Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

September Board Meeting

11 September 2015

Carnegie Building

Board in Attendance:

Dick White – City of Durango

Andrea Phillips – Town of Mancos

Julie Westendorff – La Plata County

Michael Whiting – Archuleta County

Shane Hale – City of Cortez

Ron LeBlanc – City of Durango

Lana Hancock – Town of Dolores

Dan Naiman – Town of Ignacio

John Egan – Town of Pagosa Springs

Michelle Nelson - Town of Bayfield

Staff in Attendance:  
Miriam Gillow-Wiles – COG Executive Director

Sara Trujillo – COG Assistant/Accountant

Shannon Cramer – COG VISTA

Jessica [Laitsch](https://plus.google.com/u/0/106210564040146245793?prsrc=4) – COG assistant

Marsha Porter-Norton – Moderator

1. **Call to Order/Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dick White at 12:24 pm.

1. **August 2015 Minutes**

Julie Westendorff noted that the minute’s title should read “August” versus “May” and that under the DoLA contract section “contact” versus “contract” was used. These typos need to be updated.

**Motion to approved the August 2015 minutes with updates mentioned: Shane Hale, Second: Michael Whiting. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

**May, June, and July 2015 Financials**

Julie Westendorff questioned by Fort Lyons was showing up on financial reports when that class should be closed out. Miriam noted upon the update to Quick books 2015 old accounts have been showing back up. Sara will look into this to see if it is a program error and ensure the balance sheet has not been affected.

Questions were asked about the salary and wages expense account showing funds in all classes. Sara explained that per the auditor, salary should be separated out according to how much time staff spends on each grant. Therefore, Sara calculates what percentage of staff time was spent on each grant according to bi-weekly submitted time records and these figures then go into the general journal which reflects in the financials.

With the budget in Quick books reflecting the budget approved in December 2014, some of the accounts look over or under spent. Sara said she could do a budget amendment so the board could have a clearer picture of where the financials currently sit and that another amendment would happen in December. Julie Westendorff said a budget amendment in October would be good so the board would be up-to-date on financials before the end of the year. Sara is to prepare a 2015 budget amendment for presentation and approval at the October 2 board meeting.

**Motion to approve May, June, and July 2015 financials as presented: Shane Hale, Second: Dan Naiman. Passed by a unanimous voice vote.**

1. **Strategic Planning:**

Strategic Plan 2014

2014 goals/plan was based on getting the organization functioning better, which the board feels was accomplished. This information is useful for context as a reminder of where we were.

2015 Goals

2015 goals are about moving forward and establishing objectives and benchmarks. These objectives help to frame the budget and support goals. Questions asked were where did we get? Where did we miss? Where are we in terms of capacity? The objectives spreadsheet was provided in the board packet. Finding the specific measurable results is the purpose of the following 2015 objectives check-up:

***Objective 1.1: Leverage Funds***

*Recycling* – this objective wrapped up in June 2015 and helped to determine if recycling was viable, and it is. Working with private sector haulers is the next step. Mention was made of non-COG members benefiting from COG results given to the public. Michael Whiting said as long as projects are tailored to maximize member benefits and there is a collateral benefit then there should not be too much energy spent on figuring out how to keep non-members from benefiting.

*DoLA 2015 TA grant* – the COG received this grant and is currently in works. Seven COG members have received $5,000 to spend on IT, software, and hardware. This grant will go into 2016; 2016 will also bring another technical assistance grant, so these efforts will remain ongoing.

*Transit* – this is a state grant through federal money from CDOT to provide forum for transit and human service provider networking to discover unmet needs. Miriam plans a goal setting session to take place in November, specifically to get the transit council to be provider-driven and not staff-driven. 2015 resulted in $24,800 in funds (with a bank error in COG favor) and projected 2016 funds are $19,000. This endeavor is very important for economic and work force reasons and will be an ongoing effort.

*TPR* – the TPR is funded through CDOT and member dues. The funding goes towards STAC conference travel expenses for representatives to advocate for our region as well as staff time. This is an ongoing funding source and ongoing critical endeavor.

*Membership dues* – member ROI for 2015 is calculated to be 300%. Dues for 2015 were $114,000, which cover just 27% of staff time.

*DoLA broadband planning grant* – this grant was awarded in July 2015 and is required by the state to move forward with any infrastructure grants. This grant will allow $107,000, with $7,000 for staff time. This grant begins in October 2015 and will run for 6-8 months.

***Objective 1.2: Aggregate Demand and Share Costs on Common Service Needs***

*Recycling* – this item is a common service need. The majority of members do not have access to recycling. For 2016 it is proposed for the COG to purchase 2 trailers and lease them out to communities who have no access to recycling where a hauler would pick up the full trailer and take to a recycling center. The insurance on these trailers would be inexpensive.

*IT support* – this support is written into the DoLA 2015 grant and is for communities with little IT support.

*Software* – there has not been much traction with this objective as COG staff is unsure how to implement without having more staff. This objective would entail all members purchasing software packages together to reduce cost. The board felt this was not really a COG function but more of a community staff function. The board directed COG staff to look for opportunities as community staff members raise issues and not to spend much staff time on this item.

