

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, June 18th, 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

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

Leslie Everett noted some edits to review that included a name correction and editing information of Section 2. Minutes will be edited

2. Office Manager Report – Sara Fleming

10 min.

2.1 Fleming opened the report with updates to facility items. The heating within the facility has not been functioning, for which Fleming asked if board members who have been involved with the chamber for a while could speak to what the issue is. Guengerich recommended to contact Graybeals All Service HVAC of Livingston.

Public restrooms were the next item of discussion. The chamber is seeking a means to have the restrooms locked later in the evenings that accommodate demand and abide by the CDC guidelines to have limited hours. The restrooms will have to have limited hours until the State of Montana has moved beyond Phase 3 of state's phased reopening plan. Fleming also has reached out to Park County Sheriff's office to see if a deputy could be available to lock the facilities later. Board members advised considering having an automatic lock so that staff are not required to lock the facility later in the evening to which Fleming will follow up to see if that is possible. Chamber staff are also seeking a commercial cleaner and requested for the Board to inform us if they have a commercial cleaner that they are aware of in the area who could provide those services.

The Chamber now has a full staff for the 2020 summer season.

Gardiner Travel Guides have been distributed to most member businesses within the area. Reviews on this year's edition have been positive from the community.

Travel Guide Leads have been very prosperous. We are currently getting ready to send out 548 for the months of May and June.

The Gardiner maps are updated and distribution of those will begin soon.

3. Committee Updates

20 min.

3.1 Director/CVB Report – Terese Petcoff

Rodeo Grounds updates

The abandoned property being left on the grounds is piling up again and chamber staff will have to begin leaving notices on vehicles that need to be removed. Petcoff is considering adding a notice in the Gardiner Newsletter in addition to the Mammoth/Gardiner Community Message Board page on Facebook. The Firework Stand will be arriving soon, and they need to have space to accommodate their operations. The contractor of the Firework Stand has requested to defer payment for renting that space and the board approved.

Gardiner Rodeo Discussion

Board members mentioned that they believe that the Big Timer Rodeo is planning on proceeding with their rodeo and provided detailed information for how they will be abiding by CDC guidelines while hosting the event. The Gardiner Rodeo Club has asserted that if Montana has not transitioned into Phase 3 of the Phased Reopening Plan by July 1st that they will make the decision to cancel the event. Johnson mentioned that the Northern Rodeo Association is currently planning to continue their circuit and that Gardiner is included.

The Chamber has distributed a COVID-19 Economic Impact Survey for the Gardiner Community and we are hoping for more participation. Petcoff requested for board members to complete that survey if they haven't yet done so.

CVB Updates

The Annual Marketing Plan for the Gardiner Chamber was approved on June 8th.

Summer Landing Page

The Chamber is launching a campaign which is a landing page to explain what is open in Gardiner. This page will mimic the language that the Montana Department of Tourism is utilizing for travelers. This campaign will run for a total of six weeks and we will closely monitor success for the first two weeks to see if it should continue. Deadwood has launched a similar campaign with great success.

3.2 Yellowstone NPS – National Park Service

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

3.3 US Forest Service – Mike Thom – USFS

10 min.

Thom was unavailable. Hopeful to be present at meeting in July.

4. Outstanding Business

10 min.

4.1

COVID-19 Updates

The Gardiner Chamber staff is participating in the weekly surveillance testing being offered by Park County Health Department. Petcoff and Fleming explained testing procedures and experience to Board Members. There are currently 4-5 Gardiner area businesses participating so far. Park County is joining the National Guard to provide testing at the Gardiner School on June 19th and in Livingston on June 20th.

5. Public Comment

10 min.

Chamber Member Business Updates

Guengerich asked Chamber Members to discuss how the Chamber can be serving the community in lieu of COVID-19 and how business is fairing since Yellowstone has reopened. Ondrus updated on how her companies are doing; operations have been smooth, but commerce is still slower than what would be hoped for. Skelton mentioned that the park is at 75% of what it was last year and that his business bookings are filling up for July. He explained requirements for guides to abide by state and CDC guidance. He also noted that visitors are abiding by guidance better within facilities than they are outside in crowded areas. Alex Roberts gave an update for the Rusty Rail. They are open and their vacation rentals have been receiving bookings. Petcoff noted that so far per the Daily Hotel Availability Call List that Gardiner lodging is currently around 50%.

Board Members noted that Chamber referrals are helpful. Petcoff mentioned that there is an unprecedented need to market summer due to the impact of COVID-19. The chamber will have marketing that emphasizes that there are wide open spaces and that Gardiner businesses are following guidance of Park County to keep visitors healthy.

Target Demographic Discussion

The question was asked to the board of what age demographics their businesses target and rely on. Opinions ranged from elderly for tours, young families for rafting, horseback riding and other activities, and all ages for vacation rentals.

Yellowstone Forever Update

Leslie Everett spoke to the status of the Yellowstone Forever's Institute. The Board's decision to suspend the institute is due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. Operating educational programs simply is not feasible for the organization this summer season. For now, there is not a timeframe for when to reopen the institute.

YF Bookstores have been significantly affected by the pandemic and they will continue to keep their guidelines the same as that of what the National Park Service is following in the park. Only stand-alone locations are planning to open that may include West Thumb. The bookstore in Gardiner will open tomorrow, June 19th from 9am to 5pm, seven days a week.

6. Date of Next Meeting: July 16th, 2020 12pm – 1pm.

Meeting was adjourned.