

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, February 16th, 2023 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:

1. Chamber Business

1.1. Roll Call & Introductions

Chelsea Deweese, Amanda Haggerty, Brian Koski, Mike Keller, Debbie Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Mike Skelton, and Billie Taylor

Excused Absence: Trina Smith

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

Haggerty motioned to approve the minutes from January 2023. Ondrus seconded. Minutes approved.

1.3 November 2022 Meeting Minutes

Petcoff requested to amend the November 2022 meeting minutes based on correspondence she received from the Park County Wyoming Commission regarding plowing the plug. Petcoff communicated the request to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. There was no discussion regarding the request. Keller made a motion to amend the minutes. Haggerty seconded. November 2022 Minutes amended.

Amended minutes can be viewed online at

https://www.visitgardinermt.com/images/11.17.22_Minutes_Amended_2.16.23.pdf.

2. Committee Updates

2.1 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone NPS

Wilson updated the Board on pertinent matters within Yellowstone National Park, including:

Visitation

- January visitation was down 1.94% from January 2022.
- Recreation visits YTD are up 2.43% from the same time in 2022.

Winter Road Closing Dates

Roads will **close** to over-snow travel by snowmobile and snowcoach at 9:00 pm on the following dates:

- **March 5:** Mammoth Hot Springs to Norris
- **March 7:** Norris to Madison and Norris to Canyon Village

- **March 12:** Canyon Village to Fishing Bridge
- **March 15:** All remaining groomed roads close

2023 Spring Opening Dates

Roads will **open** at 8:00 am on the following dates (conditions permitting):

- **April 21:** West Entrance to Madison Junction, Mammoth Hot Springs to Old Faithful, Norris to Canyon Village
- **May 5:** East Entrance to Lake Village (Sylvan Pass), Canyon Village to Lake Village
- **May 12:** South Entrance to West Thumb, Lake Village to West Thumb, West Thumb to Old Faithful (Craig Pass), Tower Junction to Tower Fall
- **May 26:** Tower Fall to Canyon Junction (Dunraven Pass), Beartooth Highway (US-212)*

Campground Status for Summer 2023 (North District)

- Nothing definitive has been determined for campgrounds at Mammoth, Tower, Slough Creek, or Norris. Wilson noted that Pebble Creek has now been closed 2+ years.

Mammoth Hotel Status for Summer 2023 - Open

- Xanterra is taking reservations: yellowstonenationalparklodges.com
- Xanterra's website lists opening: April 28, 2023...closing: November 26, 2023

**Dates are subject to change based on future conditions and public health guidance.*

New North Entrance Road

- Long-term Reconstruction (estimated to be multi-year project)
- NPS is working closely with the FHWA to prepare and analyze a range of long-term alternatives.
- Alternatives: least environmentally and visually impacting; most resilient to future natural disasters; most expeditious and cost effective; take advantage of unimpacted existing road infrastructure if possible.
- Timelines for long-term reconstruction will depend on alternative selected.

Northeast Entrance Road Winter Driving Safety (Please help us remind visitors – thank you!)

- Is open to Cooke City and snow packed and icy...winter driving conditions.
- Use pullouts - do not stop in the middle of the road.
- Snow plows cannot stop quickly on snow-packed/icy roads when they come around a curve and find a vehicle in the road.
- Park road updates can be obtained by texting 82190 to 888-777, calling the park's Public Road Report Line at 307-344-2117, and/or by visiting the Park Roads page on the park's website.

Bison Transfer Program

- 112 Yellowstone bison were transferred to Fort Peck Indian Reservation the week of January 10.
- Transfer constitutes the single largest transfer to date under the park's Bison Conservation Transfer Program (largest relocation of live Yellowstone bison to American Indian Tribes ever).
- Since 2019, a total of 294 bison have been transferred from Yellowstone to tribes at Fort Peck.
- Approximately 170 of those bison were distributed to 23 Tribes across 12 states.

YCC Recruitment for Summer 2023

- Residential work-based education program for students between the ages of 15 and 18.
- Visit the YCC program webpage to apply. *Applications must be postmarked by March 1, 2023.*
- Two, 1-month-long YCC sessions will be offered from June 11-July 12 and July 16-August 15.
- Forty-four youth will be randomly selected from across the country to participate in the program.
- No previous wilderness experience is necessary, but enjoying camping is a plus since it will be required four nights a week during work assignments.
- Participants will be required to live in the park, and a minimal fee will be charged for room and board. Wages will be \$9.50 per hour.

- Questions may be directed to YELL_YCC_Office@nps.gov.
- The YCC Program is funded by park entrance fees and donations to [Yellowstone Forever](#).

Steamboat Geyser (most recent eruption)

- Tuesday, January 28, 2023 (23-day interval from previous January 5, 2023, eruption).
- Palette Spring dried up in Mammoth, Old Faithful has long intervals.

Discussion continued and Wilson was asked the following:

How many bison are in the Gardiner Basin? Wilson was unaware of the exact number but said she would look into the request and report back with any information

How many bison have been taken in the hunt this year? Gardiner Ranger District Forest Service representative, Schumacher spoke to the question, noting that there has been 530 hunted, 400 trapped, and 20-30 miscellaneous bison deaths due to traffic accidents, etc.

