

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, June 15th, 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 Hagerty, Mike Keller, Brian Koski, Debbie Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Mike Skelton, and Trina Smith
Excused Absence: Billie Taylor

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

Keller motioned to approve the minutes from April 2023. Mackey seconded. 7 in favor/ 0 opposed/0 abstentions. Motion approved.

2. Guest – Joe Josephson – Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Joe Josephson presented the work of Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) to acquire and conserve land currently subject to Crevice Mine mineral rights (property is both on private and public), that has been eight years in the making.. This area is located near Jardine, MT on the boundary of Yellowstone National Park. He was seeking a letter of support from the Gardiner Chamber of Commerce towards the project to receive federal funding under the Land Water Conservation Fund .

Josephson explained that GYC if acquired it the rights to mine the land would be extinguished. They are working with private landowners – all of whom are willing and in agreement of the sale. Once the land is purchased by GYC, the land will then be transferred to the Forest Service and become public land. He noted that the cost is approx. 6 million and that GYC has already purchased some land. Further, if purchased there will be no interruptions by new roads, mine traffic, pollution, etc.

The federal Land Water Conservation Fund, supports conservation projects across the nation and with the 2025 funding application deadline this fall they are requesting letters of support from the Gardiner community and beyond by September 1 as decision makers in Washington DC will be looking for local support in these letters. He noted that all property owners and residents surrounding the 360 acres are in support of the project.

Josephson brought an example letter of support for the board to look over and is requesting the Chamber support the efforts of GYC. He is available for questions and invites Chamber members to create personalized letters of support from individuals and businesses.

The following discussion took place:

Question – This area borders Yellowstone, is this situation a special case? How can mining happen here so close, go downhill into the Yellowstone River?

Answer – 1872 mining laws are still the law of the land, in addition to Montana laws that strongly support mining. A miner can basically follow a gold vein wherever it goes. In theory, someone could legally mine under YNP. The lands are technically withdrawn, but valid existing rights take precedence. This effort from GYC would dissolve the valid existing rights. The land falls outside the Gateway Protection Act.

Question – Can Gardiner residents write letters of support?

Answer – Yes, residents and visitors can write letters of support. Visitors wanting to preserve their Yellowstone experience may be interested. They could sign a petition-type document, writing their name to support the effort.

Question – Are there out-of-state and out-of-country vacation rental owners with land in Jardine who are not supportive?

Answer – Not that he knows of, he's most familiar with landowners specifically in the Crevice area and they are on board. He'd like to know of any concerns folks have. He doesn't see eye-to-eye about a lot of topics with landowners up there, but this is one thing they agree on.

Christina White, NPS – She'd like to thank them for all the work with the mine and she expresses support for their efforts. The mine area is critical wildlife habitat and impacts the Yellowstone River.

3. Committee Updates

3.1 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone NPS

Not present

Christina White, Chief of External Affairs & Partnerships Office of the Superintendent, presented the following updates on YNP:

- Explained that the reasoning behind the name of Temporary North Entrance Road was in effort to secure funding for the construction of the long term permanent North Entrance Road.
- Slough Creek Campground is delayed in opening because of bear activity, will not open before June 22, 2023.
- Fishing bridge Visitor Center has reopened with new exhibits.
- West Thumb construction end date is Nov 2023
- Question from Ondrus regarding visitation number for the North Entrance compared to other entrances. White will follow up.
- Dewese requested YNPS to assist in urging Google to update a confusing search result. White will reach out the YNP web team.

3.2 Tim Schumacher – USFS

Not present

3.3 Terese Petcoff – Director's Report

Petcoff reported on the following:

- The CVB marketing budget and plan for FY24 was approved by the Tourism Advisory Council.

- The Interagency National Park Pass Sales sold 15 passes = \$120 in approximate revenue, selling 1 -2 per day.
- Rodeo this weekend – requested volunteers to assist in distributing the survey purchased from ITRR. The survey will gauge the impact of the rodeo on Gardiner and learn about attendees.
- Fireworks Lease – Board was in agreement to charge the traditional rate of \$600 for Casey Hubbard to lease the rodeo grounds to sell fireworks.
- Business before hours (BBH) – first gathering of this kind. The Chamber has gotten feedback from members seeking this kind of event. It's similar to open house but not as formal, will have various hand outs for distribution etc. Focus on lodging at this particular meeting, network with each other. Open to members and the public.
- YNP Stats May - we are comparable to 2019.
- Fran Ragsdale, VECEC position – she's been a great addition to the team and has been working on exciting projects like the BBH.
- Yellowstone Country Resiliency Planning – MT State contracted the Coraggio Group, these are bi weekly meetings
- EDA Resiliency Grant Planning – County level, may want to be at the July Board meeting as well. This grant requires a match.
- Terese will continue to update the board as things move along with both resiliency planning efforts.

3.4 Maria Koppelberger – Operations Manager's Report

Visitor Information Center

- Summer staff is here! Fran started as Visitor Experience and Community Engagement Coordinator. Three Visitor Information Specialists, Shelby, Trudi, and Kim – all three worked here previously, so they are all incredibly knowledgeable and lived in the area for years. Fran's position also overlaps with Visitor Information Specialist, so she will be working to engage visitors alongside those three.
- Summer hours – 9am-5pm Monday-Friday, 9am-3pm Saturdays
- Visitation Stats -GCoC/CVB – for 2023 we are up about 1% as of June 12, compared to January-June 12, 2022

Properties and Facilities

- Urgently hiring a new cleaner – going the employee route because no interest from contractors.
- Flagpole – in May before the convergence conference, Terese and I worked on the flagpoles for a couple of hours. Taking out the cable and winch and untangling them. In contact with Montana Flag and Pole for a solution – heavier counterweight so the flags can't lift upward with a severe wind.
- New printer board approval need as it would be over \$1,000- A representative from Kelly Connect, the company that services the printer, stopped on Tuesday to discuss a new printer for us, a Canon C5540 III. The current printer (C5250) is on its last legs at 9 years old and 1.4 million copies. Repairs are becoming more frequent and more complex – issues the past several weeks, thankfully always able to print the newsletter.
 - He is offering a used printer to us for \$2,500 and only 156k copies on it, expecting that it would last us at least 3 years. A new printer is around \$12-13,000.
 - He's offering to continue the \$600 annual maintenance agreement and beyond that we pay per page for printing. However, he's giving us a better rate per page for copies: \$.015/BW and \$.08/color. Currently, we pay \$.025/BW and \$.148/color. About 40% off.
 - The representative thought of us for the printer knowing how things are tough in Gardiner since the flood and wanted us to have the opportunity before trying to sell it to other clients. However, there is only one printer and it's available until sold. He'd like to hear back within the week. – It might sound too good to be true, but it's a win-win overall since his technicians don't need to come down here and do extensive repairs with hard-to-find parts.
 - I have talked it over with Terese, Sarah, Mike, and we're really interested to get this new printer. I have some of the paperwork he brought in - seller agreement, 2014 invoice for the current

printer, and previous invoices for copies. Questions or comments – motion to approve the \$2,500 purchase?

Deweese motioned to approve the purchase. Mackey seconded. 7 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstentions. Motion approved.

4. Outstanding Business

No discussion.

5. New Business

Mackey motioned to approve the letter of support for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Keller seconded. Haggerty abstained. 6 in favor/0 opposed/1 abstention. Motion approved.

6. Public Comment

No public comment

Keller motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mackey seconded. 7 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstentions. Motion approved.

Date of Next Meeting: July 20 2023, 12:00PM – 1:00PM