

Gardiner Chamber of Commerce

216 Park Street
PO Box 81
Gardiner MT 59030-0081

Phone: 406.848.7971
E-mail: executivedirector@gardinerchamber.com



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

Meeting date: **Thursday, February 18th, 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 Director's Meeting

Agenda:

1. Chamber Business

1.1. Roll Call & Introductions

Kelly Burns, Chelsea Deweese, Amanda Hagerty, Mike Keller, Debbie Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Alex Roberts, Mike Skelton, Sabina Strauss

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

Mike Keller made a motion to approve January's Minutes. Sarah Ondrus seconded. Minutes approved without discussion.

1.3 Cooke City Plug

The Board discussed whether or not to support the plowing of the Cooke City Plug. It was decided that the Chamber will remain neutral on the issue but encouraged members to submit their own letters if they would like.

1.4 Treasurer's Report – Mike Keller

Keller reported that currently all accounts for the Chamber are in good financial standing. There are four total accounts that the Chamber maintains: main checking (approx. \$184,000), Visitor Center Capital account (approx. \$254,000), Convention and Visitors Bureau account (approx. \$53,000), and a savings account (approx. \$7,000). He recommended to investigate a different avenue for the Chamber's savings account so that the money can build, rather than accruing minimal interest that it is currently.

Strauss asked if the Chamber is in a good position to pay off the buildings balloon note in 2025. Keller stated that based on collection history of the resort tax and the current amount of funds on hand, the Chamber should be able to pay the entire note and not have to refinance the loan.

2. Committee Updates

2.1 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone NPS

Wilson reported that the final numbers for Yellowstone National Park visitation in 2020 were released. Compared to 2019 the park was only down 5%.

Wilson reminded the board that road closures in YNP would begin in 15 days and that all roads would be closed by March 15th. Roads will begin to reopen on April 16th.

Lastly, Wilson announced that the new COVID19 update page for the National Park Service was published. You can visit the page [here](#).

2.2 Mike Thom – USFS

Thom reported that the Forest Service is gearing up to hire for the summer season. They are expecting it to be a busy year.

Thom spoke to the Bison hunt and that there is currently not much activity and that there is minimal tribal activity in the area. He informed the board that for the first time the Forest Service has authorized the “Bridge” group to camp for 6 weeks at the LaDuke Hot Springs Picnic area in wall tents. This was authorized because the Forest Service sees what they do regarding clean up as a benefit to the area during the hunt. He stated that the public is welcome to stop and ask the group questions while they are camping there.

Thom spoke to the collective effort between the Forest Service, Park Service, and Park County regarding Old Yellowstone Trail South, and improvements to the road and a biking trail. They are on track to submit a grant for the project in the near future. [See additional project notes from Matt Whitman below]

2.3 Park County – Matt Whitman, Mike Inman, Dr. Laurel Desnick, & Bill Berg

Whitman informed the board that the owner of the Corwin Springs Refuse site will not be renewing the lease and that this site will be closing on March 15th. To supplement the closure, there will be an additional roll off container added to the Tom Miner refuse site.

There was further discussion about Gardiner’s recycling and refuse needs. The Board requested for a glass recycling receptacle to be placed in Gardiner, for the recycling container located near the Gardiner Public School to be emptied more often and inquired about the possibility of an additional trash/recycling receptacle placed on Park Street.

Whitman reported that the County will be increasing maintenance on Jardine Road due to the winter and that grating of the road would happen in July. Additionally, in Jardine the Bear Creek Bridge Deck will be replaced. There has not been a date set of construction, but they will inform the Chamber when a date is set. The County will also begin a Mag Chloride application in town to the dirt roads as this will help keep the dust down.

Whitman also informed the Board that the County is looking to create an infrastructure plan for Gardiner in which they will seeking community input. When the time comes for the public’s input the Chamber will be notified of the meetings and the membership will be made aware.

Finally, Whitman spoke to the Old Yellowstone Trail South project (FLAP). He informed the Board that they are applying for a grant for the project that is a joint effort between the County, Forest Service, and Park Service.

There are many aspects of this project including:

- Having a continuous route from Point of Rocks to Arch Park in Gardiner.
- Turning the rail bed just north of Gardiner into a biking/walking trail with an end goal to have the trail connect from Livingston to Gardiner.
- Widening the road and fixing the slide off area in Yankee Jim Canyon, with the road through the canyon only open for emergency vehicle use.
- Potentially having a pedestrian bridge across the Yellowstone River in Gardiner.

Dr. Laurel Desnick spoke on the current COVID19 situation and vaccine distribution plan in Park County. She stated that currently they are allowed to vaccinate 70 years and older. She projects that the County may be allowed to move into the designated group 1C that includes people 60 and younger, and frontline/essential workers in 6-12 weeks. She spoke to the Gardiner Vaccine Clinic and stated that they may be able to host another clinic but needed suggestions on how to get the word out to the people over age 70 in the community, as attendance was low at their initial clinic.

