

Visit Grand Junction
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting
September 12, 2023, 3 pm – 5 pm

The meeting was held at the Hotel Maverick, 840 Kennedy Ave., Grand Junction, CO

Presiding: Kelsey Coleman, Chair

Visit Grand Junction Board Members Present: Paul Petersen, Joe Burtard, Pat Nichols-Perrin, Tammy Anderson, Elizabeth Fortushniak

Absent: Mikhail Blosser, Brenda Greene

Grand Junction City Council Member Present: Mayor Anna Stout

City of Grand Junction Staff Present: Elizabeth Fogarty, Director; Kim Machado, Administrative Specialist

Guests: Kamie Long, Interim Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager, Colorado State Forest Service

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. by Board Chair Kelsey Coleman.

Minutes from the August 8, 2023, meeting: Pat Nichols-Perrin motioned to approve the minutes as written; Paul Petersen seconded. Motion passed.

Community Updates and Q&A

Kamie Long, Interim Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager for the Colorado State Forest Service, provided an update on the health of the state's forests, state forest programs, and upcoming events and projects. She also explained the partnerships with other local agencies, community organizations, public landowners, and volunteer groups to improve forest health and wildfire mitigation. Community outreach efforts include education on pest and disease prevention for trees and the steps they have taken to address these issues. Kamie shared that protecting the community's tree canopy is very important for the environment, including fauna, flora, and carbon dioxide and oxygen levels, and although water conservation is important, maintaining trees and grass with appropriate amounts of water is important. Using drought-tolerant plants (xeriscape) is helpful, compared to zeroscaping, which can inhibit this delicate balance by replacing too much of the tree canopy. Upcoming community events include workshops, seminars, and other events related to forestry and wildfire preparedness.

Elizabeth Fogarty inquired about how Visit Grand Junction can organize and support a tree-planting event for the community in areas where trees are needed. Kamie responded positively and suggested Elizabeth contact her to discuss this further.

Elizabeth thanked Kamie for the update and asked how Visit GJ could assist the Colorado State Forest Service. Kamie thanked Visit GJ and the board for inviting her to share updates and to contact her if there are further questions or if additional materials are needed.

Visit Grand Junction Updates

Elizabeth Fogarty provided an update on lodging tax collections for April, May, June, and July 2023 business activity. April 2023's business was 10.1% above April 2022, May 2023's business was 17.9% above May 2022, June 2023's business was 15.2% above June 2022, and July 2023's business was 20.3% above July 2022. Of the Grand Junction lodging properties that reported their metrics to STR, LLC., occupancy for July 2023 was 76.2%, ADR was \$114.70, and RevPAR was \$87.43. A comparison of Grand Junction's July 2023 and year-to-date metrics to Colorado and the U.S. was also shared.

Other updates include:

- The annual City of Grand Junction Board and Commission Appreciation Dinner is scheduled for December 11, 2023. Formal invitations will be sent out soon.
- Community and Industry Meetings, Conferences, and Events that Elizabeth attended recently include City Leadership Training – Enhancing Communication Skills and Building Stronger Connections (Emergenetics); U.S. Travel Association Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO); Visit Grand Junction 2024 Budget Review with the City Manager and Finance Director and team; and City Entryway Signage meeting.
- The Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference is September 27 – 29, 2023, in Ft. Collins, CO. Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board members are invited to attend. Visit GJ will cover the conference registration and accommodation

expenses for the members who wish to attend. For the fifth year, Visit GJ is also sponsoring community members to attend. Visit GJ covers registration and accommodation costs and provides carpool arrangements.

- Visit Grand Junction was accepted into the Colorado Tourism Office's Destination Blueprint Program. Visit GJ has chosen to focus on the shared priority of advancing the tourism workforce in Mesa County, as well as advancing the power of tourism. A tourism consultant has been assigned to Visit GJ to lead the program and provide 100 hours of project-based consulting. The program also includes assembling a core team of local stakeholders from the restaurant, retail, activity, lodging, education, economic development, and education sectors, who will bring value, insight, and expertise in advancing the priorities. An in-person community visioning and action planning workshop is scheduled for November 28. This workshop will include a larger group of community stakeholders. At the end of the program, Visit GJ will receive an action plan that includes a series of recommendations identified during the workshop.
- In response to a board member's request for information on Visit GJ's marketing strategies during the August 8, 2023, meeting, Elizabeth presented information on Visit GJ's adtech platform and how the data is analyzed, and results are achieved.
- Recent media coverage of Grand Junction included 5280 Magazine ("Running Wild: Camping with Colorado's Wild Horses"); The Denver Post ("Hidden Gems of Colorado's Western Slope Include Sandstone Arches, James Beard-Quality Dining"); The Wall Street Journal ("Colorado's Western Slope Offers Gems That Travelers Often Overlook"); and Pride Journeys ("Fall Festivities Come Alive in Breckenridge and Grand Junction"); and Afar ("12 Epic Hikes in the U.S. Plan a Trip Around").

There being no further business, Paul Peterson motioned to adjourn; Elizabeth Fortushniak seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.