

VISIT BIG SKY

November 14, 2019 *Visit Big Sky Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*
VBS Offices | Big Sky & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Information Center

Present: Tim Drain, Julie Grimm-Lisk, Justin Bain, Andy Wirth, Dan Martin, Krista Traxler, Kirsten King, Josh Treasure

Call-In:

Absent: Ryan Kunz, Ryan Hamilton

Staff Present: Candace Carr Strauss, Emelie McGee, Paige Desatoff, and Lori Wetzel

Public: Sara Huger – Resort Tax, Ron Edwards – BSWSD, Melanie West, Caitlin Quisenberry and Jordan Meyers – Big Sky Chamber; Taylor Middleton, Stacie Mesuda, and Troy Nedved – Big Sky Resort

Call to Order: 8:34 am

PUBLIC COMMENT

All public attendees introduced themselves to the board. No other public comment was made.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes

- A motion to approve the September minutes was made by Andy Wirth, with a second by Krista Traxler. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Financials

- A motion to approve the October financials was made by Krista Traxler, with a second by Julie Grimm-Lisk. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Winter 2019/20 Presentation by Big Sky Resort

- Taylor Middleton, COO of Big Sky Resort introduced himself, Troy Nedved, recently appointed General Manager, and Stacie Mesuda, Public Relations Manager to the board.
- Middleton made comment to the board and staff that he wanted this to be more of an open dialogue than a formal presentation. He provided background on Boyne as a family-owned company in the ski industry, overviewed the strategy behind joining the Ikon and Mountain Collective pass products, noting that it was a strategic move and assists with the growth of the resort and “staying in the game” with the consolidation in the industry.
- The conversation then moved into Q&A. Strauss asked if there were any insights/new additions to the mountain for the upcoming Winter season that Middleton could share with the group. Big projects include: four new heavy lifts in the last three years, an additional 500 parking spots, installation of a new RFID data lift ticketing system, 75 new beds for workforce housing, a full remodel of the Mountain Mall, now known as The Exchange (with an increased capacity of serving 50% more guests) along with a heated plaza, a new employee locker area, and a remodel of M.R. Hummers now named Westward Social. In addition, should be another record-breaking year by all indicators. Middleton also spoke to the bond issuance in 2019 that has precluded them from participating in DestiMetrics as well as sharing other data points such as skier visits as they have done in the past.

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- Mesuda commented on the increased interest in Big Sky by journalists and their desire to visit and write about the destination. Big Sky Resort has been seeing a significant number of hits on national news outlets such as Good Morning America and The Weather Channel.
- Kirsten King asked if anyone could speak to the profile of a typical Ikon/Mountain Collective pass holder. Middleton said the average pass holder stays in the destination 4-5 nights, and that they are expecting growth in visitation from these segments this year as national pass sales are up.
- Dan Martin asked how many Big Sky Resort employees commute from Bozeman and to provide an update on the J-1 employee status. Currently BSR has 1,700 employees, 150-250 max commute in from Bozeman. At peak times, it employs roughly 150 J-1's, however this is a very complicated resource and not always the easiest solution.
- Middleton asked for clarity on the mission of Visit Big Sky.

VBS Board Operations & Administration

Big Sky Chamber/VBS Board Holiday Party – December 10th at 4:30pm, The Rocks

- A reminder was given about the upcoming board holiday party. It will be a co-hosted event with the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce, staff of both organizations and spouses/partners are welcome. Beverages and heavy appetizers will be provided.

The Corner Property Lease Discussion

- Strauss informed the board that potentially starting January or June 1, 2020 rent would be increasing. Currently there is no lease in place between the building owner and the Big Sky Chamber to whom VBS pays for its portion of tenancy. Rent is currently \$4,500/month however, an increase along with the addition of NNN, may bump it to \$7,200/month. Strauss has been looking at other potential properties, in addition to land that could be a future build location. A joint Executive Committee meeting with representatives from VBS and the Big Sky Chamber is scheduled to discuss options. The question was asked as to what the “best” location for the organization is and Justin Bain made note that with proper signage, the best location would Town Center. HOA dues are a consideration however, and they are very high in TCOA compared to other areas. Clearer definition of the future role of the Visitor Information Center is needed. Talks continue and the board will be kept up to date.

