

A Meeting of the
MONTANA HERITAGE COMMISSION

September 7, 2018
Virginia City Meeting Hall
316 W. Idaho Street
Virginia City, MT 59755

MISSION

The Montana Heritage Commission preserves and manages historic resources in Virginia City, Nevada City and Reeder's Alley and promotes the appreciation of history through quality visitor experiences.

Commissioners Present

Marilyn Ross, Philip Maechling, Andy Poole, Bill Howell, David Hoffman, Bill Beck, Pam Haxby-Cote, Shera Konen, Pam Bucy, Paul Sihler, Bruce Whittenberg

Commissioners Absent

Timothy Lehman, Stan Ozark

Staff Members Present

Elijah Allen, Executive Director, Amy Barnes, Attorney, Bonnie Martello, Paralegal

Interested Persons

Russ Hamilton, Bill Koch, Dan Allhands, Sara Carlson, Chelsey Rayfield, John Ellingsen, Bill Bennett

Call to Order

The Montana Heritage Commission was called to order by Chair Ross at 9:03 a.m.

Approval of June 1, 2018 Minutes

**Commissioner Howell motioned to approve the minutes with corrections. Commissioner Konen seconded.
Motion carried.**

Welcome Commission Members:

Chair Ross introduced Pam Bucy, and Paul Sihler new members to the Board.

Public Comment

Russ Hamilton, Alder Gulch Accommodations stated he received excellent customer feedback on the renovations of the cabins and hotels. Mr. Hamilton stated financial year end was about 2% below last year which was a record year with it being 14% higher than 2016, making a successful year even with the deficit due to weather and fires.

Bill Koch, Opera House stated that revenues in June were up 25% over last year, he contributed the increase to the shows that were picked for the season; Treasure Island, Cinderella, and Jekyll and Hyde. Bill also stated with school getting out early this year the weekdays were filled with lots of families and kids. Bill finished his presentation requesting the Commission, if any appropriations become available in the future, to look at redoing the bath house, so the performers have suitable facilities during the season.

Commissioner Beck asked Bill if there is a record of where the visitors come from as there is a lot of advertising in the flathead for Virginia and Nevada City and was wondering if it was paying off. Mr. Koch stated that there is a ledger that visitors can sign, but most visitors are from Idaho and other parts of Montana; very few from Missoula and Kalispell area.

John Ellingson thanked the commission for their hard work, and from what he can tell, there were a lot of visitors to Virginia City.

Sara Carlson, Legislative Auditor, introduced Chelsey Rayfield, who is helping with the follow-up to the audit. Ms. Carlson stated that she will be talking to a few of the Commission members to see how things are going after implanting the audit suggestions.

Director's Report

Elijah reported visitor services budget projection was down by 3.5%; the vacation rental income was approximately \$30,000 ending the season with a record revenue season. Elijah stated the wet cooler weather in June and the fires at the end of the season along with train's engine deciding to retire prior to the season's end resulted in not coming close to the projected budget.

Elijah discussed the mountain bike rentals, the pioneer experience, and lodging accommodations renovations have been implemented or completed moving the above business ideas in the Strategic Plan to 'completed.' Elijah also discussed that he is working with Madison County on the possibility of acquiring a tour bus that would help promote tourism in Virginia City and Nevada City. Commissioner Howell stated there could be grants available through Montana Department of Transportation to fund the purchase of a tour bus.

Elijah provided a list of the completed preservation projects which include the Thomas Meagher Cabin, Harding Residence, Bonanza Inn, Nevada City Cabins, and the Fairweather Inn. Elijah also stated that he applied for a grant though an African American Heritage Grant program for the Sara Bickford Residence in the about of \$150,000. Commissioner Poole inquired if the residence is still occupied by the individuals that have been remolding the residence. Elijah stated that the tenants have about nine months left. Then it would be turned into a vacation rental.

Financials

Elijah reviewed the Commission's financial statement with the Commission. Elijah stated that the season ended in the positive with \$42,748.00 in revenues. The vehicle tax increased around \$2,300 from last year. Elijah explained he doesn't foresee any increases for the upcoming year with the projected budget of \$2,184,312.

New Business

McFarland Center

Elijah reported the McFarland Center land transfer has been finalized.

Job Profiles

Elijah requested approval of the possibility of updating MHC job descriptions to include the ability to become trained on fire prevention and EMT training. Elijah expressed his concern with the amount of tourist visiting Virginia and Nevada City without trained professionals to render aid. Mr. Allhands, Madison County Commissioner spoke on behalf of the MHC staff becoming trained. Commissioner Whittenberg asked about the increase of the work comp insurance. **Commissioner Bucy motioned for the approval of Elijah to work with HR on amending the job descriptions to include the ability to participate voluntarily with the fire department along with obtaining basic EMT and first responder training as a job responsibility.**

Commissioner Maechling seconded. Commissioner Poole questioned what impact this action would have on the insurance premiums for the board and the impact of the EMT training. Commissioner Poole stated he was not comfortable with EMT training part of the discussion and would like additional discussion or research on the issue. **Commissioner Howell motioned to amend the motion to allow Elijah to work with HR on amending the job descriptions to include only first responder training. Motion carried.**

Village Pump/Information Center Gas Station

Elijah updated the Commission on the status of the Information Center. He stated that the final task needed to be completed is the Environmental Assessment along with a public hearing regarding the Environmental Assessment. Commissioner Haxby-Cote offered to have the Engineers and Planning Department at the Department of Commerce along with Amy Barnes assist Elijah through the process.

Executive Committee Member Replacement

Chair Ross discussed the need for a replacement of Barbie Durham on the Executive Committee. Commissioner Konen agreed to serve the rest of Commissioner Durham's term. **Commissioner Howell motioned that Commissioner Konen serve the rest of Commissioner Durham's term. Commissioner Poole seconded. Motion carried.**

Old Business

Central City-Land Approval

Elijah provided background information for the new members. Elijah shared a Deed Restriction that was formulated by Commissioner Maechling and Amy Barnes stating that any adjustment to the land would have to be approved by the Commission and the Montana Land Board. Elijah stated, per the appraiser, restricting the land decreases the price per acre. Elijah also stated that the appraiser offered options that would not hinder the price per acre; those options being a Deed Restriction that would prevent the buyers from building in the view shed or have the land be subject to the current zoning code of Virginia City. Commissioner

Maechling went over the Deed restriction that he formulated and expressed his concerns with the assessment without justification of the vast decrease per acre with the Deed Restriction in place. Commissioner Maechling stated he would like to see a proposal from Central City that the Commission could discuss and respond to. The Commission discussed the options presented. **Commissioner Haxby-Cote motioned that an offer be made in writing to Central City to start negotiations regarding the Restrictions. Commissioner Poole Seconded. Motion Carried.**

Commissioner Konen motioned that Amy Barnes construct a proposal to Central City that consists of language that places restrictions within the view shed and no restrictions behind the view shed based on the sketch map. Commissioner Howell seconded. Commissioner Maechling asked if there was a Growth Policy in affect that would potentially hinder the future of subdividing the land. **Motion Carried.**

The next Commission meeting will be December 7, 2018 in Helena.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:57 p.m.