

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 21, 2021, 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

Agenda:

Chamber Business

1.1. Roll Call & Introductions

*Kelly Burns, Deborah Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Amanda Hagerty, Alex Roberts, Mike Skelton
Excused Absence: Sabina Strauss, Chelsea Deweese, & Mike Keller*

1.2 Approval of May Board Meeting Minutes

Skelton noted edits needed to the September 2021 minutes regarding Board Member Term Limits and recommended changes. Upon adopting the edits, Ondrus made a motion to approve the September Board Meeting Minutes. Mackey seconded. Minutes approved.

1.3 Previous Action taken by the Board

Bylaw Changes and Voting Discussion

The proposed changes outlined were emailed to the Board in advance and made public in the Gardiner Community Newsletter. Skelton and Petcoff explained how the in person and virtual voting will work. Voters must be a Gardiner Chamber of Commerce member in good standing to vote. One vote per membership.

The proposed amendment to Article 5 – Directors, Section 3 of the Gardiner Chamber of Commerce Constitution and By Laws that needs to be voted on by the Chamber membership. The amendment would allow interested Chamber members to serve on the Board of Directors for up to six (6) years (three (3) - two (2) year terms) instead of the current four (4) years (two (2) - two (2) year terms).

Current Article 5 – Directors, Section 3:

Terms of Directors shall be for two (2) years and so as to provide for a majority of holdover directors each year, there shall be required to elect four to five (4-5) directors for two-year terms on the occasion of the first annual meeting, three to four (3-4) directors for two (2) year terms on the second annual meeting; and that each succeeding year the above procedure be followed so that the same sequence of election is obtained. All board members must be dues-paying Chamber members. No board member shall consecutively serve more than two terms [up to four (4) years] at a time.

Proposed Amendment to Article 5 – Directors, Section 3 of the Constitution and By Laws as follows:

Terms of Directors shall be for two (2) years and so as to provide for a majority of holdover directors each year, there shall be required to elect four to five (4-5) directors for two-year terms on the occasion of the first annual meeting, three to four (3-4) directors for two (2) year terms on the second annual meeting.; and that each succeeding year the above procedure be followed so that the same sequence of election is obtained. All board members must be dues-paying Chamber members. No board member shall consecutively serve more than three (3) terms [up to six (6) years] at a time.

The vote was completed via roll call vote. Motion passed unanimously.

2022 Fiscal Budget Discussion

Petcoff opened the discussion with two fiscal year 2022 budget options; one being with the possible \$25 increase to Chamber Membership dues, and one without the dues increase. Both budgets were explained in entirety, Petcoff explained each line item, and highlighted items with notable budget increases or decreases. Skelton recommended to the Board that the Fiscal Year 2022 be completed and approved at the November 18 meeting, as that meeting will follow the Gardiner Resort District Board meeting on November 9 meeting, where they should receive final budget numbers.

Annual Membership Dues Increase Discussion and Vote

Additional discussion followed regarding the \$25 increase for Annual Membership dues at the non-profit, gold, and silver membership levels, to which the Board was in consensus that the increase is necessary. Along with a dues increase the amount of advertising credit available per membership will also increase. The updated dues increase and advertising credit increase will be as follows and begin in January of 2022.

Platinum Members - Annual Fee \$375 (previously \$350), entitles business to \$225 of advertising credit

Gold Members - Annual Fee \$325 (previously \$300), entitles business to \$155 of advertising credit

Silver Members - Annual Fee \$275 (previously \$250), entitles business to \$95 of advertising credit

Non-profit Member - Annual Fee \$125 (previously \$100), entitles business to \$50 of advertising credit

***NO CHANGE* Additional Business** - Annual Fee \$150, Must have common ownership with a Platinum, Gold, or Silver paying member. Entitles business to full benefits except additional advertising credits.

***NO CHANGE* Friend of the Chamber**- Annual Fee \$50, for individuals who would like to support our mission Please note that Advertising credit can be used towards the Gardiner Community Newsletter and Public Restroom advertising.

Ondrus made the motion to approve the increase Annual Membership Dues by \$25 starting in Fiscal Year 2022. Hagerty seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Updates

2.1 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone NPS Visitation

Visitation

September visitation was 5% higher than September 2020 and 27% higher than September 2019. The month was the busiest on record and the first time that visitation exceeded 4 million visitors year-to-date.

Year-to-date visitation was up 32% from the same period last year, and up 17% from 2019.

Bison Conservation Transfer Program

A special post on the park's official [Facebook](#) page yesterday focuses on the Bison Conservation Transfer Program which coordinates with Tribal, federal, state, and nonprofit partners to transfer bison to American Indian Tribes.

Search at Shoshone Lake

The search for Kim Crumbo, reported missing by family on September 19 after a backcountry trip to Shoshone Lake, has been scaled back. The park will continue limited search efforts as long as conditions allow this year. Crumbo's brother, Mark O'Neill's body was found on the east shore of Shoshone Lake Monday, September 20.

Wolves Killed

The park's Junction Butte Pack lost three wolves (two female pups and one female yearling) to Montana hunters during the first week of Montana's wolf hunting season. This pack travels Yellowstone's northern range and is the most viewed wolf pack in the world. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks confirmed three wolves were killed outside of Yellowstone in the general area of where the Junction Butte Pack was traveling in mid-September.