*Equipment purchasing* – this objective was for communities to purchase equipment in quantities to receive reduced pricing or to share equipment. The board feels communities need to talk about these opportunities and the COG be the hub where they talk to each other. Miriam noted that the new VISTA, Shannon Cramer, can work on creating a shared service menu and put this on the website. However, the VISTA position is a one year position with another VISTA coming in 2016, but after that, there must be appropriate staff to maintain this shared services web portal.

***Objective 1.3: Shared Training and Services***

*CIRSA trainings* – these training are offered to municipalities only. Miriam spoke with CIRSA and confirmed that counties are not eligible although counties are members of the COG. Several trainings have occurred in 2015 including defensive driving, which had a very good turnout.

*Waste water certifications* – it is very expensive to send people to Denver for certification; therefore, the COG sought to bring trainers from Denver to Durango to lower cost. The board suggested looking into training opportunities in other areas of operations, such as public finance. Perhaps a message board on the COG website would be useful to share information and upcoming trainings.

***Objective 2.1: Target Non-Member Entities***

*Target non-member entities* – the board feels demonstrating value to members first is the priority over non-member entities. Julie Westendorff suggested giving non-members an update of COG functions and benefits to members every two years. In addition, commissioners need to talk to newly elected officials as this item should not be solely staff driven. Andrea Phillips mentioned reaching out to special districts for membership, such as libraries and hospitals. Michael Whiting recommended proving our own value to governments we have right now; until that value is solidified for ourselves, the board should wait on recruiting special districts.

***Objective 2.2: Retain Existing Members***

*Retain existing members* – the objective is to make value, see value, and retain members. Miriam has put together graphics to further show ROI for COG members as a whole. This would be useful for individual communities as well.

***Objective 2.3: Partnering With Other Organizations***

*Partnering with other organizations* – the COG recently contracted with the AAA for bookkeeping services and hopes to continue building upon that relationship. Little has been heard from 4CORE . In regards to partnering with the SW Housing Solutions the board feels that the COG needs to be more settled in doing the priority items well before embarking on housing endeavors that other organizations are already working on. COG staff is directed to be aware of targets of opportunity as the current role of the COG is to attempt the facilitation for greater conversations about housing issues throughout the region. Early childhood education and daycare are other major issues that connect to housing issues. This all becomes an economic development issue. The board decided to keep this item on the current objectives list, but not directly work on it; simply be aware of opportunities.

*Partnering* – the Alliance, CDOT, and DoLA have been great partners with funding. ***Objective 2.4: Targeted Grant Applications/Requests***

*DoLA*: the planning grant is in process. Infrastructure would come in 2016 because planning has to be complete first per DoLA.

*EPA brownfields* –Ron LeBlanc recommended this item to come off of the objectives list as it is a community decision. Michael Whiting agreed with this item being a controversial issue, the COG should stay away. The board decided that communities could come to the COG for help if needed, but this is not a staff-initiated endeavor.

*CDOT trails grant* – the purpose of this grant was to combine all trails into one master plan in an electronic form. It was decided this item would not be the best use of COG staff time, currently. This item was removed.

***Objective 3.1: Increase Capacity***

*Staffing*: an administrative assistant is requested for 2016. Job description and benefits of this position were distributed in the meeting packet.

***Objective 4.1: Legislation***

*Advocacy:* Miriam has worked on the SB152. There will be an ongoing ballet issue until April or May of 2016.

2016 Goals

Upon objectives review, the board decided that the top priorities for the remainder of 2015 and into 2016 are as follows:

* Shared services/equipment
* Recycling
* Broadband – identify underserved areas to get the infrastructure and ensuring more communities having access to broadband.
* Transportation (transit & TPR) – Julie Westendorff pointed out that these items should be driven by staff capacity and be results-based. These items are important to the board; staff to maintain but not take on new transit projects.

John Egan mentioned that there are others who have already worked on some of these items and that the COG does not need to bring new intelligence but look at what others have done and are doing. COG staff could invite these folks to COG meetings to talk about how they accomplished certain objectives to help direct the COG.

The board would like staff to add a results column to the goals spreadsheet and to create a step-by-step list for each objective to mark off as the objective is accomplished for the board to see the progress on each. This will make results/goals measurable. Miriam will update spreadsheet and send back out to the board for review.

The executive committee is to meet with Miriam and give a base and direction to start from to really define what the exact steps are to accomplishing objectives as some are very broad. Specific direction to each objective will help better drive grants and budget.

1. **Discussion Items:**

2016 Budget Overview

Budgeted money from dues for staffing is less than 30%. The majority of staff costs are paid for by grants and projects.

2016 Budget Infographics

These graphics show an ROI for COG as a whole at 300%. Miriam will create graphics for all communities individually.

Dues Calculation – 20% versus 25%

Chairman Dick White requested that the board make a policy decision to go forward in 2016 and in the future with a 20 or 25% baseline for all calculations. Dolores and Igancio were in agreement of having preference for the 20%. Bayfield and Mancos were borderline based on whether sales tax on roads goes through or not. Andrea Phillips questioned whether the already decided on 25% should be changed. Some members said if budgets start getting tight, the need for membership may come into question.

