

Visit Grand Junction
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting
December 8, 2020, 3 pm – 5 pm

The meeting was held virtually

Presiding: Paul Petersen

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

Visit Grand Junction Board Members Absent: Zeb Miracle, Ken Mabery

Grand Junction City Councilmembers Present: Councilmember Phillip Pe'a

City of Grand Junction Staff Present: Elizabeth Fogarty, Kim Machado

The meeting was called to order at 3:11 pm.

Minutes from the November 10, 2020 meeting: Tammy Anderson motioned to approve the minutes as written; Josh Niernberg seconded. Motion passed.

Community Updates – U.S. Forest Service – Grand Valley Ranger District

Bill Edwards, District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service – Grand Valley Ranger District, provided an update on a variety of topics including the increase in recreational activities and camping on local forest lands this year, primarily due to the pandemic and early snow melt, which allowed the campgrounds to open up early. Bill also shared several upcoming projects planned for 2021, including the completion of the Palisade Plunge, reconstruction of the Crag Crest Trail, upgrades to the Little Bear Campground, water line replacement at the Ward Lake Campground, rebuilding of the Kendall Reservoir dam, and trail improvements for non-motorized, single-track trail systems. He mentioned that the Grand Valley Ranger District office will be moving to the Las Colonias area, next to Edgewater Brewery, tentatively scheduled for July 2021. Bill thanked Visit Grand Junction for their partnership and support of forest land management.

Community Updates – Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission

Ben Snyder, Executive Director for the Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission (GGJSC), shared the GGJSC's mission, funding, and goals, which include organically growing and facilitating local sports events, recruiting sporting events from outside the area, increasing opportunities to build and expand the local sports culture, and partnering with Visit Grand Junction on the community brand. Ben also mentioned information about the GGJSC's annual sporting event grant program to increase interest and participation in local events, along with the GGJSC's plan to work with local organizations to increase sport infrastructure. Ben said the GGJSC is looking forward to continuing the partnership with Visit Grand Junction and commended Visit GJ on successfully promoting the destination to visitors.

Visit Grand Junction Board Business

Paul Petersen reported that out of the four applicants who applied for a seat on the Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board, City Council appointed him to a second, three-year term beginning January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2023, and Paula Skrzypczak, Dual Director of Sales from the Courtyard by Marriott, and Residence Inn by Marriott, was also appointed to a three-year term beginning January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2023. Angel Bautista, a Colorado Mesa University student, was appointed to serve the remaining one-year term vacated in October 2020 by Zebulon Miracle. Paul thanked outgoing board member, Mikhail Blosser, for his service and contribution to the Visit Grand Junction Board. Elizabeth Fogarty also thanked Mikhail for his support and time on the Board of Visit Grand Junction.

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, October 2020's business was down 0.6% compared to October 2019. Total collections received year-to-date through October's business decreased by 36.4% compared to the same time period last year. When considering the 6% lodging tax collections, October's business saw a decline of 0.6% over October 2019. Year-to-date collections for the total 6% lodging tax through October's business has decreased 36.4% compared to the same time period last year. Of the Grand Junction properties that reported their metrics to STR, LLC., ADR for October 2020 was down 3.3%, but occupancy was up 4.2% and RevPAR was up 0.8% for the same month. This is the first time since the beginning of the pandemic where there was an increase in occupancy and RevPAR for the month, over the same month in 2019. The last month where there was an increase in occupancy and RevPAR over the same month in 2019, was February 2020.

Elizabeth shared that Visit Grand Junction's 2021 budget was recently adopted by City Council along with the entire 2021 budget for the City of Grand Junction. The total 2021 operating budget for Visit Grand Junction is \$3.25 million, with 73 percent of the budget allocated for marketing programs, 22 percent for labor, and 5 percent for operating expenses. When compared to other destination marketing organizations with a similar budget size, an average of 53 percent is allocated for marketing programs, 35 percent for labor, and 11 percent for operating expenses.

Based on national hotel occupancy projections for 2021 from leading tourism research firms, Visit Grand Junction projected a 12.2 percent increase in occupancy for Grand Junction's hotels, which translates to a 37.8 increase in lodging tax collections for 2021 over the amended lodging tax collection amount for 2020. A contingency will be set aside in the event 2021 revenues do not meet projections. Visit Grand Junction will be well-positioned to maximize marketing spend based on the staff's close monitoring of insights that the data platform provides.

Other updates Fogarty shared include:

- Visit Grand Junction supported the efforts of the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Grand Junction with the "Buy Local" campaign through blogs and social media to assist with the current needs of the community, while being cognizant of not duplicating the efforts of the organizations.
- A local blogger, Sharon Sullivan, has partnered with Visit Grand Junction to develop the brand story through blog writing. Blogs include Grand Junction breweries, city founders and historical figures, and the Las Colonias RiverFront.
- As part of Visit Grand Junction's community outreach, Elizabeth met with Ben Snyder and Cassidy Veach, from the Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission to discuss partnership opportunities.
- Visit Grand Junction shared destination data with the airport consultant that is working with the Grand Junction Regional Airport, to support the case for enhanced air service. The consultant thanked Visit GJ for the data and stated that the outcome of the airline meetings went well due to the data provided by Visit GJ which helped make their case.
- Elizabeth shared traveler sentiment data heading into the winter season, which is showing reduced travel planning for the time being. Visit GJ is minimizing those effects as much as possible through strategic marketing strategies.
- Elizabeth has had several recent meetings with Destination Think to fine-tune Grand Junction's brand and will meet again on December 14 to discuss the brand identity, creative direction, and logo development. She further explained the key elements of branding, including how the brand is built, the brand persona, promise, visual assets, value proposition, and experience development.

There being no further business, Julie Shafer motioned to adjourn, Tammy Anderson seconded. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:23 pm.