

ATTRACTING BUSINESS INTO BOULDER/KEEPING BUSINESSES

June 15, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Linda Norden. After self-introductions of attendees, Drew Dawson introduced **Meg O'Leary**, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. Director O'Leary introduced **Sean Becker**, Administrator of the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development in the Montana Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce (DoC) had been invited to present to the committee by the Governor's budget Director Dan Villa.

Director O'Leary said she was very excited that the DoC was invited to participate with the Boulder community on the "front end". She emphasized that she and her staff do their best when they listen to the community's needs and then help to tailor grants and technical assistance to meet that those needs.

Director O'Leary congratulated the community on receiving the Big Sky Trust Fund grant, made available through the DoC and indicated this \$20,000 grant is the beginning of a flourishing relationship. Most everything will tie back to the Master Plan including the marketing plan and the "branding" of Boulder.

Sean Becker, former Mayor of Bozeman, oversees an office with broad responsibilities including business finance, census and bed tax – among others. Their job is to help put together the story for Boulder, to provide technical assistance, to provide information sheets and details...and to make sure that the DoC resources are built in. **RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENTS** are a logical next step for Boulder – a team of experts who come to Boulder, interview community members and leaders and suggest a list of projects and resources that may be appropriate. The **RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENTS** can be conducted in coordination with the development of the Master Plan – a very symbiotic relationship. These are sponsored by the Montana Department of Commerce in coordination with the Montana Economic Developers Association and the Jefferson Local Development Corporation. The local governments provide assistance as well. The individuals also provide follow-up to the community – sort of a mentorship program.

Sean discussed the Big Sky Trust Fund and planning for jobs creation...for example – a trails hub that can be marketed to the Geo-Traveler. The next five years will increase the sustainability. There will be an opportunity to look at the communities between Yellowstone and Glacier Parks and the potential of tourism and infrastructure grants and possible help with mapping and getting people TO Boulder.

Within the Office of Tourism and Business Development, there is also a small business development center, filming program, finance assistance program and a grant program for workforce development. In-state, they are working with stakeholders and communities to help with tourism opportunities.

The **MASTERPLAN** will help to develop the Boulder Brand. The Office of Tourism and Business Development has a number of regions. Boulder is part of the Southwest Region (Gold West Region). It is important to coordinate with them and to visit with the convention and

visitor's bureau in Helena and Butte. When advertising, there are a bit different, but converging approaches, for business development and for tourism. It would be good to get more people on the Gold West County Board. When branding, it is important to use the "big brand" of Montana and the Gold West Region, but then drill down to Boulder's brand also. This helps to drive resources and tourists/businesses to Boulder.

Several important websites are: www.MarketMT.com , www.Mtfinanceonline.com, and www.Tourism.mt.gov

An example of a successful story is the Gold festival in Butte where DoC provided some initial financial resources. Another example is providing applications for smart phones and creating a walking tour using the smart phones.

The treasure statement endowment program provides funding for water, sewer, bridges, roads.

Boulder should look at possible resource through Main Street Montana – of which it is currently a member.

There is certainly a potential for DATA CENTERS which provide for higher paying jobs. Businesses are eligible for Big Sky Trust Fund Planning Grants and Primary Sector Workforce Training Program Grants.

The Community Development Block Grant System can pair the University System paired with a new business partner. The Master plan may bring forth a variety of other options.

There is some funding for architectural assessments (e.g. what is being done on south campus at MDC). This comes out of the Master Plan.

There was additional discussion of DATA CENTERS, AIRNB, bed and breakfasts, trail system including trail system assessments.

Seasonality is a problem. So – let's be the community that drives people to us in the winter and create marketing momentum.

Bicycle shelter at the Fairgrounds – discussion on how to make this known statewide. For instance, there is a developing statewide trails app. Creating the technological platform for bicycle shelters/paths using the same application and have all of the data communicate across the state. Visit with Gold West about this. Need to make sure the shelter is included in the DoC list.

Discussed visiting with/learning from Shirley Beck in Philipsburg.

Greg, The River, has made all of the logistical arrangements for highway signs advertising his business. Must meet all DOT requirements including being open 7 days per week and for all meals. The cost of \$1100 per sign initial cost and then \$110 per direction, per month. Question was raised – *is there a way we could fund this for the first year in order to get good data on its impact?*

What other things could be done to support business here?

- Look for something that is a need
- Capitalize on that need
- Consider formation of an investment group of Boulder area persons
- Create tax increment financing district. Can bond for the district and pay off through the taxes

There was discussion of the need for an additional motel/hotel here. There was a motel firm that was looking here several years ago. Rusty Guilio is aware of it.

Greg – if we think a hotel is a good idea, then let's figure out a way to get it done. Let's make it happen. (Need to look at what assistance the DoC could provide).

What other things could be done to support business here?

- -look for something that is a need. Capitalize on a need and move forward on it?
- -create an Investment Group of local persons to pool their money.
- Create tax increment financing district. Can bond for the district and pay off through the taxes.

Motel firm was here several years ago. Rusty Guilio knows about it.

Greg - if we think a hotel is good, then let's figure out a way to get it done. (What assistance could DoC provide?)