

# Gardiner Chamber of Commerce

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*The Gardiner Chamber of Commerce serves our community through developing local tourism while endorsing stewardship of the Yellowstone Ecosystem.*

Meeting date: **October 15, 2020 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm**

Location: Call in and Chamber Conference Room

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Meeting

## **Agenda:**

### **1. Chamber Business**

**1.1 Roll Call & Introductions** Edwin Johnson, Kelly Burns, Trina Smith, Mike Skelton, Alex Roberts, Sabina Strauss

### **1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes**

September Minutes were approved with no edits needed. Edwin Johnson moved for approval; Mike Skelton seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

### **2. Yellowstone NPS – Mary Wilson - National Park Service**

**5 min.**

Mary Wilson called into the meeting and provided the following updates.

September's visitation was increased 20% in 2020 compared to 2019.

The elk rut is wrapping up, but the safety messaging is important to disseminate.

There will be a road closure above the Mammoth Corrals on October 21<sup>st</sup> from 8am to 12pm.

It is important to remind visitors that this is the time of year to expect inclement weather than can cause adverse road conditions and closures. To get road updates, visit the Current Conditions Page at [www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell) or [call 307.344.2117](tel:307.344.2117) for recorded updates.

The Trumpeter Swan restoration project continues to be underway.

Steamboat's last eruption was 10.14.20.

The Board asked about how park staff are trained to not encourage visitors to view grizzlies at Tom Miner Basin. Members noted that visitors have told them that Entrance Station staff have told them to go to that location to view wildlife. Wilson noted that she will connect with her staff.

## **2.1 US Forest Service – Mike Thom – USFS**

**5 mins.**

Campground hosts have concluded their seasons in the district. Eagle Creek, Tom Miner, and Canyon Campgrounds will remain open this season. Soda Butte Campground will remain open for a few more weeks.

Pending or current road closures include Upper Eagle Creek, Bald Mountain and Bear Fork.

There has been an influx of dispersed camping. The Forest Service District will be starting conversations with residents on long term, short term solutions on how to manage dispersed camping.

The Slip & Slide project is underway. The Forest Service District will further the conversation to connect with persons who didn't understand why the project is underway.

## **3. Committee Updates**

**45 min.**

### **3.1 Office Manager Report – Sara Fleming**

Fleming began her report with updating the Board on highlights from the State Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) Meeting that took place on October 6<sup>th</sup>. The following updates were disseminated.

- Fall Visitation.
  - Bozeman Airport is seeing flights being booked for November to be 80% above normal. Airlines are being aggressive in adding service to Montana than the nation as a whole.
  - Yellowstone and Glacier saw larger numbers of people who did not know how to recreate.
  - According to Adara's data, Montana is greatly outperforming most travel destinations.
- Lodging Tax
  - State-wide collections are down 57% over the same quarter of 2019. Summer is predicted to be a completely different story.
- Travel Trends nationwide
  - The travel market is ramping up. 50% of travelers are excited to travel again, the highest percentage it's been since the beginning of the pandemic.
  - Travelers prioritize destinations and experiences where health and safety measures are acknowledged and practiced.
    - Expedia's research showed that 9 out of 10 travelers will make travel decisions based on health and hygiene protocols within a destination.
    - Longwoods International had a recent report that found that about 40-50% of travelers are hesitant to travel because of unclear travel restrictions and confusion about varying health and safety protocols.
    - Destinations with vast outdoor experiences are highly favorable. In Destination Analysts surveys two of the top three travel priorities were:
      - Getting away from crowds
      - Enjoying Nature
        - We obviously fall into these travel priorities.
  - VisitMT is achieving record levels of organic website traffic and has continued to break records since May.
  - Official stats are not out yet, but out-of-state visitor trends have likely caught up to previous years. Nearby states are also seeing significant growth.
- International Travel
  - Domestic travel will recover faster than International Air Travel. Some travel experts see international travel being depressed through much of the decade.
- Take away from TAC: Let your customers know that you are prioritizing health and safety protocols. This is proving to promote more than we first realized and can add value to your marketing platforms.

- There is a need for the MT Safety Messaging Campaign not only to encourage healthy practices, but in turn promote Montana as a state that takes travelers health seriously.
- Board Members noted that this information should be shared with the rest of Chamber Membership. Fleming will add it to the membership email.

The letter to Bill Burg requesting lighting to be improved on Stone Street was sent earlier this month. Members noted that the lights have been fixed.

Fleming is going to reach out to NPS regarding placing trash containers at the location that was lost in the fire. Mary Wilson noted that she would inquire about who is responsible for that.

Board Members inquired about the Gift Certificate project that is underway for the Montana Aware Campaign. Fleming asked for advise for how to spend the allotted portion of the grant in a manner that is fair to membership while be an efficient project to complete. The discussion will continue, and Fleming will update the board when a plan is established.

#### Rodeo Grounds Discussion

The Board reviewed and discussed Xanterra's proposal to have vehicles parked at the Rodeo Grounds throughout the winter in exchange for the installation of a gate in addition to leveling and grading the grounds in the Spring. The Board agreed that the Chamber should pay outright for the proposed items. Members advised and agreed that the Chamber will charge Xanterra the bulk rate of \$35.00 per month, per vehicle and to discount the rate for completing leveling and grading of the grounds per the estimate of a third-party entity. Fleming will inform Mike Keller of the proposed agreement and update the Board as needed.

### **3.2 Director/CVB Report – Terese Petcoff**

*Terese is on maternity leave and will be absent until conclusion of her leave.*

## **5. Public Comment**

**5 min.**

#### Board Attendance

Trina Smith noted that Board Member attendance at scheduled meetings has been lacking and that it should be revisited in future discussions. Fleming will add it to November's agenda.

#### Successful Gardiner

The organization is needing assistance with marketing and committee attendance issues.

## **6. Date of Next Meeting: November 19, 2020 12pm – 1pm.**

*Meeting was adjourned.*