



Annual Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Noon – 3 p.m. (Tabletop discussion + business meeting)

In-person – Open to the Public

Sanders County Fairgrounds, Pavilion, 30 River Road, Plains, MT 59859

Board Attendance:

Flathead County	Aubrie Lorona	Victoria Noble-Lee, secretary/treasurer
Glacier County	Lisa Cline	Kimberley Woodring
Lake County	Dirk De Coninck	
Lincoln County	Open	
Mineral County	Open	
Missoula County	Shannon Brilz, Chair	Matt Lautzenheiser, Vice-chair
Ravalli County	Barbara Liss	Mary Casper
Sanders County	Ray Brown	Juli Thurston
At large	Linda Howard (Glacier) Riley Polumbus (Flathead)	Edna White (Flathead) Lailani Upham (Glacier)

Ex-officio:

Ramona Holt	Barb Neilan
Diane Medler	

Board Members Absent:

Steve Clairmont (Lake)	Rachel Lynn Meyer (Sanders)
Robynne Gibaud (Sanders)	

Glacier Country Staff:

Racene Friede, President CEO
Kristi McNeal, Director of Operations + Accounting
Debbie Picard, Director of Sales
Lucy Beighle, Director of Communications
Aerionna Skrutvold, Marketing Project Manager

BROWN BAG ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION/PRESENTATION – Called to order at 12:00 p.m. –
Featured Presentations: Ronan Pilot Community Tourism Grant Program (Carissa McNamara) +
Agritourism in Montana (Kim Woodring + Carissa McNamara).

BREAK – 1:03 p.m. to 1:13 p.m.

GLACIER COUNTRY BOARD MEETING: (open to the public) Shannon Brilz, Chair, called the
business meeting to order at 1:13 p.m.

INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Western Montana's Glacier Country acknowledges
that we are on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Sé liš (Salish or "Flathead"), Ksanka
(Kootenai), Qlispé (upper Kalispel or Pend d'Oreille), and Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet) peoples.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: (voluntary)

INTRODUCTIONS – Board members and staff.

Public in Attendance: Jessie Yeager (Windfall), Annie Mead (Windfall), Holly Kuehlwein (Windfall), Rachel (Windfall), Carissa McNamara (MT Farmers Union/Wild Horse Lavender), John and Linda Thurston (Paradise Center), Linda Jones (Friends of Paradise) and one other attendee who did not sign in.

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – Mary Casper

PUBLIC COMMENT: (10 minutes maximum – two minutes per person) No public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Shannon Brilz called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the board meeting on March 11, 2025. Edna White motioned to accept the minutes as presented, with a second by Lisa Cline. There were no discussions or changes. All were in favor. The minutes were approved as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT/DISCUSSION – Victoria Noble-Lee presented the financials for public, private, Tourism Matters, Line of Credit, Air Service Support, and Electronic Funds (EFT Account) accounts as of March 31, 2025. Matt Lautzenheiser motioned to accept the financials as presented, with a second by Aubrie Lorona. There are no discussions or changes. All in favor. Financials approved as presented.

POLICY REVIEW – Governance Documents/Policies, the board reviewed the committee structure per the bylaws. Two years ago, the board initiated a pilot committee model to test a revised structure, which included the following standing committees: Executive, Governance, Finance & Audit, Brand Strategies, Grants, and Stewardship. Racene suggested the Governance Committee review the pilot committee structure to discuss the effectiveness of pilot committees to determine alignment with current organizational needs. The next step during the bylaw review is to assess compatibility with the existing committee structure and identify areas for revision or refinement. A six- to 9-month timeline was discussed for this review.

BOARD BUSINESS REPORTS/DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Shannon Brilz, Chair – Monthly meetings report (Industry, Operations, Marketing, Financial Management, Communications, Ongoing Efforts).

Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) and Flight Guarantee Support

- The board discussed changes to SCASDP federal funding and the resulting request from regional airports. Emphasis was placed on the mutually beneficial relationship between airports and destination organizations in driving regional economic growth and tourism.

A proposal was introduced to expand the use of air service funds beginning in FY25 to include flight guarantee contributions. Racene shared that Glacier Country had agreed to support Discover Kalispell and Explore Whitefish in leasing space for a VIC at GPIA, contributing booth design support and lease costs, with an opportunity to feature Glacier Country's travel guide and responsible recreation messaging.

However, the project was paused due to issues with the lease negotiation, raising concerns about the potential lack of general visitor information in any form at the airport. Board members affirmed the value of visitor information at airports and were asked to consider tying future air service support to the presence of traveler-serving infrastructure, with solutions ranging from simple brochure racks to a professionally designed VIC. The existence of a well-stocked brochure rack meets the needs of the air service support.

If the only solution for visitor information is a leased booth that the local destination organizations develop, manage and maintain, we feel the determination of whether it is self-serve or staffed should be determined by local destination partners funding the project based on resources and visitor needs. The desire for visitor information has not decreased. Still, the way people consume information has changed, and technologies are rapidly emerging that allow people to receive information as they like, from a tangible travel guide to potentially an artificial intelligence agent. Resources should remain fluid and able to adapt and change as visitor behavior does. Everyone expressed confidence that a reasonable solution could be agreed upon.

Dirk DeConnick made the motion to accept the Air Service Support program changes to expand the scope to allow funding expansion and tying air service support to the presence of traveler-serving infrastructure, with a second by Matt Lautzenheiser. There were no further discussions or changes. All were in favor.

Board Retreat – Staff recommended holding the January board retreats in Missoula in 2026 and 2027 in order to reduce overall costs (fewer overnight stays, lower room rates), simplify planning, coordination and maintain a productive and engaging retreat environment. The recommendation supports efficiency while preserving the value of in-person retreats. The board discussed the proposal and agreed that Missoula offers both logistical convenience and financial benefit.