The park has received many emails and calls from the public expressing concern about Yellowstone wolves. Yellowstone NPS shares their concerns and are asking the State of Montana to build in additional protections for park wolves that may move out of the park into the State.

Yellowstone NPS does not agree with the wolf hunting and trapping practices now allowed in the state and are especially concerned with these activities occurring in Montana wolf management units, 313 (Gardiner) and 316 (Cooke City). Their greatest concern is the lifting of quotas in these units which could lead to a large number of Yellowstone wolves being baited and killed at a single point in time.

While Yellowstone NPS continues to engage the State of Montana on this transboundary wildlife matter, the National Park Service does not manage wildlife outside of Yellowstone NP boundaries. Yellowstone NPS encourages the public to directly contact the Governor of Montana and his Director of Fish, Wildlife and Parks with any opinions they may have about the current situation.

Woman Sentenced in Grizzly Charging Incident

A 25-year-old Illinois woman pleaded guilty to willfully remaining, approaching, and photographing a grizzly bear within 100 yards. She was sentenced to four days in custody, one-year unsupervised probation, and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine, a \$1,000 community service payment to Yellowstone Forever Wildlife Protection Fund, plus court fees. The woman was also banned from the Park for a year. The woman was at Roaring Mountain in the park on May 10, 2021, when visitors noticed a sow grizzly and her three cubs. While other visitors slowly backed off and got into their vehicles, the woman remained. She continued to take pictures as the sow bluff charged her.

Road Closure Reminder

Interior Park roads close for the season at 8:00 am Monday, November 8. The road from the North to the Northeast Entrance remains open all year conditions permitting. Park road updates can be obtained by texting 82190 to 888-777, or by calling the park's Road Condition Line at 307-344-2117.

Wildlife Safety and Autumn Elk Rut

Elk Rut is in winding down quickly. Area closures are still in effect to maximize employee, visitor, and elk safety. Please advise visitors to follow signs and ranger instructions for their safety and others.

Steamboat Geyser

Steamboat has erupted twice since our last meeting, September 28 and again October 13.

2.2 Terese Petcoff – Executive Director's Report

New Members

Yellowstone Tipis and Mountain Taco

Recreate Responsibly

The new street banners are installed with the Recreate Responsibly messaging. Petcoff thanked Mike Keller for coordinating the Chamber being able to borrow their Genie lift and especially the three staffers who helped with the install.

GRAD Application Status

Petcoff updated that the application for the Bear Proof Canisters and the AED was near completion and was to be submitted the following week. Regarding placement of the canisters, the application includes two additional singles located on Park Street, a double on the Conoco property, a double on the corner of the Super 8 property, and a double on the Forest Service property. She will update the board as the project continues.

CVB

The October TAC Meeting took place on the 4th and 5th.

The VIC Grant final report was submitted by Fleming and Petcoff on October 15th.

2.3 Sara Fleming – Office Manager

Summary of Summer Season Visitation Stats for the Chamber:

From June through July 2021, there was an approximate increase 127.74% from the same period last year.

2020 – 36,880

2021- 83,991

Breakdown of 2021

57,709 during business hours

5,926 after hour weekday visitors

20,356 weekend visitors

Items to note with the jump in numbers. In 2020, The Visitor Center visitation numbers were limited because we had to keep vestibule (public restroom access) open exclusively during business hours to abide by the health guidance at the time; this year an automatic lock allowed us to keep the doors open from 4:30am to 12:00am, enabling us to track after hour visitors. Additionally, it should be noted, due to staffing, this year were unable to be open for the majority of the weekends in the grant reporting period. For these reasons, we could be seeing a disproportionate increase from 2020 to 2021.

The busiest months for the Visitor Center this year shifted slightly to June and July, whereas the trend had been July and August in previous years.

California continues to be our top ranked state, with Texas replacing Washington for second, and Minnesota taking the third place spot this year.

From May 28th through September 30th, we were open a total of 748 hours. Through the Yellowstone Country Grant funding we were able to fund 900 hours.

Christmas Stroll Update

Because of the success of last season's Gardiner Christmas Festival, which was born from adapting the COVID-19 guidance at the time of not having large scale events, we're going to have the month-long event happen this season as well/. The Gardiner Market has agreed to host crafters and creators at their location throughout December.

Social Media Update

On VisitGardinerMT, the Chamber broke a record for engagement and views on a video post from October 6. It was a video of a bull elk bugling in front of the Chamber, and it garnered a 244,000+ reach, 17,000+ plus engagements, and has been viewed 113k times so far. This is highly successful organic reach. Growth continues to be slow on both Instagram and Facebook.

Outstanding Business

3.1 2020 Montana Aware Grant Update

Skelton reported to the Board on the item within the Montana Aware Grant which was the allocation of funds to purchase Gardiner Market Gift Certificates to visitors abiding by the safety messaging of the campaign. Prior to today's meeting, Skelton, Petcoff Fleming completed the final audit of the distribution of the gift certificates, and Skelton reported that the audit was a success.

Skelton highlighted a letter he received from the State of Montana regarding the FY21 CVB Audit approval. It stated that the Gardiner CVB FY21 Audit was approved and that the TAC would like to recognize the Gardiner CVB's efforts, especially those of Terese Petcoff for her great job of keeping the records in order. Petcoff was very appreciative.

Meeting Adjourned.

Date of Next Meeting: November 18, 2021, 12:00pm – 1:00pm