

A Meeting of the
MONTANA HERITAGE COMMISSION

June 23, 2016

Rehearsal Hall, Virginia City, MT

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, Barbie Durham (Proxy), Bill Howell, Philip Maechling, Andy Poole, David Hoffman, Bill Beck, Cyndy Andrus

Commissioners Absent

Jennifer Pelej, Timothy Lehman, Matthew Marcinek, Bruce Whittenberg, Shera Konen, Stan Ozark

Staff Members Present

Elijah Allen, Executive Director; Amy Fitzpatrick, Legal Counsel; Frans Andersson, Legal Intern

Interested Persons

John Ellingsen, Bill Bennett, Mike Edwards, Harlan and Joelle Olson, (Legislative Auditor) - Sarah Carlson

Call to Order

The Montana Heritage Commission was called to order by Chair Ross at 9:00 a.m.

Approval of September 2016 Minutes

Cyndy Andrus made a motion to approve the minutes. Bill Howell seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Bill Bennett welcomed the Commission back to Virginia City it has been a wonderful spring in Virginia City. John Ellingsen echoed Bill Bennett's comments.

Director's Report

This was one of the best Memorial day weekend for visitors and revenue. Elijah stated that Virginia/Nevada City is the number one (1) stated owned tourist attraction for the 5th year in a row, with almost a half of million visitors a year.

Elijah wanted to highlight that Kate Slawski and Donnie Steeley both who are part of the team are getting married on Saturday in the Discovery Park that the Ameri Core cleared this summer.

Elijah expressed his excitement for the business development, there is currently 44 businesses with 17 waiting to start their business in Virginia/Nevada City, which means we could charge better premiums in the future. In tourism the Heritage Commission has partnered with a lot of partners, Elijah couldn't thank the strategic partnerships in helping to make this a successful project.

Elijah discussed some of the preservation highlights in Virginia City, including the newly renovated Fairwether Inn, historic Opera House, and the Wells Fargo Steak House.

Marilyn stated she has been talking with the State Hibernians about their interest in having a feasibility study conducted on the Thomas Francis Meagher Cabin and site next to it, the Irish Hibernians are very interested in helping in securing funds for the Cabin.

Elijah discussed the three projects that they having going on currently in Virginia City: Methodist Church, Sarah Bickford House, and Governor Francis Meagher. He indicated that these projects will be top priorities for the next fiscal year and handed out rack cards that have donation information should donors want to contribute to projects.

Reeder's Alley celebration was a huge success; it was estimated to have brought in around 3500 people. Elijah complimented Cheri Justo (MPA) and Anna Strange (Visit Helena MT) on their hard work in Reeder's Alley. The Wedding venues are going well with currently seven scheduled through the fall.

Elijah discussed the collections of the Heritage Commission. The collections are now uploaded 34,000 pieces into the pass perfect system that now can be viewed on line. Elijah wanted to give the curator's a thank-you on job well done for the work they have done. As of 2016 year there were 73 MHC volunteers that help with collections, artifact restoration, living history and preservation (Elderhostel, Americore).

Elijah indicated that \$913,591 was spent on repairs, maintenance and preservation and \$104,510 on marketing and promotions in FY 2016. (Through June 15th, two week to go for fiscal year end)

Elijah updated the commission on contracting with Mike Ciani who was part of the state historical crew about six (6) years ago and now has an archeologist certification. Also, working with the Heritage Commission is AmeriCorps and Washington State University and are doing work in Virginia/Nevada City. The other one that will be available in August is "Destination Unknown" with the Travel Channel filmed a segment on Henry Plummer's gold.

Elijah introduced Mike Edwards who is repairing the music machines, so that we are able to be used again. Elijah is working with Mike with getting the music boxes up and running in every visitor center in Montana along with one in the capital building. Mike provided a presentation to the Commission on the music box collections.

Elijah also introduced Harlan and Joelle Olson who are living history volunteers and is working on restoring the wagons and carriages in Virginia and Nevada City.

Sarah Carlson- Legislative Auditor:

Sarah discussed where she was in the audit process and let the Commission know that she would be staying through the weekend to get a real tourist perspective. Sarah expressed appreciation on how helpful everyone one has been for the process.

Strategic Plan:

The Commission discussed what they would like to see in the strategic plan and how they would like Elijah report on items that are being accomplished. Cyndy Andrus suggested that the strategic plan should have times lines or measurements on each of the strategic priorities. Elijah expressed concern that the goals and objectives are to general, he would like some goals and tasks being established for the next year. Phillip suggested that they look at the priorities and discuss what we want done now and what we want done in the future. Elijah stated that he would like to provide updates on each priority during his Director's Report in the future. **David Hoffman moved to adopt the strategic plan as written. Motion carried.**

Standing Agenda Items:

Phillip would like to have a member's comments on the agenda for the members of the Commission to be able to an opportunity to discuss issues or items that the Commission has been doing or items that could be added to future agenda items.

Public Comment:

John Ellingsen thanked the commission on the picnic lunch and for a great season.

Meeting adjourned at 2: 30pm.

The next commission meeting will be September 30th 2016 at the Rehearsal Hall in Virginia City, MT.