

# 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, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 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**

*Chelsea Deweese, Amanda Hagerty, Deb Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Mike Skelton*

*Excused Absences: Sabina Strauss, Mike Keller*

*Unexcused Absences: Alex Roberts*

#### **1.2 Approval of February and March Board Meeting Minutes**

*Deweese made a motion to approve March Minutes. Haggerty seconded. Minutes approved without discussion.*

*The February minutes were approved via email vote prior to the April meeting. Burns made the motion to approve. Ondrus seconded. Minutes were approved.*

#### **1.3 Matt Whitman – Park County Public Works Department**

Whitman presented the Public Works Department Infrastructure Plan for Gardiner. Proposed changes are directed towards improving travel through areas and projects that encompass parking lanes, repairing curb storm damages. The department hopes to partner with the Chamber and other key organizations to gauge community interest and desire for the implementation of the infrastructure improvements. Next steps involve discussions with the community for wants and funding resources by summer of 2021 and beginning the improvements by summer of 2022. The Board affirmed that they want to proceed with aiding the department with the proposed projects. Petcoff asserted that she will be glad to assist by having the Chamber host surveys and meetings to gather public input. The project may potentially request funding from the Gardiner Resort District. Whitman will send follow up information to the Chamber.

#### **1.4 FY22 Marketing Plan Presentation**

Petcoff presented the budget proposals and changes to the proposed FY22 Marketing Plan for the Gardiner Chamber of Commerce. She began with reflecting upon FY21 and the challenges and noteworthy details of the last fiscal year of the plan by touching on the impacts of COVID-19 and the messaging shifts that ensued, the Gardiner Fire that occurred on July 14, 2020 and finally the Montana Aware Campaign the Chamber participated in. She went on to explain the successes of last year that included wide distribution of the Gardiner Travel Guide, a strong social media presence, engaging digital campaigns, boosted posts, leads acquired, and

the Quarterly E Newsletter distribution. Petcoff moved forward with explaining unused funds of FY21, the upcoming implementation of Destination Management Marketing, our need to be relevant social media presence, and the continued goal of increasing visitation in the winter/shoulder seasons. She concluded the presentation by providing a detailed breakdown of the proposed budget for FY22 and answered Board member questions.

*Ondrus made the motion to approve the FY22 Marketing Plan. Mackey seconded. Deweese abstained. Motion was approved.*

### **1.5 CVB Committee Appointments**

Skelton opened the discussion by explaining that members of the CVB Committee must be appointed and approved by the Board of Directors, and that the current acting committee needed their appointments to be updated. The Board agreed without discussion.

*Deweese made the motion to approve of the current Committee Appointees. Mackey seconded. Motion passed without discussion.*

### **Committee Updates**

#### **2.1 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone NPS**

Wilson began with the park roads report for roads open to the public at 8am April 16

- West Entrance to Old Faithful
- Mammoth Hot Springs to Old Faithful (via Norris)
- Norris to Canyon Village
- North Entrance to Mammoth Hot Springs to Northeast Entrance (open year-round)

May 7: East Entrance to Lake Village (Sylvan Pass), Canyon Village to Lake Village

May 14: South Entrance to West Thumb, Lake Village to West Thumb, West Thumb to Old Faithful

May 28: Beartooth Highway

What visitors to Yellowstone should expect:

- Bring and wear face masks - Face masks are required in all visitor facilities in Yellowstone National Park and on NPS-managed lands when physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as hiking trails, overlooks, and parking areas.
- Come prepared - Initially, some NPS and partner services will be limited and/or modified, especially in early spring. We suggest you bring your own food, water, snacks, and a variety of clothing including cold/wet weather gear.
- These services (limited and/or modified) will be available through:
  - Yellowstone National Park Lodges
  - Delaware North General Stores
  - Yellowstone Forever
  - Yellowstone Park Service Stations, Inc.
  - Medcor at Yellowstone

Visit each partner's website for details. The park and its partners will continue to evaluate and adapt to changing COVID-19 guidance and adjust operations as needed.

- Recreate responsibly - The park asks each visitor to recreate responsibly and reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you are sick, do not visit the park. Self-quarantine to avoid exposing others.
- Respect the park, other visitors, and wildlife. Keep at least 100 yards (300 feet) from bears and wolves, and at least 25 yards (75 feet) from all other wildlife. Bison have started calving and elk are not far behind! Slow down, use pullouts, never approach, and stay required distances from wildlife.

- Know current conditions - Weather conditions can change rapidly, especially in the spring. Many areas of the park are still experiencing winter conditions. Visitors should understand the park's current conditions.
- Stay informed - Reduce wait times at park entrances. Buy a pass online ahead of time.
- To celebrate National Park Week, entrance fees will be waived on Saturday, April 17, 2021.
- Spring road conditions can change quickly. Find updated road status on the park website and by calling (307) 344-2117. To receive Yellowstone road alerts on your mobile phone, text "82190" to 888-777 (an automatic text reply will confirm receipt and provide instructions).
- The road between Canyon Junction and Tower-Roosevelt will be closed for the 2021 season.
- There will be no access to the Mount Washburn trails.
- Check locally at [www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell) or download Yellowstone's App for current information.

