

# MONTANA HERITAGE COMMISSION

Rehearsal Hall

Virginia City, MT

September 15, 2011

*Approved at the December 6, 2011 Meeting*

## **Commissioners Present**

Marilyn Ross, Twin Bridges; General James Womack, Dillon; Philip Maechling, Missoula; Bob Lawson, Whitefish; Bruce Whittenberg, Helena; Barbie Durham; Cameron, Andy Poole, Helena; Bill Howell, West Yellowstone

## **Commissioners Absent**

Diane Rice, Harrison; Paul Tuss, Havre; Randy Hafer, Billings; Colin Mathews, Big Sky; Chas Van Genderen, Helena

## **Staff Members Present**

Dianne Carey, Administrative Assistant; Bonnie Martello, Legal Secretary (Legal Department Commerce)

## **Interested Persons**

Karen Fisher, Jack Murphy, Billy Doyle, John Ellingsen, Carma Sinerius, Bill Koch, Kirk Belding; Chris Stadler, Nancy Allen

## **Call to Order**

The Montana Heritage Commission was called to order by chair Marilyn Ross at 8:45 a.m.

## **Introduction of New Members**

Chair Ross welcomed new Commissioner Bruce Whittenberg, the new Director for the Montana Historical Society, Commissioner Whittenberg replaced Mike Cooney.

## **Public Comment**

Karen Fisher asked if the Montana Heritage Commission would be picking up the cost of the walking map, if not would the State allow the Virginia City Chamber of Commerce to bear the cost of producing the maps. Mrs. Ross state the Montana Heritage Commission would assist the Chamber in getting the proper art work.

Jack Murphy stated that he was very concerned about what is happening in Virginia City and would like to give suggestions.

Billy Doyle stated that there are a lot of private assets in Virginia City and is also very concerned on what goes on in Virginia City.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Poole moved to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2011 meeting as submitted. Commissioner Durham seconded and the motion carried.

### **Financial Report**

Chair Ross presented the financial report for Teri Juneau. Chair Ross advised that the budget was adopted in April.

Commissioner Lawson discussed his concern on how the bed and license tax will pan out, and is pretty sure that the issue will be brought up in the next session. Commissioner Lawson also is concerned about the income stream with Virginia City, stated that MHC needs to look at funds that needs to be paid from concessioner's and that he is real concerned about the budget for MHC and that we need to watch our P & Q's.

Mrs. Ross stated there are a number of concessioner's that pay at the end of the season and she understands the concern over the bed tax bill.

Mrs. Ross advised the commission that Mike Casey, a property manager is in place at Reeder's Alley and is very pleased with his services.

### **Interim Director's Report**

#### *Consultant for RFP*

Mrs. Ross discussed the possibility of exploring the option of hiring a consultant to write RFP's that would go out to concessioner's; this process is similar to what Yellowstone and Glacier Park currently uses. Mrs. Ross indicted that the RFP process could produce additional funding for MHC. Commissioner Howell moved to allow Mrs. Ross to obtain additional information on obtaining a consultant. Commissioner Lawson seconded and the motion carried.

#### *RIF discussion*

Mrs. Ross notified that the RIF process was carried out, notices were given on August 15, 2011 and the last day of employment was August 31, 2011.

### *Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame*

Mrs. Ross was approached by the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame to see if the MHC would have any interest in submitting a RFP. Commissioner Poole stated that the Legislature made it a competitive process. Commissioner Poole also asked if there is an issue with the MHC being a state agency and submitting an RFP to the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame. Commissioner Maechling suggests that the Commission could support Madison County in Submitting and RFP and he also stated he would be happy to look into a landscape analysis.

Commissioner Durham moved that the MHC Support Madison County in efforts to compete for the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame. Commissioner Howell seconded with the clarification that the MHC would not be committing to any land or other services. Motion carried with Commissioner Poole not voting on the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame matters.

### *Railroad issues and discussions*

John Ellingsen met with Montana Rail Link on September 14, 2011 regarding the possibility of getting the train back up and running on land owned by the MHC, They advised it is not possible to get the large locomotive in the turns without moving outhouses, but it would be possible to construct railroad tracks for the smaller locomotive, but to construct the tracks to meet standards would take a considerable amount of money.

Commissioner Howell expressed that the History Foundation has had a lot of discussions regarding the train and thinks that the MHC should make every effort to get the train back up and running. Commissioner Womack asked if the train made money, will the train pay for its self. What are the liabilities? Mrs. Ross advised that the yes the train made money, but not a lot after maintenance, wages, etc. Commissioner Whittenberg asked if the commission had considered approaching BNSF or Montana Rail Link to maybe look at it as a community project. Commissioner Poole stated that he thinks it important to get the train up and running but that some great consideration should be taken regarding the easement issues on the land, he also stated that there may be some grant monies through the Big Sky Economic Development fund for engineering. Commissioner Lawson stated he also supported getting the train up and going but to not over look custom locomotive leasing options.

Mrs. Ross stated that decisions need to be made regarding the railroad and proposed that a committee be formed to deal with the railroad issues. Commissioner Durham motioned to form a study committee for the railroad. Commissioner Lawson seconded. Motion Carried.

The Committee will consist of the following; Commissioner Howell; Commissioner Durham; Commissioner Maechling; community member John Ellingsen; community member Billy Doyle; community member Karen Fisher; and community member Chris Stadler. Commissioner Howell was appointed chair of the committee.

### **New Business**

The Montana Heritage Commission will host the Joint ALHFAM Conference September 19-22, 2013, thanks to the great efforts of Dan Thyer. Mr. Thyer will be putting together a Committee with community involvement to plan for the upcoming event. The Conference will bring a lot of people to Virginia City and Nevada City.

The Commission still has a vacant seat, Chair Ross will look into who appoints the seat and get in touch with them.

### **Public Comment**

Karen Fisher citizen of Virginia City/Nevada City complimented the commission on trying to listen to the communities' concerns. She also would like a member of the MHC staff or commission member to be part of the 2013 celebration committee.

Carma Sinerius, citizen of Virginia City/Nevada City. She stated that people are just excited to ride the train and don't cut community members out of the discussion with the railroad.

Jack Murphy commented that he is very impressed with the commission meeting despite the negative comments within the community. He also recommended that the Commission consider construction the big engine for long term plan and that the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame is not an appropriate for Virginia City makes no sense it should be located in cowboy country.

Nancy Allen commented on if there was a very visual commemorative to the Bovey family it may change the land owner's decision.

Bill Koch wants the commission to keep in mind that the train not running was a very hard hit this summer, it is very vital to the community and it is stalling people getting to Nevada City.

Kirk Belding expressed if the train does not get up and running by next summer it would be a disaster for Virginia City/Nevada City, he would like to see at least the small train up running on MHC owned property.

### **Executive Session**

Chair Ross stated “the following portion of the meeting relates to matters of individual privacy. As Commission chair I have determined that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. As such, this portion of the meeting will be closed.”

The meeting was reopened at 2:20 p.m.

### **Public Comment**

John Ellingsen wanted to thank the commission members for serving on the commission.

Carma Sinerius stated one word for the commission to keep in mind “interpretation” and asked if there were any plans of opening the museum, and stated if not that’s big loss.

Nancy Allen asked if there was any way to put something on the new fence to make it look weathered and who should she call if there are vandals in Nevada City during the winter. Chair Ross told the audience to contact the police if anything looks out of the ordinary.

Jack Murphy suggested to the Commission that maybe MHC should explore the idea of season pass or punch cards that could be purchased.

The Meeting Adjourned at 2:45