

# MAIN STREET MONTANA PROJECT

A BUSINESS PLAN *For Montana by Montanans*

## Small Business and Downtown KIN Meeting Minutes

September 29rd, 2015

11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Butte, Montana

Prepared by Michaela Wolfinger

### *KIN Members Present*

Sarah Calhoun, Co-Chair

Scott Brown, Co-Chair

Sarah Calhoun

Paige Williams

Tami Christenson

Scott Brown

Nick Kujawa

Mike Dowling

Courtney McKee

Charlie Beaton

### *Staff/Public*

John Rogers, Governor's Office of Economic Development

Michaela Wolfinger, MT Department of Commerce

Mary Craigle, MT Department of Commerce

Janice Wannebo, MT Department of Commerce

Meeting started at 11am with introductions and preliminary comments by the co-chairs.

Mary Craigle gave presentation of the highlights and accomplishments of the Main Street Montana Project, available at [mainstreetmontanaproject.com](http://mainstreetmontanaproject.com). Presentation included information on the upcoming Peer to Peer Workforce Symposium.

John Rogers gave presentation on the status of the business portal and a run through of registering.

Questions: Is there a budget for upkeep? Will it remain past this administration?

Answers: Website is in house, no need to for extra budget. Yes, we hope it will.

Rogers also gave an overview of the Come Home Montana Campaign and his office's recent efforts marketing it (Homecoming games, social media, etc.)

Rogers spoke about meeting with MACO. His office has been looking at the electronic presence of Montana cities and towns. Looking to get more conformity with permits.

Suggestions were made for the portal including:

Links to financing options (portal already has a lot of them) (Scott Brown)

Links to banks, banks, HR and Accounting hiring options (Sarah Calhoun)

What about grant opportunities? (Courtney McKee)

A number of other KINs have stated we need to work on recruiting workforce.

They Labor Day report shows workforce/population won't replace what is lost creating a workforce shortage.

Looking at ways to stop/ slow down leakage of Montana workforce. Make sure we are supporting our own employers. These are some of the ideas behind Choose MT recruitment website.

GOED plans to add a community/ town page to the website.

Courtney McKee suggested making sure this is not spamming

Tax incentive webinar from Manufacturing KIN will be posted to Main Street Montana website for the Small Business and Downtown KIN.

Mary Craige showed the KIN Commerce's MarketMT.com

12:30PM Lunch Break

1PM Facilitated session to finalize recommendations to the Governor.

Review of Small Groups

Capital Resources and Incentives

Market Business to Business

Nurture New Businesses

The KIN had a brief brainstorming session

-Would a small business conference be useful?

-hard copy welcome packet that includes options for hiring agencies

-5 year congratulatory letter (10year, 20year, etc)

-PSAs/contests

-wayfinding app

MT Historic preservation Tax was brought up (Nick Kujawa)

-comes from interim study commission

Is there an incentive for startups to locate downtown?

Urban renewal districts? Universal incentive?

Nick Kujawa volunteered to ask the Governor for task force to increase MT historic preservation tax.

## FINAL RECCOMENDATIONS

### **Make state health insurance coverage available to Montana domiciled small business (below 50 employers)**

- Research states where they currently provide this option

### **Add resources for small Businesses including:**

- Welcome packet
- Congratulatory letter from Governor on business anniversaries
- Enhancements to the business portal
- PSA's (and contests on the best) highlighting small business

### **Create bipartisan taskforce to examine incentive and tax barriers to small business including:**

- A tax credit for investing in historic downtown (20% of qualified rehab expenses)
- Incentive to grow the types of small businesses (and combinations) that make downtown thrive including infrastructure and beautification.
- Redesign the alcohol licensing system to promote parity across industries.
- change DEQ hazardous materials inspection requirements to only apply to buildings older than 1990 (date when all hazardous materials were no longer used)
- Direct board of housing to set aside 10% of annual low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) funding to historic downtown residential projects.

### **Hold an annual small business symposium that includes:**

- Networking time
- Alliance for on-going support organization after the conference
- Discussion forum – alliance members
- Sessions for businesses in all phases of life cycle
- Dynamic job fair
- Training opportunities for employees, managers (that include CTE options for some)
- Symposium needs to be state-private partnership so its sustainable; grassroots