

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 16th, 2020 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm**

Location: Zoom meeting

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Agenda:

1. Chamber Business

1.1 Roll Call & Introductions

*Jeff Guengerich, Kelly Burns, Sarah Ondrus, Trina Smith, Mike Keller, Alex Roberts, Mike Skelton,
Absent: Edwin Johnson, Leslie Everette*

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

*Mike Skelton moved to approve February Meeting Minutes. Trina Smith seconded to motion.
Minutes were passed unanimously.*

2. Park County Health Department – Greg Coleman

20 min.

2.1 Coleman and colleague presented updated information on behalf of Park County Health Department. The county has opened emergency operations to be prepared for increased cases of COVID-19 in the county. Their preparedness requires working with various local and state agencies to address the spread of the virus. Representatives of park county are currently meeting with Governor Bullock, from which updates on reopening will hopefully ensue. Currently, the county feels that they have a good sense of control for local spread; that could however be compromised by interstate travel. They have placed a sandwich board at the Gardiner Market entrances in hopes of increasing info reach to the Gardiner community.

The board opened a Q&A to address questions from board members:

- Q: Demaree asked if there will be a mandate in the State of Montana to wear masks?
A: Coleman responded that there currently is not a legislative or Governor's Directive which mandates the wearing of masks. They will continue to be strongly advised if social distancing (such as visiting the grocery store) is not possible.
- Q: Smith opened her question with acknowledging a large amount of lodging cancellations prior to June. She went on to ask what the recommended best practices for housing would be and to address the onboarding seasonal staff for the upcoming season?
A: Coleman responded that some restrictions might be lifted for in state employees but that is unlikely for out of state and international employees. Advised to keep an eye on what the state restrictions look like soon. Businesses will likely have limitations with shared housing.

Berg noted that the county and state's efforts seem to be working to flatten the curve and that continued vigilance should continue. He advised to share the information with businesses that are asking for assistance to seek resources for Micro Emergency Loans by calling 406-582-9200.

3. Committee Updates

10 min.

3.1 US Forest Service – Mike Thom – USFS

Thom opened with stating that the Forest Service is currently in the process of onboarding and housing incoming seasonal employees. 16 seasonal employees will be coming to the Gardiner Ranger District on May 10th. These employees will be quarantined until May 24th and will complete online training at home during the interim. They will house these employees by each having their own bedroom and will have them adhere to social distancing recommendations in the bunkhouses.

Forest Service wide, regulations are evolving to address COVID-19, particularly regarding the upcoming fire season. Thom noted that our district is in a region where the fire season is usually later than others in the nation, which will help them see how other districts are working before they must mobilize firefighting efforts here. This provides an opportunity to observe how other regions have succeeded.

Additionally, all campgrounds and cabins within the district will remain closed until April 30th. Sometime in mid-May is likely the earliest they will open.

Thom updated the board with the Forest Service's ongoing and upcoming projects in the district. They're working on building a water diversion ditch at Reese Creek to ensure adequate water flow to maintain a healthy native cutthroat trout population. This project should be completed by the middle of May. The Forest Service is still planning to grade the Travertine Road, the Old Road and Reese Creek. Thom also informed the board that starting in June, they will begin an Aquatic Organism Pathogen Project at Eagle Creek that will require a road closure.

Straus asked Thom for updates on the bison hunts to which he responded that the hunts have concluded for this year. Two native tribes could still hunt but have chosen not to in response to COVID-19.

3.2 Yellowstone NPS – National Park Service

Mary Wilson was unavailable. Hopeful to present at meeting in May.

3.3 Director/CVB Report – Terese Petcoff

Petcoff introduced Sara Fleming as the newly hired Office Manager.

She informed the board that the Gardiner Travel Guide should be ready within the next two weeks and that we will order less than last year.

She informed the board that the First Security bank account has been closed and the remaining balance was transferred into the First Interstate Savings account.

COVID-19 Update

The chamber will have a mailer ready by April 20th that provides detailed information of Park County and statewide resources regarding the virus, which will be distributed to residents. The chamber will cover the cost of the mailer.

On April 21st, Yellowstone Superintendent Sholly will host a call with Yellowstone Gateway communities of Montana. Petcoff asked the Board if they agree that 100 lines should suffice for Gardiner community members to join the call, to which they agreed. The chamber would inform the community of the phone call with Sholly.

The chamber is projecting a 57% decrease in lodging tax for the upcoming season. This season will be unique in the face that the chamber will have to heavily market the summer season, whereas that has not been necessary in previous seasons.

CVB Update

As the board cannot meet in person, Petcoff will provide a power point presentation of the chamber marketing plan for review and approval. She requested for Board members to respond by no later than April 28th to the presentation so she can proceed with submitting it. The deadline to submit the marketing plan has been extended to May 4th.

4. Outstanding Business

10 min.

4.1 Articles of Incorporation and Constitution and Bylaw Review

Considering the inability of meeting quorum due to not being able to meet in response to COVID-19, the Board unanimously agreed to table the previously discussed adjustments of the chamber by-laws until in person meetings are possible again.

5. Public Comment

0 min.

School lunches

Holloway informed the Board that the Gardiner school received funding to have 100% of meals covered for local children in the area, regardless of enrollment. This service is in place due to the economic shutdown.

Successful Gardiner

Straus gave a report of their recent meeting. They have made some Steering Committee changes and had 15 new volunteers sign up at the meeting. The committee will take over the website and social media. The consensus at the meeting suggested that residents wanted to learn more about having the county conduct zoning and possible incorporation. The committee is seeking to secure financing and possibly hiring a Community Planner.

Status of local events

The Hell's A Roaring Drive will reevaluate if the event will take place the first week of May and will adjust dates if necessary.

Gardiner Brewfest has been rescheduled due to COVID-19. Date of the event will likely be sometime in August.

Skelton asked about the status of the Gardiner Rodeo. Decision on the event will be determined later and is contingent on what future regulations or mandates are in response to COVID-19.

Xanterra Updates

The company is still hoping to bring on their seasonal staff on May 21st. Services would likely not open until sometime in June.

6. Date of Next Meeting: May 20, 2020 12pm – 1pm.

Meeting was adjourned.