directors will be Thursday, May 21 in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn. Meeting Adjourned at 3:30pm.