

**Montana Lodging and Hospitality Association
Board of Directors Meeting
Comfort Suites - Helena
February 17, 2016**

Members Present

- Scott Arensmeyer
- Bryce Baker
- Karen Baker
- Robert Carette
- Valerie Edwards
- Greg Elliot
- Tim Giesler
- Dax Schieffer
- Matt Sease
- Jim Tucker
- Steve Wahrlich
- Tina Wiser

Members Absent

- Bill McGladery
- Trevor Haar
- Paula Ruark
- Betty Stone
- Joe Wilson

Others Present

- Stuart Doggett
- Charlotte Lauerman

Call to Order and Announcements

The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Wahrlich at 11:18am.

Agendas / Approval of Minutes

Motion: It was moved to accept the minutes of the October 25, 2015 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.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive/Budget – Steve Wahrlich, Stuart Doggett

Stuart noted that Tony Brown's board position will need to be filled and that the bylaws allow the executive committee to offer potential replacements with board approval. Steve said there were three potential candidates: Jeff Schoenhard with Kelly Inn and Suites in West Yellowstone and Billings, Brent Olson with the C'Mon Inn in Missoula, and Lisa Sebena with the Lewis & Clark Motels in Bozeman and Three Forks. These candidates will be contacted to see if they are interested and then the board will be polled to make a selection.

The issue of board meeting location was addressed and it was decided that two of the quarterly board meetings will always be held in Helena – a more centrally located location for all.

Committee Goals/Objectives for 2016 were discussed and are as follows:

1. Work to hold MLHA Committee Chairs and board members accountable for the 2016 goals that have been adopted by the board.
2. Work to focus the board member energies on specific committee goals, as needed, to ensure they are achieved.
3. Work to maintain continued financial success of MLHA and Voices in the coming year.
4. Work to organize and facilitate productive discussions between the MLHA board and key policy leaders at state and national level.

Membership / Non Dues – Matt Sease, Charlotte Lauerman

Matt reiterated how productive the sessions with Mark Wilmarth have been and is excited to start working on our goals:

1. Attain goals that were set forth at our Strategic Planning meeting over the next 3 years.
2. Board members to meet personally with 3 current MLHA members, 3 current Allied members and 3 prospective members in each of the next 2 quarters.
3. Produce and send out Newsletter and Benefits as discussed at last Board meeting.

Legislative / PR – Steve Wahrlich, Stuart Doggett

Stuart went over the goals:

Revised Legislative Committee Goals for 2016:

1. Develop a dialogue with legislative and governor candidates and establish forums to discuss key issues involving lodging/tourism before the 2017 legislative session.
2. Develop a dialogue and establish meetings with state agency heads at the Departments of Commerce, Labor and Revenue to discuss key issues involving the lodging/tourism industry.
3. Develop questions for candidates at the local and state level to answer at candidates forums that can help raise awareness about the lodging/tourism industry and gauge their interest in working towards common policy objectives.
4. Track and communicate the status of lodging/tourism related issues being worked on by policy makers at the local and state level to MLHA members. During legislative session MLHA will do weekly updates and special alerts as needed to request members to contact lawmakers.
5. Outreach to local lodging/tourism organizations with an offer for the Executive Director of MLHA to provide a legislative/policy update at their meetings. If the Executive Director is unavailable then he will work to prepare a member of the legislative committee to provide comments instead.
6. Enhance MLHA communication tools to make it easier for members to contact state and national lawmakers.
7. Develop new programs such as discounted room blocks to incentivize the opportunities for members to come to Helena and participate in legislative proceedings when necessary.

Steve noted that because of the election cycle coming up, we'd like to develop a set, group of questions to ask candidates (for consistency). He also noted that we will be able to utilize the AH&LA communication tool to communicate with our state legislators. We will still receive from Stuart weekly, legislative updates of key bills during the session.

He also noted that in the past we have provided some sort of sponsorship at the Governor's Conference. It was decided that we will support the conference this year, but we will not be a financial sponsor.

Jim will take the responsibility of getting Helena hotels (including Jorgenson's) to offer discounted rates to MLHA members when they come to Helena for tourism/legislative issues.

Convention / Education – Karen Baker, Charlotte Lauerman

Karen let the board know that we're attempting a new session format for this year's convention:

First, a knowledgeable speaker on the subject matter that opens the session with a 20 minute introduction to the topic. Second, local (or national) vendors that offer services/products in this area explaining their services/products. Lastly, participants in the session share their best practices in the topic with each other. As the session unfolds, conversation can rotate between speaker, vendors, participants, etc. Topics discussed were Recycling/Going Green, Energy Efficiency, Employee Benefits, Labor Laws and Safety/Insurance/Loss Control/CPR. Each session would last about 90 minutes.

Charlotte spoke about enticing people to attend by more exciting emails and facebook posts as well as deeper discounts for multiple people attending from the same property. Several Keynotes were discussed and Charlotte will look into their session topics and pricing. With the upcoming election, a Governor's candidate forum was also proposed.

AH&LA, Steve Wahrlich

Steve said he would be attending the Legislative Action Summit in Washington DC mid-May.

Sales Council, Valerie Edwards

Valerie let us know that there are currently 36 Sales & Marketing members with some additional members set to join soon. Seven properties bid on the Sales & Marketing Retreat and Chico Hot Springs won. The retreat will be June 5 – 7 and they are still working on the offered education and activities. One new activity that will be added this year will be a Sunday arrival day with the participants doing site visits/tours of all the local MLHA properties.

Department of Revenue

Jim Salandi, Mark Schoenfeld and Jim McKeon talked to us about the lodging tax audit process and how to be in compliance with federal law. States cannot tax the federal government so federal government employees' lodging stays cannot be taxed.

They talked and answered questions about becoming familiar with federally issued credit cards and passed around some handouts, including one on the GSA Smart Pay Program many federal employees use, that help identify them.

Voices of Montana Tourism, Dax Shieffer

Dax gave an update on Voices of Montana Tourism. They are currently in the process of becoming a 501(c) 3 foundation and are working on the Articles of Corporation as well as creating bylaws and resolutions. A board of Stuart, Steve and Racene Friede was formed to put all these pieced together.

He said Voices is becoming a 501(c) 3 to provide education and outreach and better reach all entities involved in tourism. Other goals include getting more engaged with the Department of Commerce and fundraising: focusing more on traditional partners.

Other

Robert asked if others had problems with Expedia re-routing customers to other lodging facilities if you're not a paying customer with them. Valerie gave him the contact's number and Steve suggested taking his hotel off the site as an option to not paying and not having potential customers re-routed.

Next Meeting/Adjourn

The next meeting of the MLHA Board of Directors will be June 16 in Helena. Meeting Adjourned at 2:10pm.