NEW STEWARD the Destination

Northwestern Energy – Dec. 3-4th in Big Sky: Energy Gathering

- As a result of attending the Mountain Towns 2030 (MT2030) Net Zero Summit event in Park City this past October, Northwestern Energy convened a key group of community leaders from Big Sky, Bozeman, Helena and Missoula for a two-day “gathering” to talk energy. Strauss was invited to be a part of the discussion and will provide a full debrief at the next board meeting.

Sustainability Committee

- The VBS Sustainability Committee has officially launched and held its first meeting in October. Currently, the committee is made up of twelve local community and business members who are already involved in environmental sustainability efforts or who have expressed interest in participating. A charter was created and the committee plans to meet once a month for the remainder of the fiscal year. The goals of this committee are still being determined, however

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following the GSTC Certification training, researching the Mountain IDEAL is a priority along with spearheading the GHG Co-hort, an opportunity stemming from the MT2030 event.

OLD BUSINESS

DEVELOP the Destination

Funding Committee – Discussion of Revenue Sources, Future BHAGS

- Justin Bain shared that the funding committee has not met yet and therefore he has no updates however Strauss noted that a discussion around future BHAGS is needed and the ability to reach them will be dictated by the ability to fund them so most likely the need to access philanthropy and public grants through the establishment of another 501(c)(3) will be necessary.

Truly360 – Update

- The Truly 360 project is still underway, however the completion date has been pushed back to the end of December. The delay was caused by program changes by Google to the Street View platform back in September.

PROMOTE the Destination

VBS Marketing Committee – Update

- Krista Traxler shared that at the last meeting, Strauss and McGee presented agency choices for consideration to run a summer campaign. Scope of work includes strategy on markets/timeline, creative design, media placement and analytics. The committee is slated to hear pitches from the top three agencies at their January 13th meeting and will bring their final recommendation to the board at the next board meeting.

#FLYBZN Air Development Marketing Committee – Update

- Krista Traxler reported that the current goal of the committee is to get all participating members to pledge a total of \$240,000 in marketing monies. However that is in flux somewhat until the new flights requiring support are determined. A small fraction is being used to renew a billboard in the Long Beach airport for the JetBlue flight that launched last winter. Seat guarantees for future flights are necessary and the idea of potentially tapping Resort Tax dollars in the future was brought up by Strauss. For example, JetBlue is investigating new flight service for this spring/summer, including a non-stop to JFK, NY and Boston, MA. Details should be announced by the holidays.

LEAD the Destination

Resort Tax - Our Big Sky Plan Completed; Ordinance Revision Effective November 25th

- Strauss gave a brief overview of the Our Big Sky Community Strategic Plan that was publicly presented at the Joint County Commissioners meeting in early November. The plan is final, available online and is slated to be adopted by the Resort Tax Board at their November board meeting. This document will provide guidance to the Resort Tax Board with respect to community priorities and funding.

Interim between 66th-67th Montana Legislative Session

- Strauss and fellow Big Sky Chamber Board members, in addition to key Big Sky stakeholders, will be traveling to the Montana Chamber Business Days at the Capitol in Helena on January 6-7th to meet with legislative representatives and talk about local issues. The two interim committees being watched relate to tax policy in the state – consideration of a state-wide sales tax or local option tax. In

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addition, the audit of MOTBD was completed related to their oversight of funds distribution to the Regions/CVBs. It was mostly positive with certain issues to be resolved. Another audit is forthcoming.

STAFF REPORTS

CEO Report

- All topics had been discussed during the meeting, and no CEO report was necessary to give.

ADJORN

- Dan Martin made a motion to adjourn, with a second by Josh Treasure. The motion was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 10:27 am.