

# 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: **November 19, 2020 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm**

Location: Call in via Zoom

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Meeting

## Agenda:

### 1. Chamber Business

**1.1 Roll Call & Introductions** *Jeff Guengerich, Kelly Burns, Trina Smith, Mike Keller, Mike Skelton, Zondra Skertich Absent: Sara Ondrus & Alex Roberts*

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

October Minutes were approved with no edits needed. Trina Smith made the motion to approve; Mike Keller seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

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

**5 min.**

Mary Wilson opened with covering visitation in October, which increased 110% in 2020 from 2019 and was the highest on record.

Interior park roads are scheduled to open December 15<sup>th</sup> for over snow travel. Sylvan Pass is scheduled to open on December 27<sup>th</sup>. The Entrance continues to be scheduled to remain open throughout the winter.

Winter services will include having warming huts in the interior. Huts will not be staffed but fires will be maintained to serve visitors.

This winter it is important to encourage visitors to drive cautiously and use appropriate pullouts to avoid collisions during adverse conditions. It is also integral to the park's success to continue to encourage visitors to use COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

November 11<sup>th</sup> was the last time Steamboat erupted.

### 2.1 Xanterra - Mike Keller – Yellowstone Operations

**5 mins.**

Jeff Guengerich called upon Mike Keller to see if there were any pertinent updates or changes to Xanterra's operations in the park this winter. So far, lodging is booked up to 94% in the park lodging that is open for the winter. Snow coach tours will require a minimum of 4 guests and a maximum of 11.

### 2.2 US Forest Service – Mike Thom – USFS

**0 mins.**

*Mike Thom was unable to attend the meeting.*

### **3. Committee Updates**

**45 min.**

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

##### **11.18.20 Gardiner Community Newsletter**

Fleming opened her report to discuss the ad that was placed in the 11.18.20 Gardiner Community Newsletter regarding the message to vote no on the upcoming increase to the Gardiner Resort Tax. Due to a strong response from the community and multiple requests to know who published the ad, Fleming recognized that staff should have better vetted the placement of the ad and that the unintentional omission of contact information was in poor judgement.

Board members asserted that they recalled in prior meetings that similar issues have occurred before and it was determined that ads cannot be placed in the newsletter anonymously and that the Chamber needs to implement that practice going forward. The Board and staff discussed and reasserted that ads cannot be allowed without contact information and depending on the nature of the ad have disclaimers stating that the Chamber did not create the content.

Due to the concern from the community over the content of the ad, the Board recommended that the Chamber staff take the following steps to settle community concerns and resolve the matter of the November 18<sup>th</sup> newsletter:

- Send a follow up email to the newsletter email list stating that the newsletter is a mechanism to disseminate local information, news, advertising, and at times, controversial topics. We are revisiting our policies to ensure that the mission of the newsletter continues in a transparent, unbiased and accountable manner.
- State in the email that in addition to payment, all ads submitted by an entity, group, company, organization, or individual are required to list contact information with their submission to be included in the publication. Contact information must be an active title with a phone number, email, mailing address, or web address. The Chamber reserves the right to decline ad submissions if this requirement is not met.

Fleming will draft an email following the meeting for the Board to approve by 5pm that will then be disseminated to the Newsletter email group.

##### **Rodeo Grounds Report**

The gate was installed on the West End of the Rodeo Grounds. Standish Excavation will place the rocks along the west side as soon as they can. Casey Hubbard's box truck will be removed by November 20<sup>th</sup> per the contract we sent to him. Fleming also asked the Board if they would approve a disposal container being placed out at the grounds for the purpose of the Gardiner FFA's twin removal project. The Board did not approve.

##### **Montana Aware Campaign Funding Update**

The gift cards were purchased as discussed in October's Board Meeting. Almost \$50,000.00 has been spent so far of the grant. Grant dollars will continue to be spent and the board will again be updated at the December board meeting.

##### **Gardiner Christmas Festival**

The Chamber withdrew our role in planning the stroll as it would be impossible to implement COVID-19 mitigation efforts. As a safe substitute, the Chamber will implement the Gardiner Christmas Festival, an ongoing two-week calendar highlighting businesses and artists that would otherwise benefit from the Christmas Stroll. This will include artists being staged at participating businesses to display their goods during normal business hours, online shopping highlights, and small activities where safety guidance can be followed such as the FFA wreath sale and Gardiner Cross Country Team Ski Waxing.

##### **Montana COVID-19 Directive Updates**

Starting on November 20<sup>th</sup>, restaurants, bars, breweries and casinos are to lower their occupancy to 50% and to close by 10pm.

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

*Terese is on maternity leave. She was present but did not report.*

### **5. Public Comment**

**5 min.**

Board member engagement

Guengerich opened the discussion with stating that the Chamber needs to be proactive with members to encourage engagement and that Board members need to understand that their engagement at meetings is needed. Board Member attendance at meetings needs to be required and redefined. Skelton noted that if Board Member absence cannot exceed more than three times that it is not stated in the Chamber's Bylaws and that the bylaws might need to be edited to state such.

### **6. Date of Next Meeting: December 17, 2020 12pm – 1pm.**

*Meeting was adjourned.*