



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: **Thursday, October 20th, 2022 from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM**

Location: Gardiner Chamber of Commerce 216 Park St. Gardiner, MT & [Virtual via Zoom](#)

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Monthly Board of Directors Meeting

All meetings are recorded and available upon request by emailing executivedirector@gardinerchamber.com.

Agenda:

1. Chamber Business

1.1 Roll Call & Introductions

Chelsea Deweese, Amanda Hagerty, Debbie Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Mike Skelton, Trina Smith, Sabina Strauss, and Billie Taylor

Excused Absences: Mike Keller

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

Ondrus moved to approve.

Smith seconded. Minutes from September 2022 pass.

2. Committee Updates

2.1 Mike Thom – US Forest Service Gardiner District
Not Present

2.2 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone National Park Service
Not present

2.3 Terese Petcoff – Director's Report
Mike Skelton presented the following update on behalf of Petcoff

GRAD Trash Canisters

All canisters that the Chamber committed to placing for the project, aside from one, have been placed throughout Gardiner. The last canister to be placed was created and donated by the Gardiner Public School welding class and will be located on the corner of Park and 3rd St. It is currently in the Chamber vestibule and will be placed once it is determined to be 100% bear proof.

Grants

Petcoff will apply for grant funding through the SW MT Flood Relief Fund for the Chamber.

Budget Payroll

Due to the Montana Disaster Grant for CVBs and the Yellowstone Country Tourism Region VIC grant Petcoff was able to save a total of \$21,212.90 towards 2022 budgeted payroll costs.

Yellowstone Country Tourism Region VIC Grant Stats & Report

The final report for the Yellowstone Country VIC Grant was submitted on October 14th. Petcoff thanked Fran Ragsdale for her assistance in putting together the final report. Key findings from the report were:

- Visitation was down 79% compared to 2021: 17,586 visitors vs. 83,991 visitors. See print out for details on numbers.
- When looking at visitation numbers from late May (5/28 – 5/31) 972 people and early June (6/1 – 6/12) 2,494 it suggests that we were on par for a record breaking summer.
- Visitor breakdown 13,735 visitors during business hours and 3,851 visitors after hours utilizing our public restroom facility/vestibule.

3. Outstanding Business

3.1 Sesquicentennial No Report

4. New Business

4.1 Flood Incident & Recovery

Skelton gave an update on the Old Gardiner Road based on his travel experiences (not on behalf of Yellowstone National Park Service) that road is looking great, all of the guard rail to be placed has been delivered, and road crews continue working diligently from dawn to dusk to complete the road.

4.2 Park County Staff Gardiner Community Check-in

Park County Commissioners Bill Berg, Steve Caldwell, and Clint Tinsley were present on behalf of Park County to check-in with Gardiner community members.

Strauss inquired on who was running for reelection, Caldwell was the only Commissioner running for reelection. He explained that the commissioners rotate in serving two-year terms.

Strauss inquired about the timeline for having two ways out of Gardiner, e.g. rebuilding the Old Yellowstone Trail through Yankee Jim Canyon, as the only current option is US HWY 89 S. Caldwell stated that, due to the flood, there is a need for additional engineering. Berg reported that when Federal Highways was in Park County approx. a month prior they looked into Old Yellowstone Trail and where the previous Carbella Bridge was, among other areas impacted by the flood. Once the report from their visit is received there will be a better understanding as to how they can proceed with the projects. Caldwell reminded that when Old Yellowstone Trail was approved to be improved it was only for secondary emergency access and not for everyday vehicle travel. The project for Old Yellowstone Trail is still approved and will proceed when able, with hopes to start and be completed next summer.

Berg reported that when the corridor study for improving Old Yellowstone Trail was completed, it was identified that the water lines (wastewater and water) located beneath the Yellowstone River in Gardiner could be a vulnerable. This was proven true as due to the flood the water line was completely severed and wastewater line was damaged. As identified in the study, an option to negate this possibility would be building a pedestrian bridge across the Yellowstone River in Gardiner that also houses the utility lines. Both FEMA, Army Corp of Engineers, Gardiner Water & Sewer, and Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), are looking at this.

Regarding the Carbella Bridge, Berg reported that signs for funding to replace the bridge is promising but there is not yet a timeline, as full funding has not been secured.

Ondrus inquired about additional grant funding for businesses to assist in making it through the winter. Caldwell spoke to potential funding by applying to the SW MT Flood Relief Fund through the Park County Community Foundation. Berg assured Ondrus that he continues to remind legislatures about our need and spoke to a recent conversation he had with Senator Tester. Tinsley referred to a conversation he had with Governor Gianforte in which he was told that there may be sources coming on a federal level, but he does not know when, how much, or who would qualify. Skelton reported that he has been told the State of MT has no additional funding, however, there is a promising lead with potential Federal Community Block Grants becoming available to communities that have suffered natural disasters. Skelton has reached out, to no reply, to both Senator Daines's and Senator Tester's offices inquiring if any of the \$2 billion for these grants has been

ear marked for our communities. Dewese reiterated the importance of communicating that Gardiner's economy has not rebounded which has created a ripple effect through every industry in Gardiner – our community is still in desperate need of assistance.

Skelton requested the Commissioners explain the proposed 2022 Park County Housing Action Plan (HAP) and how it would look if the 2022 HAP were adopted into the Park County Growth Policy. Caldwell explained that the 2022 HAP is a non-regulatory document that provides, if proposed by the Park County Planning Board and then subsequently approved by the Commission, a framework and potential tools or guidelines that Park County could utilize to combat the housing crisis. Caldwell reiterated that even if it the 2022 HAP was adopted into the Growth Policy for any of the proposed tools laid out in the 2022 HAP to move forward protocols, e.g. informing the public, public comment periods, etc. would still have to be followed in order for a tool to pass. Further Caldwell explained that in reality there is really nothing in the 2022 HAP that the Commission couldn't try to instate now as long as they followed the proper protocols. He also reminded the meeting that the County cannot tax short-term rentals. All commissioners spoke to the impacts of Gardiner's housing crisis and that time and time again surveys of resident's report that the housing crisis is at the top of the list.

Strauss and fellow Gardiner community member Missy Miculka stressed the importance of communicating what exactly the 2022 HAP is to the Gardiner Community. Strauss and Miculka spoke to further explaining what exactly a non-regulatory document means, what the funding sources could be, and Miculka spoke to having equal representation from the communities through out Park County in regarding to the creation of the HAP. Berg stressed that the members who were involved in the 2022 HAP are very aware of the housing challenges in the community as well as the importance of short-terms rental in the community.

5. Public Comment

Date of Next Meeting: November 20, 2022 12:00PM – 1:00PM