Ondrus asked Dr. Desnick if rapid tests or surveillance would be available to employees for the upcoming summer in Gardiner. Dr. Desnick said that the Chamber and Health Department could work together on scheduling testing days. Petcoff will be in touch with the Park County Health Department when the time for seasonal employees to arrive is nearer.

Strauss asked Dr. Desnick about the possible side effects of the vaccine and that she is unable to find a list of side effects on the Park County Health Department website. She was concerned that they are not informing the public of vaccine side effects and possible exposure to illnesses such as heart disease, neurological illnesses, autoimmune disorders, and lifelong infertility. Dr. Desnick stated that she knows that the information Strauss spoke too is out there but that this information is not true based on the science that they have about the vaccine. Dr. Desnick informed the board that the side effects of the vaccine have been arm soreness, redness, inflammation, some individuals have experienced chills, achiness, myalgia, or a low-grade fever. About 15% of people have experienced these side effects after the first does, while the number is a little higher after receiving the second [dose]. Dr. Desnick is happy to send us more information about the vaccine; she understands that there is fear about a new vaccine but that the science behind the vaccine is not new. That this science is being used worldwide without increasing anyone's risk for illness or new disease and that one cannot get COVID from the vaccine. Dr. Desnick stated that it is a fine idea for one to consult their physician about how the vaccine could affect them.

Petcoff asked Mike Inman with the Park County Planning Office what the status was on zoning in Gardiner. He stated that currently they are working on a draft that once complete would then go to the public for comment. He then made the Board aware that there are many bills in Montana legislation that, if passed, would make it extremely hard to have a zoning plan adopted by the county.

2.4 Director Report – Terese Petcoff

Petcoff reported that the Department of Revenue reports collections for the 4th Quarter of 2020 lodging tax (October – December) are down 7% statewide; reports collections for Calendar 2020 are down 22% statewide. However, the collections for Gardiner for Q4 are up 44% when compared to 2019.

Lastly, Petcoff made the Board aware that a new Marketing Method added to the FY21 budget for Crisis Management. The goal of this method is to have signage placed regarding camping, specifically how to camp/dispersed camp in USFS land and the Jardine area. The CVB will work in tandem with the Forest Service in the creation and placement of these signs. Additionally, these funds will be used towards a sign to address the Park Street fire that took place on July 14th.

2.5 Office Manager Report – Sara Fleming

Petcoff reported on behalf of Fleming that we are currently developing a sign to be placed at the Rodeo Grounds with information on how to use the grounds and who to contact. Additionally, she made the board aware that a few shingles have become missing from the roof. We are in contact with a contractor to assess the damage and plan next steps.

3. Outstanding Business

3.1 Bailee Morrison-Fogel – Rodeo Grounds

Fogel presented her business of a horse drawn carriage that she plans to run in Gardiner this upcoming 2021 summer. She explained that she would like to have one horse pull the carriage at a time, while housing another horse “on standby” in a pen at the Rodeo Grounds. She assured the board that she would not be picking up, dropping off, loading, or unloading customers at the grounds. She asked for the Board’s approval to do this and inquired about a monthly rate for the livestock. The Board agreed that she could do this but also made her aware that she may have to list the Chamber as an additionally insured is necessary. Fogel thanks the Board for their support. Petcoff will follow up with Fogel regarding pricing after the meeting.

3.2 Previous Board Action

Skelton reported on previous board action, which was a salary increase for the Executive Director, with the purpose of offsetting the out-of-pocket cost of a Bronze Healthcare plan, as well as the Chamber implementing a Simple IRA Retirement plan for Chamber staff. He stated that both items passed with a vote of 8 for both actions and 1 opposed.

3.3 Chamber Governing Documents

Skelton made the Board aware that Strauss found a conflict between the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws. See below.

*Articles of Incorporation
Article 6 Section 5*

Dissolution: Upon the dissolution of the Corporation, the assets of the Corporation remaining after payment of, or provision for payment of, all debts and liabilities of the Corporation, shall be distributed to an organization or organizations, as determined by the Board of Directors, that is recognized as exempt under Section 501(c)(6) of the Code or any successor provision, and used exclusively to accomplish similar purposes for which this Corporation is organized. Any assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of competent jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the Corporation is then located, exclusively for similar exempt purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for similar exempt purposes.

*Constitution and Bylaws
Article 3, Section 5*

Special meetings of the Board of Directors may be called by the President or any three (3) Directors and it shall thereupon be the duty of the Secretary to cause written notice of the time, place and purpose of such meeting to be served not less than two (2) days previous thereto, either personally or by physical/electronic mail to each Director.

Skelton stated that Article 3, Section 5 should be stricken from the Bylaws so that it does not conflict, there were no objections. Skelton will send out proper notice of the change prior to the next board meeting.

Skelton also reported that the Chamber Staff and Executive Committee will be working on updating the current Policy and Producers Manual as it is outdated. Additionally, the manual will be split into two necessary manuals a Policy and Producers Manual and an Employee and HR Manual.

4. Public Comment

Meeting adjourned

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