

Visit Grand Junction  
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting  
February 11, 2020

Holiday Inn & Suites Grand Junction Airport  
2751 Crossroads Blvd.  
Grand Junction, CO

**Presiding:** Paul Petersen

**Visit Grand Junction Board Members Present:** Ken Mabery, Julie Shafer, Zeb Miracle, Tammy Anderson, Kelsey Coleman, Joe Burtard, Mikhail Blosser

**Visit Grand Junction Board Members Absent:** Josh Niernberg

**Staff Present:** Elizabeth Fogarty, Kim Machado

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 PM.

Minutes from the January 14, 2020 meeting: Zeb Miracle motioned to approve the minutes as written; Ken Mabery seconded. Motion passed.

Paul Petersen welcomed Joe Burtard and Kelsey Coleman to the Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board of Directors. All board members introduced themselves and briefly described their backgrounds.

**Community Updates and Q&A**

Greg Wolfgang, Acting Field Manager of the Grand Junction Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Field Office and Collin Ewing, Manager of the Dominguez-Escalante and McInnis Canyons National Conservation Areas shared information on the BLM's current activities and projects. Interviews have taken place for the Field Manager position and a selection should be named soon. The Grand Junction Field Office has been assisting with the relocation of BLM's headquarters to Grand Junction. This year will mark the 20-year anniversary of the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area and a celebration is planned for October 2020. Beginning this year, brand new camping fees of \$20 per night will be implemented at the Rabbit Valley camping area and the revenue will assist with campground improvements.

Greg complimented on the Grand Junction Visitor Guide and appreciated that the "Leave No Trace" principle was included in the guide to further educate on the protection of the area's public lands. He asked if the BLM may review the visitor guide before it goes to print. Elizabeth replied that because of the timing of the guide, it is not possible to have every organization review the guide ahead of printing. However, Visit GJ is responsive when feedback on the guide is received and will apply appropriate edits with the next guide. Elizabeth welcomed any edits needed in the current guide before the upcoming print run for the 2020 Guide. Any immediate content received throughout the year from organizations may be included on our website or social media channels.

Greg mentioned that other destinations have considered lodging tax funds to pay for trail maintenance and printing of BLM brochures. Elizabeth commented that the voter-approved resolution language restricts the use of lodging tax revenue to promoting and marketing travel, tourism and tourism related activities, as determined by City Council. Part of that includes promoting good stewardship of public lands and adjusting messaging at appropriate times to counteract any over-used trails. Elizabeth suggested connecting with local businesses and associations regarding assistance with brochure printing.

## **Director Updates**

Elizabeth provided updates on the following items:

- Visit GJ board members Tammy Anderson and Joe Burtard joined Elizabeth in attending the Tourism Industry Association of Colorado's (TIAC) annual Legislative Reception in Denver. They met with various state legislators to help educate them on the importance of tourism to Colorado's economy and gain insight as to the issues currently facing the state. Two Rivers Winery donated wine for the reception. Elizabeth was also voted on to the TIAC Board at the annual member meeting and will serve a 3-year term.
- The lodging tax collection amount for December's business was not available to report at this meeting. It will be reported at the next board meeting.
- Representatives from Destination Think will arrive in Grand Junction the first week in March. The engagement sessions include one-on-one interviews with select community leaders, two 3 ½ hour Place DNA™ deep-dive "by invitation only" workshops, Facebook Live, surveys, one-hour "open to the public" community sessions and drop-in sessions. Visit GJ board members will receive an invitation to attend one of the Place DNA™ workshops. Destination Think will return in the spring for a Visit GJ board meeting with a formal presentation of their findings.
- Elizabeth, along with representatives from various organizations and destinations along the Dinosaur Diamond Scenic Byway, have been meeting quarterly to develop, market and promote the byway. The group is designing a new website and map. Elizabeth requested that "GJ" be included in the map since the byway starts in Grand Junction, which was approved. Visit GJ's support for the byway includes increased content and blogs on our website. The next meeting for the group will be in Ouray. Elizabeth shared she plans to be more involved with this byway committee, if they continue to include Grand Junction and progress their marketing initiatives.
- Recruitment for the revised Data Analytics Marketing Manager position has begun. The ideal candidate will have a focus for data analytics along with marketing experience.
- Members of the Visit GJ Bylaws Committee, which includes Paul Petersen, Julie Shafer, Ken Mabery, and Tammy Anderson, met on January 30 to review Visit GJ's bylaws and make suggested edits. After Elizabeth reviews the edits, they will be shared with the bylaw committee and then the entire board before they are reviewed by the City Manager and City Attorney. It then needs to go before Council for consideration.

## **Visit Grand Junction 2019 Overview**

Elizabeth explained that as time allows during each regular meeting, Visit GJ will provide to the board an overview of the activities and accomplishments in 2019, along with items of focus for 2020. Kim Machado began the overview by reviewing lodging tax collections. As of January 1, 2019, the total lodging tax rate increased from 3% to 6%. The Grand Junction Regional Air Service Alliance receives 1%, the Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission receives 0.75%, and Visit Grand Junction Receives 4.25% (the original 3% plus 1.25% from the new 3%). From the original 3% lodging tax, a total of \$1.65 million was collected through November's business (December's collections), which was a 5.1% increase over 2018's lodging tax collections. Visit GJ had originally projected a 4.1% increase. From the additional 3% lodging tax, a total of \$1.61 million was collected.

Hotel metrics for 2019 were also shared, as reported by Grand Junction hotels to STR, Inc. The average daily rate (ADR) for 2019 (January through December) increased 2.3% to \$88.84. The increase is primarily due to hotels applying effective revenue management strategies instead of driving occupancy rate. The number of rooms sold in 2019 increased 1.2% over 2018, which demonstrated additional demand in the Grand Junction

market. The opening of Home 2 Suites (91 rooms) and the Tru by Hilton hotel (92 rooms), increased the total room supply by 4.1% in 2019. The total room supply does not include two hotels with high room count in Grand Junction, as they do not report to STR, Inc.

STR, Inc. reported a decrease in the average occupancy (OCC) percentage and revenue per available room (RevPAR) over 2018. This is due to the 4.1% increase in room supply for 2019, which does not result in a true and accurate year-over-year comparison. Excluding the additional rooms added in 2019, the OCC is 62.8%, up 1.1% over 2018, and RevPAR for 2019 is \$56.12, up 4.1% over 2018.

Visit Grand Junction was appropriated by City Council to spend \$2.99 million in 2019. We reduced overall labor and eliminated minimal impact tasks to focus on the highest ROI duties, which allowed Visit GJ to deploy additional strategic marketing. Of the total 2019 operating budget, Visit GJ spent 75% on marketing programs, 19% on labor, and 6% on operating expenses. Compared to industry standards of other destination marketing organizations (DMOs) with similar budget sizes, 53% is spent on marketing programs, 35% on labor, and 11% on operating.

The 2019 overview will continue at the March 10 board meeting and beyond.

There being no further business, Tammy Anderson motioned to adjourn, Ken Mabery seconded. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:01 pm.