

# 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 20, 2019 from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM**

Location: Gardiner Chamber of Commerce

Purpose: Regularly Scheduled Meeting

## Agenda:

### 1. Chamber Business

#### 1.1. Roll Call & Introductions

*Anna Holloway, Edwin Johnson, Leslie Everett, Mike Keller, Mike Skelton, Terese Petcoff, Neala Siegle*

*Excused: Trina Smith, Jeff Guengerich*

#### 1.2 Approval of Prior Month's Meeting Minutes

*Minutes from May 16, 2019*

*Motion to approve by Edwin Johnson. Leslie Everett seconds. Motion passes.*

## 2. Committee Updates

### 2.1 US Forest Service – Jeremy – District Ranger Forest Service

Jeremy reported that all Forest Service Campgrounds are open with the exception of Colter Bay, which should be open by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Soda Butte is partially open and will be fully open by June 21<sup>st</sup>. Tom Miner is currently a no host campground so you cannot get a petrified wood permit at that location. To get a permit you must go to the Gardiner or Bozeman office. He reported that back country trail crews are starting next week. Also, there will be bear safety demos starting in Gardiner put on by the Forest Service and he will be forwarding the Chamber the schedule.

The Forest Service will be surveying use of the Gallatin National Forest, this weekend they will be on the Jardine Road Z hill asking visitors questions.

A Missoula Non-Profit is partnering with the Forest service and will be working on weed management and amphibian ponds this summer.

Lastly the Shooting Start Ranch road is now a public road that was inherited by the Forest Service. Currently it is only open to foot, horse, and bike traffic.

### **2.2 Director's Report – Neala Siegle**

Neala reported that two new members have joined the Chamber Yellowstone Roughriders and Upriver Cabin. This means a total of seven new members have joined in the last two months making our membership total 150 members. Terese and herself will be working to follow up with lapsed members. This fall they plan to revamp the member communications to include a renewal letter that reminds members of benefits and highlights what the Chamber has been doing included in every invoice.

She presented the Chamber's new Frontline Gardiner information packet made especially for J1/seasonal workers. After gauging interest from members this was made in lieu of a large event we hope to hold in the future.

Three banner ads have been sold this month and will show a nice bump in ad revenue for June. The Visitor Center is now fully staffed. They also participated in the Rodeo parade this year on behalf of the Chamber.

### **Yellowstone National Park – Mary Wilson- North District Ranger – Neala Reported on her behalf**

Elk calving season is winding down but encourage local businesses to remind visitors to stay a safe distance from all wildlife. Elk cows are still charging in the Mammoth area. While May statistics show slightly lower numbers than last year, Yellowstone is experiencing a 1% increase in visitation compared to same period in 2018. North Entrance vehicle counts represent a 1.69% decrease from last May. Construction is continuing in the park and visitors can expect a 30 minute delay at Norris to Mammoth, typically 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, and 30 minute delays at Fishing Bridge. Fishing Bridge project will start working through the night but currently no nightly closures are expected.

### **2.3 Office Manager Report – Terese Petcoff – Properties & Facilities**

Terese reported that the flagpoles out front have been fixed. Also, through marketing funding the Visitor Center received a door counter to track visitors, there will be one placed at each doorway and we will now be able to track visitation when we are not open.

Terese has been distributing visitor guides across Montana and several other states. Two key locations we were able to contract with are the Badland Visitor Center and the Jackson Hole Airport. She is also planning another hotel drop off in the next two weeks.

**Following up:** Terese will be talking with Dennis McIntosh to fix the fan in the family bathroom of the Visitor Center. Additionally she will talk to the park service about the proper type of mulch to put in the front of the building to keep the weeds down.

**2.4 Marketing Report – Neala Siegle – FY19 Q4 Reporting :** FY19 coming to an end some highlights were: creation of a new Gardiner visitor guide, creation of a new winter website, we hit our goal and increased website traffic by over 60%, we increase our Instagram following over 200%, we were recognized by MOTBT with the 2019 Marketing Campaign of the Year Award.

In the last quarter of FY19 highlights include: getting the Visitor Center ready with new chamber stickers, postcards, and visitor guide; tried our first radio ad with Yellowstone Public Radio, created a half page ad for the regional publication Explore Yellowstone hitting shelves in July, and have distributed 7,000 visitor guides throughout Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Idaho and more coming in the next two weeks.

She presented key observations from our social media on Facebook, Instagram, and our website. We find that videos are performing highest on Instagram and Facebook. Instagram is growing steadily while Facebook is leveling off. Blog posts on our website have not been as

popular. Lastly our website bounce rate has increased as we have added content. We will continue to monitor ROI on blog posts and ask for recommendations from our web agency on bounce rate. We will continue to post regularly on Instagram and Facebook and monitor impressions. We may look into a free analytics service. Lastly, we have used all of our marketing budget for the year!

#### **4. Outstanding Business**

##### **4.1 Rodeo Grounds Parking & Fireworks**

Terese and Neala reported that they posted notices on 12 items at the Rodeo Grounds and all but two have since been removed from the property have purchased appropriate permits to park at the property. Terese spoke with Hannah from the Livingston Parks Department about the Junk Vehicle Program and will use her as a resource in the future if vehicles need to be removed. They plan on purchasing more signs the display owners must purchase the proper permit to park on the Rodeo Grounds.

The annual vendor who sells fireworks at the Rodeo Grounds has set his dates of sale for this season. However, this year the Rodeo Grounds will not be a designated area to shoot off your fireworks. We will be purchasing signs that display this so visitors and residents know.

##### **4.2 Strategic Plan Check-in**

1. Expand board member recruitment and develop an organizational succession plan.  
Kelly Burns interest in vacant board member seat.

2. Establish Gardiner as a year-round destination through innovative marketing campaigns to grow a more sustainable economy.

Neala presented stats from the North Gate Entrance that numbers are up. The Chamber will be checking to see if we can get out bound numbers since these are only inbound numbers. We will also follow up with MDOT to see if they monitor traffic on highway 89.

3. Exercise stewardship of Gardiner/Chamber Properties for community benefit.

This is a top priority and Neala and Terese have taken major steps in tagging unauthorized vehicles. Anna Holloway will look into what other communities do with their Rodeo Grounds when not in use and report at next meeting.

4. Enhance our value to chamber members.

The Chamber has continued to see success with development workshops and open houses. Additionally, we have maintained our retention rate of 90%.

5. Leverage local events to promote year-round visitation to Gardiner.

In the coming years we will capitalize on the Sesquicentennial in 2022.

#### **5. Public Comment**

##### **Dennis McIntosh on behalf of the Greater Gardiner Community Council**

Reported that the GGCC is in the final stages of the capital campaign for the building They hired out a separate company to help them develop a fundraising plan.

The GGCCs next area of business is to provide a walking route to the historic jail. They are partnering with the county to create it as a public access to the site since they own the rights to the property. Their next step is to speak with the owner of equipment that is currently blocking where the path would be in hopes to get the area cleared. Dennis asked for the Chamber's support on this endeavor, possibly in the form of a letter. The Chamber agreed to this and will continue to stay in touch with the GGCC on the matter.

#### **7. Date of Next Meeting**

**July 18, 12pm-1pm**