

Visit Grand Junction  
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting  
October 13, 2020: 3 pm – 5 pm

The meeting was held virtually

**Presiding:** Paul Petersen

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

**City of Grand Junction Staff Present:** Greg Caton, Elizabeth Fogarty, Michael Bodman, Mason Barrows, Kerry Graves, Kim Machado

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 pm.

Minutes from the September 8, 2020 meeting: Ken Mabery motioned to approve the minutes as written; Julie Shafer seconded. Motion passed.

### **Bureau of Land Management/Grand Junction Field Office Update**

Collin Ewing, Manager of McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA) and Dominguez-Escalante NCA, presented updates from the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Grand Junction Field Office. The BLM recently realigned Colorado's districts and as a result, Grand Junction was moved from the Southwest Colorado District to the newly created Upper Colorado River District. Collin also shared information from the Pine Gulch fire, which was ignited by a lightning strike on July 31, 2020 and consumed 138,655 acres. Total cost of the fire was \$34M. The Emergency Restoration Plan team assessed the soil to estimate the potential for landslides and as a result, the area will be closed to the public this winter. Plans to rehabilitate, stabilize, and seed the land are in progress.

This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the McInnis Canyons NCA. The BLM along with the Colorado Canyons Association, have scheduled several small events, including lectures, hikes, a bike ride, and a plein air invitational, to celebrate the anniversary.

### **Visit Grand Junction Updates**

Elizabeth Fogarty provided an update on lodging tax collections. From the 4.25% lodging tax collections that Visit Grand Junction receives, August 2020's business was down 28.0% compared to August 2019. Total collections received year-to-date through August's business decreased by 42.6% compared to the same time period last year. When considering the 6% lodging tax collections, August's business saw a decline of 27.9% over August 2019. Year-to-date collections for the total 6% lodging tax through August's business has decreased 42.5% compared to the same time period last year.

Other updates Fogarty shared include:

- The Grand Junction Visitor Center reopened on September 28. A significant number of processes to align with health and safety protocols, to protect staff, ambassadors, and the public, were instituted. Visitation to the Visitor Center continues to increase.
- Through Visit Grand Junction's image platform, 447 photos were collected for the 2021 City Calendar. Fourteen images will be featured.
- Michael Bodman attended the Tableau Annual Conference to learn the latest data techniques and best practices to advance analytical skills. Learnings will be implemented into Visit GJ processes.

- Since May 2020, over 7,000 Official Grand Junction Visitor Guides have been mailed.
- Elizabeth was invited by State Representative Soper to attend the Colorado Competitive Council (CCC) annual event at the VanWinkle Ranch. The CCC selects rising stars in the state legislature and organizes an event to visit their district to learn about the region and constituents they serve. Over 50 legislators, lobbyists, and business executives from the Front Range were in attendance.
- Elizabeth was also invited by Christi Reece to be interviewed for her podcast series. The discussion included Visit Grand Junction's strategy, advertising technology, community partnerships, redesigned visitor guide, and the new web-based app Visit Grand Junction is launching.
- Mason Barrows and Elizabeth attended the Palisade Plunge event on top of the Grand Mesa.
- Elizabeth was interviewed by Fox 31 Denver on weekend and fall getaways in Grand Junction. The Colorado National Monument and the Grand Mesa were featured, along with Grand Junction's affordability and accessibility from the Front Range.

### **Staff Presentation of Destinations International Annual Conference**

Visit GJ staff members Mason Barrows, Michael Bodman, Kerry Graves, and Kim Machado, presented a summary of the sessions they attended from day two of the Destinations International Annual (virtual) Convention. Highlights included the latest data, social media, technology trends, marketing tools, sustainable tourism, and recovery strategies from COVID-19. Examples were shared of how Visit GJ has implemented many of the suggested practices already, along with new initiatives being considered. Comments from the board members were positive and supportive of Visit Grand Junction's approach to effective and progressive destination marketing.

### **Board Business**

As of October 13, three applications had been received by City Hall for the two open Visit Grand Junction Board seats. The application deadline is October 16. A letter from the board chair will be drafted and will include recommendations from the board on the desired skills and experience of the candidates who would best advise Visit Grand Junction as destination management strategies and community partnerships are being developed. The letter will be sent to the City Clerk and will be included with the applications for the City Councilmembers who are on the committee.

There being no further business, Ken Mabery motioned to adjourn, Tammy Anderson seconded. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:42 pm.