

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, August 15, 2019**
Location: Gardiner Chamber of Commerce
Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Meeting

Agenda:

1. Chamber Business

1.1. Roll Call & Introductions

Jeff Guengerich, Trina Smith, Mike Keller (via phone), Edwin Johnson, Leslie Everett, Kelly Burns

Absent: Anna Holloway.

Excused absence: Neli Karamfilova

1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

5 min.

Minutes from July 2019. Mike Skelton motions to approve. Trina Smith seconds. Motion passes.

2. Committee Updates

2.1 US Forest Service

Mike Thom- District Ranger Forest Service

15 min.

Eagle Creek campground is still very busy, although the campground host has left for the season; Mike reminded the group that camping is not permitted on the land surrounding Eagle Creek. Beatty Gulch will be open for firewood cutting on September 2nd. Cooke City campgrounds are scheduled to close after Labor Day. The Forest Plan Revision is currently ongoing.

2.2 Yellowstone NPS - Mary Wilson- National Park Service

NPS and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) are conducting grizzly bear research in the park until October 31. None of the capture sites in the park will be located near any established hiking trails or backcountry campsites, and all capture sites will have posted warnings for the closure perimeter.

The park has killed two habituated black bears this year and is trying to capture a third. All three bears exhibited bold behaviors, showed no fear around people, and have demonstrated food-conditioned

behavior. These incidents serve as unfortunate reminders that human carelessness doesn't just endanger people; it can also result in a bear's death.

The National Park Service (NPS) acting Intermountain Regional Director signed the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the environmental assessment (EA) to allow park concessionaires, Xanterra and Delaware North, to develop seasonal housing for their employees in Yellowstone National Park at Canyon Village and the West Entrance. Housing improvements, funded by concessionaires, could begin as early as fall, 2019.

Mount Washburn Trail and Trailhead at Dunraven Pass Closed August 6-27 for Improvements.

Weather permitting, crews will paint road and parking lot stripes at the following locations and general time frames:

- Lake developed area, Bridge Bay Picnic Area and West Thumb, August 14-16
- West Thumb to South Entrance, August 15-16
- Grant developed area, August 17-19
- Madison to Old Faithful, August 19-20
- Norris Junction to Madison Junction, August 21-22
- Madison to West Entrance, August 23-24
- Norris to Canyon, September 9-10

The National Park Service recently completed a renovation of the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel. A commemoration of the reopening of this historic hotel is on Friday, August 30th. The public commemoration event will begin at 10am. After the remarks and ribbon-cutting celebration, tours of the hotel and historic fort will be available to visitors until 1pm.

The park hosted 936,062 visits in July 2019. This is a .48 percent decrease from last July (940,563 visits). So far in 2019, the park has hosted 2,294,690 visits, down 1.19 percent from the same period last year. The list below shows the trend over the last five years. Year-to-date visitation in 2019 is slightly higher than five years ago in 2015.

Steamboat geyser erupted July 24, July 30, and not again until last Monday, August 12.

2.3 Director's Report - Neala Siegle

The Gardiner Visitor Center's July walk-ins are up by 24% compared to last July. Reasons could be a cooler, wetter start to summer driving people indoors to the Visitor Center; word is out that the public restrooms are available at the VIC; or that staff are more diligent in tracking this year.

The fall digital campaign is going well, driving 9,000 visitors to the website. The click-through rate is 2.1% -- well above travel industry standard of .47%. Fall content to the website will include Yellowstone fall foliage, the elk rut, fall photography, and fall fly-fishing.

Door counters were successfully installed at both VIC entrances, allowing staff to track VIC walk-ins 24/7. September appears to be a short staffed month; the year-round staff anticipate spending more time assisting visitors and less time on Chamber/CVB projects.

Park County Days is coming up on September 7 & 8 – Jeff has recommended that Gardiner Chamber staff do not attend this year due to staffing issues and timing of the event. Neala reminded the Board members that they could attend instead, though interest appeared low.

The Gardiner Bridge construction project is set to begin on September 3. Glenn Oppel from Government Affairs will be in town next week to meet with Board members and answer any questions.

3. Childcare Connections

15 min.

Kami Ryles and Tammy Christofferson from Childcare Connections in Bozeman both attended to start the conversation about the need for childcare resources in the Gardiner community. They explained they offer resources to the region for child care including scholarships, grant funding to start new child care facilities, and instructions on how to get started. They would like gauge need in Gardiner, and suggested that a drop-in facility might be good for community members and tourists, just as an example of things that could be done. Jeff suggested Chamber staff work on doing some more background research first as none of the Board members in attendance have a good feel for the need for childcare. Dennis McIntosh from GGCC also chimed in saying this was something he felt the Chamber and the GGCC could collaborate on as it is both a business and community issue. Neala will work on gauging community interest and will reach out to both Childcare Connections and the GGCC when outreach is complete.

4. Outstanding Business

3.1 Rodeo grounds repairs update

20 min.

Sue Johnson & Neala Siegle

Neala and Sue presented the proposed plan on the upgrades to the rodeo grounds, which include new pens and gates as well as a catwalk. The plan will cost \$32,000 for materials from Western Supply in Billings. Sue will donate all the labor. They highlighted the need to make this upgrade to improve safety for rodeo participants, and because the rodeo grounds have not seen upgrades since the pens were built in the 1980s. Construction is set to begin in May 2020 or earlier, weather dependent. Edwin Johnson made a motion to approve the plan; Mike Skelton seconded, and the motion was approved by the group. Neala and Sue will begin working on the resort tax grant paperwork to ask the GRAD board for these funds.

3.2 Next Chamber Open House

The group discussed a date for the next Open House and agreed that the format of having the Open House after a Board Meeting was best for everyone. The group agreed October would be the best option and set the date for the October Open House on October 17th at 5:30 pm.

5. Public Comment

5 min.

Trina asked for an update on purchasing picnic tables in honor of Joe Gross. Neala shared that she had a note from Loren (previous director) to talk to Lori Hoppe from the FFA in the early fall. Mike and Trina remembered a follow-up discussion last spring that they would not ask the FFA as they have a lot of other projects going on. Neala let the group know she would look through Board meeting notes and send a follow-up email regarding the conversation last spring to get the ball rolling.

Sabina Strauss asked the Board if they would be willing to be a sponsor for the Bear Creek Council events in exchange for newsletter ad credit. The lead sponsor cost was \$600, which matches the exact amount the Council would like to advertise events in the newsletter (4 events for 3 weeks at \$50 each for a half-page ad). The Board agreed upon this trade. Someone from the BCC will remind the Chamber of this arrangement next year so the partnership can continue.

Meeting adjourned at 12:56 pm.

6. Date of Next Meeting
September 19, 12pm-1pm