

Visit Grand Junction  
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting  
March 10, 2020

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

**Presiding:** Paul Petersen

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

**Visit Grand Junction Board Members Absent:** Ken Mabery

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 PM.

Minutes from the February 11, 2020 meeting: Zeb Miracle motioned to approve the minutes as written: Tammy Anderson seconded. Motion passed.

**Community Updates and Q&A**

Sarah Shrader, President of the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of the Grand Valley (ORC) and owner of Bonsai Design, provided a background of the ORC which was assembled and formalized in 2015. The ORC is focused on expanding and enhancing the economy of the Grand Valley through collaborative support and promotion of outdoor recreation businesses. The ORC leadership council is made up of people who own an outdoor recreation business or a business that is directly affected by outdoor recreation. There are currently 300 members of the ORC. Sarah mentioned that Grand Junction is nationally known in the outdoor recreation community as an example of how to transition a community to a sustainable and diversified economy based on outdoor recreation. She added that tourism is included as part of outdoor recreation.

The ORC hopes to commission a study on the economic impact of outdoor recreation in Mesa County. Their latest project includes developing a degree program at Colorado Mesa University to develop skilled and talented workers for the outdoor recreation industry. While the ORC has relationships and ongoing engagement on a state level, part of their strategic planning includes engaging with local community stakeholders and create relationships to support outdoor recreation.

Sarah inquired how the ORC can support Visit GJ's efforts. Elizabeth mentioned ensuring that economic impact data aligns with national and state data when there are different research companies reporting on economic impact research. Prior to the commission of an economic impact study, the techniques, data and methods used for the study should be agreed upon by the organizations that will be affected by the data to ensure it is complementary, which will help mutually elevate conversations and messaging for all involved. Elizabeth added that conflicting information will only debilitate the cause for all organizations involved.

Elizabeth asked how Visit GJ can assist the ORC. Sarah mentioned regular communication between organizations. She also inquired about funding mechanisms for trail maintenance. Elizabeth commented that the lodging tax resolution language restricts the use of lodging tax revenue to promoting and marketing travel, tourism and tourism-related activities. Part of Visit GJ's marketing includes promoting responsible stewardship of public lands and adjusting messaging at appropriate times to counteract any

over-used trails. She suggested other funding mechanisms such as GOCO grants and lobbying for a portion of tax revenue generated from sports gambling or marijuana to be used for trail maintenance. Sarah mentioned that Bonsai Designs will be breaking ground on their new 22,000 square foot facility at Las Colonias Park on April 2 at 4 pm.

## **Director Updates**

Elizabeth provided updates on the following items:

- Frank Cuypers and Adam Nagy, from Destination Think were in Grand Junction March 2 – 5 to conduct several community engagement sessions for the destination branding project. The sessions included:
  - Compressed versions of the Place DNA™ workshops with City Council and City Directors
  - Ten one-on-one interviews with select community leaders including the Mayor, City Manager, and Visit GJ Board Vice-Chair, Julie Shafer
  - Two Place DNA™ workshops with industry stakeholders, past council, historians, members of the arts, academia, and others who are knowledgeable about tourism, city history and development of the city which included over 80 people.
  - Three compressed versions of the Place DNA™ workshops and a walk-in session open to members of the community to share their perspectives
  - A Facebook Live session for community members to learn about the destination branding process and ask questions which is on the City of Grand Junction Facebook page.

Visit Grand Junction Board Chair Paul Petersen, and board members Zeb Miracle, Josh Niernberg, and Ken Mabery attended one of the two Place DNA™ workshops. Each shared their positive feedback and perspectives of the workshops. Over 746 survey responses were captured, well beyond the goal of 300. Community feedback and ideas will be woven into the fabric of the Place DNA™ which will set the foundation of the brand, bring it into focus, and serve to provide enhanced visibility for Grand Junction. The formal report is expected to be completed by early summer.

- Visit GJ's Content and Partner Development Coordinator, Kyle Amann, has provided notice to end employment at Visit GJ effective March 13. The vacancy of this position has provided an opportunity to reframe it into a Marketing Manager position, as we have outgrown the Content & Partner Development position as it was originally designed. Due to rising economic impact concerns of COVID-19, the posting of the Business Development and Group Sales Specialist position will be moved to later this year.
- Lodging tax collections increased for December's business by 14.6% over the same 2018 period. This reflects the original 3% lodging tax. Year-to-date collections through December are 5.2% above the same year-to-date period last year.
- The City began identifying potential impacts relating to COVID-19 which includes identifying areas within operating budgets to reduce spending. Visit GJ will adjust marketing strategies based on how the situation progresses, including shifting toward more inspirational content.
- Elizabeth presented on the topic of travel and tourism in Grand Junction to four separate classes of students at Valley School. The students are learning about the industry, along with tours in the area to provide real-world examples of the hospitality industry, including agritourism.

- As a selected participant for this year's Colorado Tourism Leadership Journey class, Elizabeth attended a session in Colorado Springs in February that included a tour of the U.S. Olympic Training Center and new Olympic Museum which was finishing construction. Elizabeth shared that the progressive technology and data used to design and create an experiential tour sets the stage for other museums in the country with regard to how to stay relevant and profitable.
- Visit GJ has partnered with the Colorado Tourism office (CTO) to host and cover the cost of a Google My Business workshop on May 15 at 8:30 am. Location is to be determined. The workshop will cover how local businesses can expand exposure with Google and improve conversion of digital audiences into new customers.

### **Visit Grand Junction 2019 Overview**

Due to a lack of available time, the Visit Grand Junction 2019 overview will continue at the next regular board meeting.

There being no further business, Joe Burtard motioned to adjourn, Julie Shafer seconded. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:52 pm.