

A Meeting of the
MONTANA HERITAGE COMMISSION
December 9, 2016
Reeder's Alley Convention Center
Helena, 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, Bill Howell, Philip Maechling, Andy Poole, Timothy Lehman, Bill Beck, David Hoffman

Commissioners Absent

Bruce Whittenberg, Barbie Durham, Stan Ozark, Matthew Marcinek, Jennifer Pelej, Shera Konen, Cyndy Andrus

Staff Members Present

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

Interested Persons

Chere Justo, Montana Preservation Alliance; Anna Strange, Visit Helena; Sarah Carlson, Legislative Auditor

CALL TO ORDER

The Montana Heritage Commission was called to order by Chair Ross at 9:10 am.

Approval of September 30, 2016 Minutes

Corrections to the September minutes were requested. **Commissioner Maechling made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Commissioner Howell seconded. Motion carried.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Overview of Collections/Preservation for FY17

Elijah reported that the Virginia City Preservation Alliance awarded the Heritage Commission a Commercial Award for the -preservation of the Fairweather Inn.

Elijah presented an overview of the Collections/Preservation projects that is organized by the MHC staff, it can be viewed at the Town Hall and the Post Office or on line at www.virginiacitymt.com. The Fairweather Inn

was the top preservation project this season. The Opera House, the Brewery, the Montana Post, and the Pioneer Cabin in Reeder's Alley had upgrades this season.

Elijah reviewed the Business Plan with the Commission that was handed out last meeting; he discussed what marketing vendors have been selected, what is working what is not working. Elijah stated that they are at 98% capacity for rental property so they are starting to look at another way to increase profits. Elijah has contracted with a Tourism Event Coordinator to focus on bringing large groups to Virginia City for weddings, retreats and family reunions.

Elijah went over his top projects that he would like to accomplish this coming season which include the following: cosmetic updates for Reeder's Alley, stay and play venues in Virginia/Nevada City, mountain bike rentals, and civil war tents.

Elijah discussed the partnership category from the Strategic Plan. Currently the Montana Heritage Commission is a member of fifteen (15) local Virginia City Chamber Associations and currently sits on three of the boards. He stated that he has encouraged his team to be more involved in the community. Donny Steeley and Jeff Cleverley have agreed to be on the Volunteer Fire Department. The staff are very involved in the local preservation board and the chamber.

Commented [BA1]: ? Last names? If we have them...

Commissioner Maechling asked if there was anyone discussing how Virginia City/Nevada City became a town, and how things made it here. Elijah stated he must give credit to the local historians and Ellen Baumler for making videos of the history of Virginia City and Reeder's Alley. Commissioner Maechling stated that there probably is a grant opportunity with Humanities Montana and he would be happy to contact them.

Land Appraisal

Elijah updated the Commission on the status of the land donation. The appraisal of the land is not complete and Evalyn Johnson has not signed a letter of intent, but once Evalyn returns from visiting her family, he is hopeful that the appraisal will be completed and Evalyn will sign a letter of intent. Elijah stated that once Montana Heritage Commission receives the letter of intent, the Commission will then have to conduct a public hearing regarding donation of the land. Commissioner Howell, Commissioner Poole, Chair Ross, Commissioner Maechling volunteered to represent the Commission at the public hearing.

Discovery Channel

Elijah presented the Commission a high light of the Discovery Channel's Documentary that was filmed in Virginia City about Plummer's Gold.

Reeder's Alley Update-Weddings

Anna Strange, Programs Coordinator for the Visit Helena, who is contracted with the Montana Heritage Commission for promotions and management of Reeder's Alley, provided an overview of the wedding season. Anna stated that there were 10 wedding bookings from June to October and 58 meetings in the conference center. She stated she was satisfied with the numbers for the first year. Anna also stated that she has been working with the Montana Radio Company for advertising and it has been successful so she will move forward with the radio advertising along with Facebook. Anna said the Alley is the easiest thing to promote. Commissioner Maechling noted that KUFM - Montana Public Radio announces community events daily for no cost and an additional listening group.

Financial Report

Elijah reported to the Commission that they were not successful on the funding requests. The request to move seasonal workers to be paid out of the general fund and the Long-Range Preservation both were denied. Elijah stated that there is currently \$100,000.00 in the account to cover staffing expenses, current contractors and utilities. Elijah stated that the next two years will be tight and the Commission will only be conducting emergency repairs and basic maintenance. Elijah discussed other funding sources to work with including vehicle license fees, Reeder's Alley rent's and Virginia City's seasonal revenue. Elijah reviewed the projected budget with the Commission; he asked for flexibility to be able to utilize funds if needed for basic repairs and maintenance. Elijah asked for approval of the projected working budget of \$1,184,665. ***Commissioner Lehman moved to approve the projected working budget presented. Commissioner Poole seconded with a request that any source of revenue received be presented at the next commission meeting. Motion carried.***

Village Pump-Barbie Durham

Chair Ross, presented on behalf of Commissioner Durham, who has been involved in a grant for the clean-up and repurpose of the old gas station that is located at the entrance of Virginia City from Ennis. This property is under the EPA Brownfields program. Chair Ross, is hopeful that the property will be qualified for funding to clean-up the property and to repurpose the building into a visitor center.

Chere Jiusto-MPA

Chere presented the MPA's annual report that encompassed masonry repair, sprinkler system repair and clean-up of the grounds at Reeder's Alley. Chere also discussed the Infrastructure Coalition that has been formed in the State of Montana to support the improvement of infrastructure in the State of Montana. Chair Ross thanked Chere on behalf the Commission for the work performed this season.

Legislative Update

Elijah discussed with the Commission the two (2) proposals that were presented for funding this session. The two proposals were moving MHC FTE personal services into the general fund and \$750, 000 for Virginia City and Reeder's Alley, both were declined. Commissioner Maechling commented that historic preservation is not the first thing people think about today and he thinks that there is a huge educational gap in public information on infrastructure and preservation work.

Legislative Auditor-Sarah Carlson

Sarah reported that she has prepared a draft report of the Audit. She stated that there are a lot of positives in the report. Sarah stated that the main areas that she is making recommendations to the Commission include the following oversight (role and responsibilities of commission members) and business planning and the business plan. Sarah anticipated that the final draft would be ready for the Commission to review in about a month.

Chair Ross discussed with the Commission about having a one day training for the Commission that goes through the obligations and responsibilities of the board at the spring meeting. Commissioner Poole expressed that whatever training that is offered, he would like to see a program created that would be used annually for Commissioners.

MHC Commissioner Comments

The Commission set the following dates for the upcoming meetings:

March 10, 2017- Virginia City
June 9, 2017- Virginia City
September 8, 2017- Virginia City
December 8, 2017- Helena, MT

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.