FY 2026 Private Budget Review and Approval – Racene presented the Private budget for FY 2026, highlighting changes from this last year based on actual costs and program changes.

Matt Lautzenheiser motioned to accept the FY 2026 Private Budget as presented, with a second by Dirk DeConnick. There were no discussions or changes. All were in favor. The FY 2026 Private Budget was approved as presented.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – Matt Lautzenheiser, committee chair. Governance Committee review of bylaws and board policies.

Elections – Victoria Lee

3-year term renewals:

Kim Woodring – Glacier County
Riley Polumbus – Flathead County
Dirk De Coninck – Lake County

Matt Lautzenheiser – Missoula County
Barbara Liss – Ravalli County

1-year term renewals:

Diane Medler – Flathead/Discover Kalispell
Barbara Neilan – Missoula/Destination Missoula

Ramona Holt – Missoula/Past Officer

Officers – 2-year terms:

Shannon Brilz – Chair
Matt Lautzenheiser – 1st Vice Chair

Riley Polumbus – 2nd Vice Chair
Victoria Lee – Secretary/Treasurer

Resignations:

Julie Mullins – Julie has announced she is stepping down from Explore Whitefish to concentrate on her family and other endeavors.

Troy Douthit – Accepted a new job as General Manager of the Rock Creek Lodge in Red Lodge

Ray Brown motioned to accept the slate of board members and officers as presented, with a second by Aubrie Lorona. There were no discussions or changes. All were in favor. The slate of board members and officers was approved as presented.

FINANCE and AUDIT COMMITTEE: Shannon Brilz (Co-Committee Chair) and Ramona Holt (Co-Committee Chair). Request for the board to authorize staff to initiate the annual independent financial statement and internal controls audit in the summer of 2025

Lisa Cline motioned to accept the authorization to staff to initiate the annual independent financial statement and internal controls audit this summer, as presented, with a second by Aubrie Lorona. There were no discussions or changes. All were in favor. The annual independent financial statement and internal controls audit this summer was approved as presented.

BRAND STRATEGIES COMMITTEE – Riley Polumbus, committee chair. No report.

GRANTS COMMITTEE – Aubrie Lorona, committee chair. With current schedules, the committee was unable to schedule a meeting prior to the board meeting today. In lieu of a committee meeting, the approval of the current applications is requested today. **The 2024 VIC end-of-year report and 2025 VIC application summary were provided in the** board packet.

Recommend for approval:

- Bigfork Area Chamber of Commerce (\$8,000 – 40-49 hrs./week)
- Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce (\$10,000 – 50+ hrs./week)
- Cut Bank Chamber of Commerce (\$8,000 – 40-49 hrs./week)
- Libby Area Chamber of Commerce (\$10,000 – 50+ hrs./week)
- National Museum of Forest Service History (\$8,000 – 40-49 hrs./week)
- Ronan Chamber of Commerce (\$6,000 – 30-39 hrs./week)
- The Paradise Center (\$8,000 – 40-49 hrs./week)
- Whitefish Area Chamber of Commerce (\$8,000 – 40-49 hrs./week)

TOTAL: \$66,000

Barbara Liss motioned to approve the VIC application as presented, seconded by Ray Brown. Edna raised concerns about funding the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce due to recent disagreements between the Chamber and CVB regarding visitor service approaches. Discussions are ongoing to resolve the issue. The Chamber, a long-time recipient of VIC funding for staffing, is required to make the Glacier Country travel guide available in the VIC. The CVB focuses on businesses within city limits, while the Chamber represents the broader Whitefish area. Victoria and Aubrie noted concern about the lack of support for businesses outside city limits. Following the discussion, it was agreed that any potential changes to the program structure would be addressed later. The motion on the floor remained to approve the current applications as presented under the existing structure. The motion carried with a majority in favor. Edna voted in opposition. The 2025 VIC applications were approved as presented.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE — Linda Howard is the committee chair. No Report.

EXECUTIVE AND STAFF REPORTS: (discussion/action) Administrative, advertising, publicity, sales, partnership, travel guide, webpage/call center, cooperative marketing, joint venture marketing, TAC, Tourism Matters (legislative), Voices of MT.

With the time already going over 3:00, staff highlights will be included in the PDF of the presentation for the highlights in the board packet.

- **COMMUNICATIONS** – Lucy Guthrie-Beighle, Director of Communications. Highlights were provided; see reports for further information. Recent Coverage,
- **TOURISM SALES/INTERNATIONAL SALES** – Debbie Picard, Director of Sales. Debbie is returning from a Travel/Trade Show - Highlights were provided; see reports for further information. Airport Updates, In-language welcome pages – French, Italian, Spanish
- **PROJECT**—Aerionna Skrutvold, Marketing Project Manager. Highlights were provided; see reports for further information. This is a reminder to post Travel Deals and Events. Community Event Marketing Assistance Program.
- **AGENCY AND SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE** – Provided in staff/agency reports in the board packet. Warm Season Campaign Update/video. Canada Campaign video.
- **PRESIDENT CEO** – Racene Friede. Highlights were provided; see reports for further information.

BUSINESS SURVEY + SENTIMENT – What changes are you seeing in your business/community that may be related to Canadian travel trends?

BUSINESS MEETING – Board discussion (tabled items from business meetings or predetermined topics). Encourage all board members to share information and training sessions with their communities and businesses.

BOARD REVIEW/DISCUSSION – Old or New Business at next meeting

Shannon Brilz adjourned the meeting at 3:25 p.m. The next board meeting is - Tuesday, October 14, 2025.

Minutes approved as presented on October 14, 2025, and signed by:

(Presiding officer at the meeting)

Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, October 14, 2025

Lake County (In-person) - Open to the Public