**Motion to adopt the 20% baseline plus population for all 2016 and future calculations: Shane Hale, Second: John Egan. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

Staff Job Duties

These reports were provided in the board packet.

Salary Increase Calculations

Discussed previously was the up to 4% merit plus a 2% COLA budgeted for in the 2016 staff salary increases. Currently, COG policy states an up to 4% performance merit based on review; however, there is no mention of a COLA in the policy. Some communities feel 6% is too high and that a 2% COLA is not applicable. The importance of retaining high functioning staff is essential, however. In addition, staff needs to feel valued financially and emotionally. Incentives should be provided accordingly. Each organization has their own policy when it comes to merit and COLA. Michael Whiting pointed out that this is a policy decision, not about staff, and needs to be a staff policy not a personal decision. Shane Hale commented that this decision should be an executive committee decision.

**Motion that the COG continue with the not-to-exceed 4% merit raise currently in the personnel policy and defer the consideration of a COLA for 2016: John Egan, Second: Michelle Nelson. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

Administrative Assistant Job Overview

A job overview was given in the board packet for the administrative assistant position. Dick White pointed out that the admin position duties would significantly unload Miriam’s clerical duties and at a much smaller cost as the admin assistant position would pay significantly less than Miriam’s. The COG would benefit greatly using Miriam’s professional experience versus clerical experience. Miriam noted that the position calls for $12,000 from communities and that this position can be leveraged for grant in-kind matches, which would double the investment. Michael Whiting pointed out that the original strategic decision was to increase staff and that member dues went two years without change. Michelle Nelson mentioned that the travel budget was quite high with just two staff members and questioned what would happen with a third. Miriam pointed out that the 2016 travel budget for the COG is $4,000 and that the remaining funds are for TPR representatives traveling to the monthly STAC conferences. Those travel costs are reimbursed by the TPR funds. Julie Westendorff mentioned the importance of measuring the worth of this admin assistant position. Michael Whiting mentioned Miriam’s success with grants and how those numbers should go up with an admin assistant as Miriam will have more time to put towards researching and obtaining additional funding. John Egan said the board should trust Miriam and know that if she feels she needs an assistant that this is not something that needs to be measured or check listed but simply supported. Some members still feel metrics of some sort are necessary to measure the value of the admin assistant position. Dick White said the executive committee can have a discussion with Miriam to try and identify some metrics.

**Motion to allow an increase in staff as recommended by Miriam in the 2016 budget: John Egan, Second: Andrea Phillips, One opposed: Shane Hale.**

2016 Preliminary Budget 2nd Draft

The only mention was in regards to the fiber equipment replacement fund. This is a time limited contribution and needs no vote as it was voted on in the past. The COG will bill January 2016 and hold the funds in a restricted account.

1. **Decision Items:**

The agenda was amended to include a grant match item to the decision list.

Grant Match

Annual allocation of the match funds is a fixed amount that can be used for grant match and will be zeroed out every fiscal year. The grant match should be held in each individual member’s funds and will be billed by the COG when needed. If a member cannot give the funds when needed, they may not be able to participate in the grant efforts.

**Motion to approve the grant match fund for 2016: Shane Hale, Second: Michael Whiting. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

2016 DoLA Grant

The DOLA Technical Assistance Grants are due October 1, 2015. Items possible for this grant include shared services, existing community broadband infrastructure updates to eTics, and transit council development. These grants require a 50-50 match. If the COG requested $50,000 the COG would need $50,000 to match; however, this does not need to be dollar for dollar but can be in-kind.

**Motion to approve staff to pursue and apply for the DoLA grant for 2016 shared services, updated infrastructure, and transit development: Michael Whiting, Second: John Egan. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

AAA Contract

In July the AAA Board voted unanimously to enter into a contract with the SWCCOG for bookkeeping for the fiscal year 2015-2016 (July to June).Forging ties with the AAA has been one of the goals of the COG board for many years; this is the first step in doing so.

* Hourly Rate in Contract: $43/hour
* Amount not to exceed: $8000

**Motion to approve the AAA-SWCCOG MOU bookkeeping contract: Shane Hale, Second: John Egan. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

Broadband Planning Grant Contactor Selection

Five responses were received from the RFP for the broadband planning contractor position. Costs range from $100,000 to $66,500. Miriam suggested NEO Fiber as this contractor came under budget and is western slope based. NEO Fiber also did work for Region 10. However, Miriam worries about NEO Fiber not being on site enough as they are located in Denver and would be in our region for just 15 days.

**Motion to uphold staff recommendations with Miriam having signature authority on the contract: Shane Hale, Second: John Egan. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

CIRSA 2016 Renewal

CIRSA renewal documents were included in the board packet. Premiums did increase slightly for both the property and casualty policy and the workman’s comp policy.

**Motion to approve the 2016 CIRSA renewal: Shane Hale, Second: John Egan. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

1. **Reports:**

Time did not allow for reports.

**Adjourned at 4:27pm**