



# 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, November 16, 2022 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

**All meetings are recorded and available upon request by emailing [executivedirector@gardinerchamber.com](mailto:executivedirector@gardinerchamber.com).**

## Agenda:

### 1. Chamber Business

#### 1.1 Roll Call & Introductions

*Chelsea Deweese, Amanda Hagerty, Mike Keller, Debbie Mackey, Sarah Ondrus, Mike Skelton, Trina Smith, Sabina Strauss, and Billie Taylor*

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

*Strauss moved to approve.*

*Smith seconded. Minutes from September 2022 pass.*

#### 1.3 Shaleas Harrison – PARC (15 Minutes)

Harrison presented on behalf of the group PARC (Park Access Recommendation Committee) requesting further support from the Gardiner Chamber regarding plowing of "the plug". Harrison explained that PARC would like to meet with Governor Gianforte of Montana to discuss a solution to this matter, inviting local Chambers of Commerce (Gardiner, Red Lodge) and stakeholders. Additionally, she elaborated on why residents would like "the plug" plowed, as well as the progress made towards plowing and cost estimates all of which were developments made since the Gardiner Chamber Board voted on issuing our initial letter of support at the September Board of Directors meeting, highlights include:

#### *Residents Support and Reasoning*

- To ensure access to essential health and human services. It takes an ambulance over 6 hours to get to Livingston from Mammoth to Cooke City and then to Livingston. The fire department cannot get a firetruck to properties on Colter Pass in emergencies. Residents prefer to be nearer to pharmacies, groceries stores, and other services. It is safer and faster to drive to Cody.
- Road closures in Yellowstone since May have caused severe economic loss, risking our businesses, way of life, and the ability to reside in this remote region of Montana. Plowing the road would allow for the much-needed interstate commerce between Wyoming and Montana in this region.
- The viability of businesses are currently dependent upon one user group, instead of many. Snowmobiling declines year after year, so we must look to other income sources while continuing to embrace the snowmobile economy.

#### *Opposition Response*

- Plowing would not ruin snowmobiling in the area.
- They believe that it would actually increase the availability of it in the area as it would create a more desirable destination for those coming from the east, for example, Billings, Cody, the Dakotas, and the Midwestern states. Parking their vehicles and trailers in Cooke City would provide access to vehicles and supplies without having to snowmobile back and forth over Colter Pass. Highlighting that

snowmobiling around Cooke City is focused on backcountry travel, not the 10 miles of highway that would be plowed.

#### *Cost Estimates*

- YNP would not be responsible for the cost of plowing or the physical plowing of the road.
- Based on a current cost estimate from Park County Wyoming, which has agreed to plowing in the event that there is an agreement met between the two states (MT and WY) would be no more than \$60K annually.

#### *Additional Highlights*

- Opportunity for more Marketing partnerships
- Increase economies beyond Cooke City into other gateway communities like Gardiner, Red Lodge, and Livingston.

After discussion the Board reached a conclusion that Petcoff would reach out to the membership via email requesting their feedback via a survey. Included in the email will be the request of PARC, information on the PARC group, various letters of support, and other pertinent documents providing context of the situation. This way the Membership is fully aware of the situation and has the opportunity to voice their opinions on the matter. Once membership feedback is reviewed by the Board they will then make a decision on issuing further letters of support. Petcoff will follow up on the matter with Harrison and the official board decision will be recorded in the minutes of the December Board of Directors meeting.

## **2. Committee Updates**

### **2.1 Mike Thom – US Forest Service Gardiner District**

Not Present.

### **2.2 Mary Wilson – Yellowstone National Park Service**

Wilson updated the Board on certain matters within Yellowstone National Park, including:

#### *Visitation*

- October 2022 visitation was down 27% from October 2021. Recreation visits YTD are down 32% from the same time in 2021.

#### *Roads*

- Interior park roads and facilities closed for the season on November 1st with the exception of the road from the North Entrance to the Northeast Entrance, which remains open all year conditions permitting.
- The new name of “Old Gardiner Road” is now “Temporary North Entrance Road”.
  - Use of “Temporary North Entrance Road is preferred to reduce public confusion with use of the OGR acronym. The park has begun initial stages of permanent entrance road planning.
- Reminder to visitors and locals alike to please drive carefully on the Temporary North Entrance Road. Steep grades and sharp curves exists, during inclement weather short term closures will occur to allow for plowing. Continued work on the road will be on-going as weather permits.
- Regarding the Northeast Entrance Road to Cooke City, again use caution as this road can be snow packed and icy, expect winter driving conditions and use pullouts – snow plows cannot stop quickly on snow-packed/icy roads when they come around a curve and find a vehicle in the road.
- Conditions permitting, roads into the interior of the park will open Thursday, December 15 to over snow vehicle traffic.

