

Visit Grand Junction  
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting  
July 8, 2025, 3 pm - 5 pm

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

**Presiding:** Elizabeth Fortushniak, Chair

**Visit Grand Junction Board Members Present:** Brenda Greene, Julie Shafer, Theresa Horvat, Manon Desrosiers, Pat Nichols-Perrin, Joe Burtard, Tammy Anderson

**Absent:** Tevfik Demirciftci

**City Council Members Present:** Mayor Pro Tem Laurel Cole

**Visit Grand Junction Staff Present:** Elizabeth Fogarty, Director; Kim Machado, Administrative Specialist; Teagan McLennan, Content Specialist

**Guests:** Dalida Sassoon Bollig, Chief Executive Officer, Business Incubator Center

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

Minutes from the June 10, 2025, advisory board meeting: Theresa Horvat motioned to approve the minutes as written; Joe Burtard seconded. Motion passed.

**Community Updates and Q&A – Business Incubator Center**

Dalida Sassoon Bollig, Chief Executive Officer of the Business Incubator Center (BIC), provided an overview of the BIC's initiatives and programs for Mesa County businesses. She shared a brief history of the BIC and emphasized the focus on small businesses as critical drivers of economic longevity, stability, and resiliency in rural and remote areas. The BIC operates under four pillars which are innovation; space and tools; funding and incentives; and mentoring and training. Also noted were the 12 programs that the BIC offers, including the newest program, Camino al Éxito, which supports Hispanic entrepreneurs. Dalida reported that the BIC has helped one in three businesses within Mesa County, and she highlighted that 519 jobs were created in 2024. A few success stories were also shared.

Elizabeth thanked Dalida for the update and inquired how Visit Grand Junction could further support the Business Incubator Center. Dalida thanked Visit Grand Junction for their partnership and encouraged ongoing promotion of BIC services to help promote resources available to businesses.

**Visit Grand Junction Updates**

Due to time constraints, Grand Junction hotel metrics for May 2025 were not presented and will be shared during next month's meeting.

Other updates include:

- Elizabeth Fogarty will attend the U.S. Travel Association's Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) on August 17 -19, 2025. Due to scheduling constraints related to the conference and additional calendar conflicts, the board members unanimously agreed to cancel the August 12, 2025, Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board meeting.
- The November 11, 2025, Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board meeting falls on Veterans Day, a federal holiday. The advisory board agreed to reschedule the meeting. Staff will send out a Doodle poll to determine an alternative date.
- The Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference will be held on October 22 – 24, 2025, in Colorado Springs. Visit Grand Junction will cover registration and hotel costs for the City Council Liaison and Advisory Board Members who want to attend. Due to reduced lodging tax revenues caused by the hotel room cannibalization issue, the scholarship program normally offered to community stakeholders to attend the conference will not be available.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Grand Junction Regional Air Service Alliance (GJRASA) was shared. Visit Grand Junction continues to update monthly the proprietary data worksheet for GJRASA.
- City Manager, Mike Bennett and Elizabeth met with Chandler Smith from the Grand Valley Outdoor Recreation Coalition, where he shared recent updates, including a strategic plan the organization is developing that will address funding opportunities and a master recreation plan. Chandler stated that they no longer are considering lodging tax for funding.

- A video from a Town Board Study Session in Estes Park was shared, which featured a local hospitality business manager who expressed concerns regarding the local DMO that has deviated from its mission, in her opinion. The video was presented as a cautionary example of how sales tax and lodging tax decrease when the DMO does not stay focused on their mission. Visit Grand Junction staff expressed appreciation for the advisory board and Director, Elizabeth Fogarty, for upholding, defending, and supporting Visit Grand Junction's mission. The advisory board members engaged in a discussion relating to the impact a community experiences when a DMO shifts focus away from the core mission of destination marketing and management.
- The latest hotel cannibalization data was shared, including the decline in lodging tax revenue due to the sales and lodging tax exemption for stays of 30 days or more, along with current budget predictions. The loss in revenue continues to erode Visit Grand Junction's strategy, resulting in reduced marketing, which equates to less visitation.

There being no further business, Brenda Greene motioned to adjourn; Tammy Anderson seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.