

Visit Grand Junction  
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting  
July 9, 2024, 3 pm – 5 pm

The meeting was held at Hotel Maverick, 840 Horizon Drive, Grand Junction, CO.

**Presiding:** Brenda Greene, Chair

**Visit Grand Junction Board Members Present:** Pat Nichols-Perrin, Joe Burtard, Mikhail Blosser, Julie Shafer, Manon Desrosiers, Tammy Anderson

**Absent:** Theresa Horvat, Elizabeth Fortushniak

**City Council Members Present:** Mayor Pro Tem Randall Reitz

**City of Grand Junction Staff Present:** Andrea Phillips, Interim City Manager; Elizabeth Fogarty, Director; Kim Machado, Administrative Specialist

**Guests:** Chandler Smith, Executive Director, Grand Valley Outdoor Recreation Coalition

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Board Chair Brenda Greene.

Minutes from the June 11, 2024, advisory board meeting: Joe Burtard motioned to approve the minutes as written; Manon Desrosiers seconded. Motion passed.

### **Community Updates and Q&A**

Chandler Smith, Executive Director of the Grand Valley Outdoor Recreation Coalition (GVORC), provided an overview of the organization, its mission, and strategies. He described the key initiatives for GVORC, which include funding, volunteerism, resources, community engagement, workforce development, industry voice, and advocacy. He acknowledged the support from Visit Grand Junction's Outdoor Pass, which aligns with GVORC's mission and mentioned the opportunity to include the pass on their website. Additionally, Chandler mentioned the GVORC formed a funding committee to identify sustainable funding sources for both the organization and a stewardship fund to protect and improve trail access. The committee is considering several funding sources, including a potential increase in the city's lodging tax, although he said the GVORC is also considering county initiatives to possibly avoid that option. During a previous meeting with Elizabeth Fogarty, she and her team offered many fundraising alternatives, grants, and resources to assist GVORC in securing necessary funding. Chandler expressed gratitude for the information.

The entire Advisory Board voiced concern about GVORC's consideration of increasing the city's lodging tax. Concerns included: the lodging tax ballot language is confined to marketing, the GJ lodging tax is already high by comparison to others in the state and U.S., and the organization already provides financial assistance toward two other entities (Grand Junction Regional Air Service Alliance and Grand Junction Sports Commission). Chandler mentioned the GVORC believes that while the lodging tax is used to market the area to visitors, there is also a need for funding to support and improve the outdoor infrastructure that visitors use. Elizabeth noted that visitors often are held responsible for trail usage, even though residents use the trails to a higher degree. Given that the City of Grand Junction has already invested over \$4 million in trail creation, reconstruction, improvements, and maintenance per year for the last five years, it was suggested to collaborate with other organizations and fundraising activities for funding. Chandler mentioned that consideration of the lodging tax for GVORC funding is a low priority for the GVORC; however, he cannot rule it out entirely. He added that if the topic of the lodging tax is entertained, Elizabeth and the Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board will be included in the discussion immediately.

Elizabeth highlighted how Visit Grand Junction can provide value to GVORC by assisting with strategy and data to achieve its initiatives, similar to how Visit Grand Junction assisted other community organizations, such as Colorado Mesa University and Dr. Nathan Perry, by providing data for the Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in Mesa County study. Elizabeth stressed that this strategy provides a greater impact than direct financial contributions. It was mentioned that tourism generates 30% of the City of Grand Junction's overall sales tax revenue and that revenue is reinvested into many areas, including trail repair, networks, and connectivity. She also explained how Visit Grand Junction's social listening platform and survey technologies can yield statistically significant data-based consumer sentiment. Insights from recent trail usage, quality, and experience were shared as an example of the survey data results.

Elizabeth thanked Chandler for the GVORC update and his leadership.

## Visit Grand Junction Updates

Grand Junction's hotel metrics and lodging tax collections from May 2024's business activity, in addition to public relations mentions and updates on community meetings and events, will be shared at the August 19, 2024, advisory board meeting.

Updates included:

- Elizabeth shared an overview of a recent meeting with the Bureau of Land Management's Grand Junction Field Office and the Colorado Canyons Association and their need for volunteers and data on the number of people using the area's trails. Visit Grand Junction created a custom online survey about trail usage, and the results were shared with them and all area stakeholders via the monthly eNews communication.
- Insights from the trail usage survey were shared with the advisory board members. Consumers who have visited Grand Junction in the last three years indicated that they used city parks (83%), paved trails (78%), and unpaved trails (71%) to recreate. In addition, a large majority responded that the unpaved trails in the Grand Junction area were not crowded (84%), the parking lots were not crowded (78%), trails were well-marked (95%) and in good condition (96%). Hiking (94%), mountain biking (79%), and dirt biking (26%) were the top activities on the unpaved trails. Elizabeth reinforced again that over the past five years, the City of Grand Junction has invested \$23 million on trail creation, reconstruction, improvements, and maintenance, which equates to over \$4 million per year. This amount does not include Safe Route to Schools or sidewalk improvements. Trails are mentioned in the City of Grand Junction's Comprehensive Plan over 100 times, so it is a significant area of focus.
- Video survey responses from guests who visited Grand Junction in the last three years were also shown, offering feedback on areas for improvement in Grand Junction, as well as what was enjoyable.

There being no further business, Tammy Anderson motioned to adjourn; Pat Nichols-Perrin seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.