

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, May 21st, 2020 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm**

Location: Zoom meeting

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Agenda:

1. Chamber Business

1.1 Roll Call & Introductions

Jeff Guengerich, Edwin Johnson, Kelly Burns, Sarah Ondrus, Trina Smith, Mike Keller, Mike Skelton, Alex Roberts, Leslie Everett

Excused Absences: Sarah Ondrus

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

At the opening of the meeting, there were not enough board members to meet quorum for approval of April's. Present board members recommended that the minutes be sent to board via email for approval.

2. Office Manager Report – Sara Fleming

10 min.

2.1 Fleming opened the report with an overview of the procedures being implemented to protect Chamber staff in response to COVID-19. The chamber purchased plexiglass sneeze guards for all the front counter spaces. Staff will have an outlined regiment of how to properly don PPE and clean frequently touched surfaces at a minimum of 3x per day throughout the facility; per the guidance issued by the State of Montana. Restrooms will be open to the public during operating hours to mitigate risk and to follow the guidance mentioned beforehand. It was also noted that West Yellowstone and Cooke City will be closing their restrooms to abide by the same guidance. The water fountains will not be operating. Finally, brochures will be laminated throughout the facility (available upon request) to minimize touched items and to be sure that they can be adequately sanitized.

Employees will have additional paperwork added to their onboarding this season that includes Employee Health Agreements and guidance.

The Chamber has most of staffing needed for the summer season and is hoping to hire one more Visitor Information Specialist (VIS).

Finally, Fleming concluded the report with update on Travel Guide Distribution. Distribution to local members will begin next week, and they have been dropped to various Visitor Centers around region (WY, SD, ID and UT). New locations have been added this year including major recreation areas and Salt Lake.

3. Committee Updates

20 min.

3.1 Director/CVB Report – Terese Petcoff

Petcoff began with an update that the Chamber has received the Montana Social Services Nonprofit Grant as a nonprofit of \$10,000. These funds will be received within thirty days of being awarded the grant. The board asked how these funds will be allocated to which Petcoff responded that they will help cover the anticipated decline in resort tax collections and will cover operating costs of added cleaning supplies, payroll, etc.

West Yellowstone has reported that they have seen visitors despite of the park closure with counts in the VIC of up to 70 visitors per day.

CVB Update

The Chamber Annual Marketing Plan has been approved to move forward for final approval on June 8th. Dustin Floyd of TDG has been meeting with us remotely and has discussed the marketing success of Deadwood and how they are getting a steady stream of hits on their media pages and website. We will continue the discussion to see if we can reflect their success on our channels.

COVID-19 Updates

Board members asked who is responsible for carrying out surveillance testing and analyzing community spread. Petcoff said she would follow up with Park County Health Department to learn more.

The Chamber is continuing to request that Park County Health will provide explicit guidance for outfitters and rafting companies

Gardiner Rodeo Grounds

The Gardiner Rodeo date has been postponed to July 24-25, 2020. Petcoff brought up the discussion that the Chamber is the owner of the grounds and that there is a question of liability for hosting the event. It will likely be necessary to wait for the event to happen until the State of Montana has moved into Phase 3 of the phased reopening plan. Board members asked if there is any special guidance for outside events and rodeos in lieu of COVID-19, to which the Chamber staff did not know. There was discussion of what the Wilsall and Livingston Rodeos are doing this season. Guengerich advised that the board continues the discussion for making decisions when we are closer to the time of the event in July.

The rodeo grounds are again becoming crowded with abandoned vehicles. The Chamber will have to act with having them removed soon.

Outstanding Renewals Discussion

There is a significant amount of outstanding chamber renewals in excess of \$6,000 which is mostly due to commerce being limited from COVID-19. Petcoff requested approval from the Board for how to communicate with members regarding outstanding balances while understanding that funds are limited for everyone currently. She went on to propose a payment plan to ease the requirement to pay dues up front. Board members agreed that members should not lose their benefits at this time because of limited commerce. Petcoff explained the new payment plan proposal. The Board approved of the new payment plan. Petcoff will provide a detailed outline of how the awarded grant dollars will be allocated towards the renewal shortfall. Under the current circumstances, the chamber will not drop member listings because of delinquent payments during the COVID-19 economic crisis.

3.2 Yellowstone NPS – National Park Service

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

3.3 US Forest Service – Mike Thom – USFS

10 min.

District Updates

Eagle Creek and Canyon campgrounds will open May 22nd. Next week further operations will continue to open.

For now, the Ranger Station office will remain closed indefinitely. The Forest Service is hoping to work with the Chamber regarding disseminating information that their office would otherwise be normally doing for visitors.

Firewood permits being issued for free will conclude June 1st. There is a possibility it will continue past that date but that has not been determined.

Beattie Gulch project of replacing the diversion structure should conclude next week. Board members inquired if the Forest Service will remove bison remains from the bison, to which the response was that it was unlikely. The board went on to ask if Forest Service campgrounds and trailheads seem to have overuse due to Yellowstone's closure, to which the response was that visitor use has increased but they're not seeing overuse for now.

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

10 min.

Successful Gardiner

Sabina Strauss gave a report. They are still in the process of hiring a Community Planner. She inquired if the Chamber would be a fiscal sponsor so that Successful Gardiner could be a recipient of the "Give a Hoot" Campaign. After discussion the Chamber board concluded that they should remain neutral on the topic and will not be a fiscal sponsor. However, if a board member is made aware of another nonprofit Gardiner entity that would like to be a sponsor they will pass this information to Strauss.

Xanterra Updates

They are expecting full campgrounds throughout the summer and are fully booked. When Yellowstone reopens, they are expecting to see an increase in cabin bookings in the park.

6. Date of Next Meeting: June 18th, 2020 12pm – 1pm.

Meeting was adjourned.