#### New Campground Reservations (started March 24)

- 3 additional CGs: Mammoth, Slough Creek, 60% of Pebble Creek
- Reserve on [Recreation.gov](http://Recreation.gov) up to 6 months in advance.
- Allows visitors to plan ahead & assure they have a campsite upon arrival; reduce traffic at campgrounds.
- Tower and Norris Campground closed this summer.

#### Fee Increase for Fishing and Boating Permits

- Anglers can purchase fishing permits online via [Recreation.gov](http://Recreation.gov).
- Allows anglers to plan ahead & have their fishing permits before arriving at the park.
- New fishing permit fees: avg. WY, MT, and ID residential & non-residential fishing permit fees.
- Fishing permit fee has not increased since 2012.
- Boaters can get permit and AIS inspections only in person at park locations.... not available online.
- New boating fees include AIS inspection fee and have not increased since 1993.
- Increased revenues: provide sustained funding for lake trout reduction & AIS inspection efforts.

#### 2021 Construction Projects

##### Tower-Roosevelt to Canyon Junction (Dunraven Pass)

- Road between Tower-Roosevelt and Canyon Junction will be **closed** for the 2021 season.
- There will be no access to the Mount Washburn trails.
- Project will widen the road and provide additional/improved pullouts, create a larger, safer parking area at Tower Fall General Store and improve the Tower Fall's trail and overlook.
- The project's anticipated completion date is May 2022.
- Hiking/biking beyond the closed gates is prohibited to ensure visitor and employee safety.

##### Old Faithful Overpass Bridge

- Expect delays up to 15 minutes to accommodate one-lane travel over the overpass bridge.
- Old Faithful, Upper Geyser Basin, lodges, stores, clinic, and gas station will be accessible.
- Several repairs to the bridge and approaches.
- Anticipated project completion date is Fall 2021.

##### North Entrance

- Expect construction and traffic pattern changes around the North Entrance.
- The entrance station will be open.
- Improve infrastructure, pedestrian safety, and vehicle flow improvements (reduce lines).
- Anticipated project completion date is Fall 2021.

Drive slowly through construction and be alert to workers, heavy equipment, wildlife, and other hazards.

##### Mammoth Water Line

- NE corner of the Mammoth Terraces parking lot near the Mammoth public restrooms will be temporarily closed Tuesday, April 20 through Friday, April 30.
- Replacement of a 276-foot water line in the area.
- Drive slowly, watch for crews, and heavy equipment, and expect traffic pattern changes.

Steamboat Geyser last erupted Wednesday, April 4, 2021 11:28 pm 8<sup>th</sup> eruption of 2021.

Skelton asked Wilson about the management decision to remove bison carcasses from the Beaver Tail Ponds in the park. Wilson replied that it was likely due to visitor management issues.

Fleming asked Wilson about where visitor calls are currently being directed to in Yellowstone due to a theme of calls the Chamber was receiving. Wilson responded that Resource Education and Youth Programs are currently answering parkwide calls.

### **2.2 Mike Thom – USFS Gardiner District**

Thom opened with discussing campground management regarding signage opportunities to better educate visitors who are recreating in the areas near Gardiner. These signs need to be approved and developed alongside Park County Public Works Department.

Washabeck is the newly hired staff person at the Gardiner Ranger District as the Recreation Officer and will serve as an appropriate point of contact for recreation issues and inquiries.

Campgrounds in the Gardiner Ranger district will have increased nightly rates starting this season. The local district will retain 95% of campground fees gathered.

Road openings happening on May 15<sup>th</sup> include Eagle Creek and Bear Creek.

90% of local USFS hires will begin their duties on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **2.3 Terese Petcoff – Executive Director’s Report**

Petcoff began with announcing new Chamber Members. She noted that the two days the Chamber was closed in the beginning were highly successful for completing Spring cleaning projects in the facility. Old sentimental items were found during the cleaning that were offered to Board members.

### **2.4 Sara Fleming – Office Manager’s Report**

Fleming noted that there has been an increase in Travel Guide requests for visitors planning their upcoming travel plans to Gardiner. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, the Chamber will switch to the summer operating hours of 9am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. When seasonal staff begin the week of Memorial Day, weekend hours will begin. She concluded the report with speaking to the upcoming Goodness Grows in Gardiner social media initiative.

## **3. Outstanding Business**

### **3.1 Policy & Procedures Manual Progress Update**

Skelton updated the Board on the progress of the Policy & Procedures Manual Update. He hopes to have a draft of the updated manual complete for the Board to review at the May Board Meeting.

### **3.1 Bill Berg – Park County**

Berg began with an update on hopefully having guardrails installed on hazardous sections of the road towards Jardine. He also spoke to Rescue Funding. He also announced that he is serving as a member of the Big Sky Rail Authority and their hopeful plans to have a rail route for passengers throughout Montana once again and noted that a letter of support from the Chamber would be helpful.

**Meeting Adjourned.**

**Date of Next Meeting: May 20, 2021 12:00pm – 1:00pm**