#### *Update on the Abyss Pool Incident*

- Through DNA analysis it was identified that the human foot found earlier this summer belonged to a 70 year old male from California. No foul play is suspected.

#### *Boiling River*

- Due to the June 13, 2022, flood event the Boiling River no longer exists. The river channel no longer runs into the thermal springs, so swimming there is prohibited and the area remains closed. Please make visitors aware of this if asked.

## *Mammoth Hot Springs & Albright Visitor Center*

- The Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel and Dining Room will remain closed this winter season, December 2022 through March 2023, due to flood damage to the area's wastewater system.
- The hotel gift shop, coffee and beverage service, lobby and ski shop will be open. Regularly scheduled tours and snow coach services between Mammoth, Old Faithful and other park locations will be available.
- Albright Visitor Center at Mammoth Hot Springs is open daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. It will be closed Thanksgiving Day.

## *Reminders to Visitors*

- Stay alert to and prepare for changing weather conditions.
- Have flexible travel plans.
- Expect limited services. Check Operating Hours and Seasons for details.
- Anticipate possible road closures due to inclement weather and dangerous driving conditions.
- Temporary travel restrictions or closures can occur at any time without notice.

### **2.3 Terese Petcoff – Director's Report**

The winner of the 2022 Gardiner Christmas Stroll Poster Contest was Richelle Riley. The Christmas Stroll will take place on December 1<sup>st</sup> from 5:00 – 7:30 pm followed by a performance at the Gardiner School from Last Best Comedy of Bozeman sponsored by EPAC. The Chamber will be open, as in year past we will have snacks and beverages and have a Christmas stroll passport and raffle prize to generate business to the members participating in the stroll.

The Operations Manager position has been officially posted in the Gardiner Community Newsletter.

Petcoff requested the Chamber move back to the winter hours that were allowed in 2020 – 2021 so that staff is not driving in the dark. The Board agreed unanimously to allow the winter hour change, effective through approx. mid-April.

Petcoff updated the Board that she has issued the final flood Economic Impact Survey. Requesting businesses to complete this survey by December 22, 2022.

Petcoff has submitted a grant requesting approximately \$60,000 to the South West Montana Flood Relief Fund.

Finally Petcoff noted that the Tourism Directory on VisitGardinerMT.com has been refreshed and encouraged the Board to take a look at the new layout.

## **3. Outstanding Business**

### **3.1 FY23 Gardiner Chamber of Commerce Draft Budget Discussion**

Petcoff opened the discussion by presenting a draft FY23 budget, noting that the budget did not include any income or expense related to the payment of the building's note (mortgage) where monies received is held in the Capital account. This was done in order to minimize confusion being that the separate account does not relate to operational expenses.

It was enforced that due to the economic impact of the June 13, 2022 flood event Resort Tax collections were down considerably and that there will be a budget deficit moving into FY23. However, currently there should be enough cash on hand to operate fully in FY23 as long as spending is very conservative.

The budget was explained in entirety by Petcoff describing each line item and highlighting items with notable budget increases or decreases.

There were several areas that the Board recommended the Chamber consider increasing its pricing including rodeo grounds parking, rodeo ground livestock permits, and possibly advertising in publication (not the Gardiner Community Newsletter).

Following the meeting Petcoff will email a copy of the proposed FY23 budget and a year to date FY22 profit and Loss Budget vs. Actual to assist the Board in the FY23 Budget approval which is an agenda item at the December 2022 Board of Directors meeting.

#### **4. New Business**

Strauss updated the Board on the October Park County Planning Board meeting stating that at the meeting there were many public comments made regarding the 2022 Park County Housing Action Plan. She noted that there were 9 public comments made in favor and 19 comments made opposed to the adoption of the HAP to the Park County Growth Policy. According to the official Meeting Minutes of the Park County Planning Board Meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup> after discussion, following was the ending motion:

*“Full Amended Motion is brought to the table for vote and clarified as; Move to recommend the Commissioners approve the Housing Action Plan, as well as recommend the Commission consider modifying the language in the plan to highlight and emphasize the plan as non-regulatory, modifying the section on short term rentals, and to recommend the Commission add language that guarantees that any future consideration involving short term rentals will include individuals that own and operate short term rentals. We also recommend the Commission conduct a robust public engagement process with diverse representation from across the County prior to any implementation. All Yays except Gordon Elley votes Nay. Motion passes.”*

The full meeting minutes of the October Park County Planning Board Meeting can be found by [clicking here](#).

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

There was no public comment.

*Keller motioned to adjourn the meeting. Deweese seconded. Meeting adjourned.*

**Date of Next Meeting:** December 15, 2022 12:00PM – 1:00PM