2.2 Tim Schumacher – USFS

Schumacher informed the board on updates about campgrounds and various projects.

Campgrounds

- Campgrounds will open Memorial Day weekend. Eagle Creek and Tom Miner will have camp hosts this year.

Projects

- Bear Creek Trail was plowed after the recent snowfall.
- Cinnabar has a new ramp, the project is waiting for permits.
- Daryl Creek project moving forward this summer.

2.3 Terese Petcoff – Director’s Report

Maria Koppelberger started Monday as Operations Manager. Petcoff extends thanks to Fran Ragsdale. who covered the position in the interim.

Travel Guide Ad Sales

At least 25,000 copies of the guide

- There will be at least 25,000 copies of the guide printed this year. Ad Sales are on track with previous editions.

Gardiner Community Day Success

- Distributed 25% of the donated goods. Participants were very thankful for the items.
- She thanked Skelton, Ron Peterson, and Jim Halfpenny who transported the remaining donations and boxes.
- Skelton extended thanks to all those who helped make Gardiner Community Day a success including Jim Halfpenny, Doug McCartney, Ron Peterson, Terese Petcoff, and Sarah Ondrus. A significant amount of the remaining donations from summer flood relief efforts were distributed to community members. The Community Closet in Livingston was thankful to receive the remaining items.

New Chamber of Commerce Members

- Yellowstone River Lodge
- Momma Bear’s Armory
- Yellowstone River Outfitters
- Yellowstone Perk

Bear Proof Garbage Containers

- Petcoff spoke to her concerns on how bear proof the trash container donated by the Gardiner school for the Gardiner Resort Tax project of 2022 was, noting that there would be a significant cost to make it bearproof. The original intended location of the canister was to be placed on the corner of Park and 4th St. however, to minimize cost Petcoff purposes relocating the bearproof canister currently in front of the Chamber to the corner and leave the container donated by the school inside the Chamber's Vestibule. This solution would allow for continued public use and fulfill the Chamber's obligation for the specified number and location of public trashcans for the original Resort Tax request and appropriation. Petcoff will ask the Resort Tax Board if this is an acceptable solution and report back to the Board.

Skelton also raised the possibility of a new year-round, part-time position at the Gardiner Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Information Center.

3. Outstanding Business

3.1 Bill Berg – Park County, MT Commissioner

Berg introduced Greg Coleman, Park County DES Director. Berg reported on the Gardiner Comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan Draft; infrastructure improvements in and around Gardiner; meetings with Governor Gianforte and Senators Tester and Daines; and plowing the plug.

Capital Improvement Plan

- A number of meetings and surveys resulted in a 300-page draft, the majority of which is public comment. The document is available on the homepage of parkcounty.org. Public comment is welcome and open until Feb 28.

Road improvements in Gardiner

- The County is prioritizing roadwork in Gardiner
- Spring St. and Water St. areas, 3rd St. to Stone, improvements including stormwater drainage.
 - Berg noted the success of the Gateway Project stormwater system during the flood
- Plans to pave and chip seal parts of the Jardine Road going up past travertine and the first switch backs. Plans to chip seal the first switchback in town.
- Greg Strauss, working at the green boxes/Gardiner Refuse site, now has a truck with the ability to sand and plow.

Carbella Bridge

- Plans to improve and replace the bridge with piers on the banks of the river, with no piers in the river itself. The bridge will be suitable for all loads.

Meetings with State Officials

- Tester and Daines are supportive of the infrastructure issues and the possible pedestrian bridge that raises the water and sewer lines out of the river.
 - *At this time various board meeting attendees voiced their support for a Gardiner pedestrian bridge.*

Coleman remarked on the complexity of the projects planned for the area and the number of players involved. Coleman additionally noted he has received questions about future risks to the highway. While there is likely little imminent risk, it is important to assess the risk and plan for potential issues.

Berg discussed improving Stephen's Creek Road and restoring emergency access to Old Yellowstone Trail through Yankee Jim. He is waiting for assessments and cost estimates from various parties.

Meeting with the Governor

- Gianforte is supportive of the pedestrian bridge. He is helping publicize the Northern Range, emphasizing that Gardiner, Silvergate, and Cook City are open for tourism.
 - *At this time various board meeting attendees discussed the possibility of Yellowstone grand re-opening events to draw the public.*

- The Governor is waiting for community consensus regarding plowing the plug. He will not take a side. Berg noted that University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research will survey the community on this matter.

Skelton asked whether the Gardiner water treatment plant is damaged or in danger. Coleman has not heard of any concerns.

Berg highlighted the Gardiner Neighborhood plan, currently in draft form, that FEMA found very helpful for disaster recovery. Coleman noted the importance of recovery planning both before and after a disaster.

Skelton asked about ownership of the sidewalks and lamp pole stubs on 89 between Park St. and Main St. Berg responded that these are the responsibility of the county.

4. New Business

Skelton spoke to items that would be included at the March Board meeting, including the Rodeo Grounds Committee and a possible new part-time position.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Keller motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ondrus seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Date of Next Meeting: March 16, 2023 12:00PM – 1:00PM