

**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments
December Board Meeting
Thursday, 9 December, 2021, 1:30 p.m.
Video Conference**

In Attendance:

Katie Sickles – Town of Bayfield
David Black – Town of Bayfield
Alvin Schaaf – Archuleta County
Mark Garcia – Town of Ignacio
Olivier Bosmans – City of Durango
Andrea Phillips – Town of Pagosa Springs
Gloria Kaasch-Buerger – Town of Silverton
Shari Pierce – Town of Pagosa Springs
Marsha Porter-Norton – La Plata County

Staff in Attendance:

Miriam Gillow-Wiles – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments
Jessica Laitsch – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

Guests in Attendance:

Laura Vanoni – Archuleta County
Mike Segrest – La Plata County
Dan Fernandez – Region 9
Shay Denning – Region 9
Mary Jo Coulehan – Region 9
Laura Lewis Marchino – Region 9
Brian Rose – Region 9
Helen Katich – Senator Hickenlooper’s Office
John Whitney – Senator Bennet’s Office

Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 1:33 p.m.

Public Comment

None.

Consent Agenda

- a. October 2021 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes
- b. September and October 2021 Financials

Alvin Schaaf motioned to approve the consent agenda, Gloria Kaasch-Buerger seconded, unanimously approved.

Public Hearing for Fiscal Year 2022 Budget

The public hearing opened at 1:37 p.m. There were no members of the public present wishing to speak. The hearing closed at 1:37 p.m.

Decision Items

- a. Final 2022 Budget
Miriam explained that the final budget is substantially similar to the draft budget. She added that there are resolutions included as they are required by the State, although they have not been

included in the past. Andrea asked for clarification that the Board would be able to make budget amendments as necessary. Mark asked why dues revenues were higher than budgeted. Jessica replied that the City of Durango became a member.

Andrea Phillips motioned to approve Resolution 2021-01 summarizing expenditures and revenues for each fund and adopting a budget for the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments for the calendar year beginning on the first day of January 2022 and ending on the last day of December 2022, unanimously approved.

Andrea Phillips motioned to approve Resolution 2021-02 appropriating sums of money to the various funds and spending agencies in the amount and for the purpose as set forth for the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments for the 2022 Budget year, Alvin Schaaf seconded, unanimously approved.

Olivier asked for clarification on the audit and legal fees. Miriam replied the audit is annual financial audit and was the lowest qualified through a competitive bid process. The legal fees are for various legal advice, this is slightly high due to numerous contractual relationships.

b. 2021 Budget Amendment

Andrea Phillips motioned to approve Resolution 2021-03 amending expenditures and revenues for each fund and adopting an amended budget for the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments for the calendar year beginning the first day of January 2021 and ending on the last day of December 2021, Alvin Schaaf seconded, unanimously approved.

Alvin Schaaf motioned to approve Resolution 2021-04 amending appropriated sums of money to the various funds and spending agencies in the amount and for the purpose as set forth for the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments for the 2021 Budget year, Andrea Phillips seconded, unanimously approved.

c. Transition Plan

Miriam summarized the various proposed options. David asked for additional information about option 3 due to the challenges replacing Miriam and the different tax advantages of the two organizations. Olivier asked about the different organizational objectives between Region 9's focus on economic development and the SWCCOG's broader scope. David mentioned that good government is reliant on a strong economy. He added that one consideration will be determining how to manage funding equitably among the funding organizations. Miriam added that the SWCCOG works on the infrastructure that in turn supports economic development. Olivier asked about implications with respect to access to grants. Miriam replied that the SWCCOG is eligible for certain grants that Region 9 is not eligible for, and vice versa. Andrea expressed a preference to maintain the SWCCOG, perhaps evaluate the mission and programs of the SWCCOG, and explore option 3. Mark suggested collecting further information and scheduling a time for the Board to meet to discuss options. Marsha agreed with looking at the form of the SWCCOG and that a retreat would be beneficial. Laura suggested that it may be valuable to integrate considering the economies of scale and mentioned that across the State COGs and EDDs are combined. She suggested the organizations may initially choose to remain separate with a services agreement for 2022, then have the year to evaluate possible next steps. Katie mentioned that it is unusual for these types of organizations to be separate. She expressed support for setting up a working agreement. David asked, if combined, which organization would be the primary agency. Laura replied that most often the COG is the primary organization, however in Region 10 the EDD is the primary. She suggested that they remain separate in 2022, then throughout the year determine areas where reduction of duplication,

such as liability insurance, might make sense. David summarized that the intent is for the two organizations to work in a collaborative manner in 2022 and the Board will hold a retreat in the first quarter of 2022 to develop a plan for operations moving forward. Laura mentioned that there are some project areas for which the COG may need additional staff support. She summarized some opportunities for collaboration including Region 9 assisting the COG with completion of some current grant projects. David added that additional staff support will be important. Mike Segrest encouraged the Board to take an official action to establish interim leadership. Miriam pointed out that having Jessica in such a role would remove any separation of duties on financial matters. David mentioned that the suggestion to collaborate with Region 9 seems to address this. Marsha expressed support for immediate formal action, recognizing that the structure may be changed after the Board is able to hold a retreat. She asked if this is a role that Laura is able to take on. Laura replied that she was waiting to discuss this with her Board until after this discussion. Shay suggested that if the Region 9 Board is amenable, one strategy would be to establish a specific list of services to be provided to the COG. Mike suggested having the Executive Committee formalize an interim relationship until the whole board can evaluate. Shay suggested possibly authorizing Miriam to put something in place. Mark supported having the Executive Committee work with Laura and Miriam to establish a transition plan. Laura suggested she could bring a services agreement to her Executive Committee to review and edit. Miriam added that she would prefer for the COG Executive Committee to be involved as well.

Marsha Porter-Norton motioned to empower the current Executive Director to write up and work with Region 9 a service agreement that would allow Region 9 to operate as our helm/leader and the Executive Committee can provide oversight to Miriam as she transitions, and that we meet for a retreat as soon as possible in 2022 to go through the next steps throughout 2022. That will make sure that we are getting all the details in terms of leadership and give us time to work out how to do the integration, Mark Garcia seconded, unanimously approved.

Mike pointed out that there may need to be a contractual arrangement with Miriam as contractor during the transition. Miriam replied that she had proposed remaining an employee for a limited number of hours through the first quarter of 2022. David asked if Miriam and Laura could have services drafted up before Miriam's last day. Olivier commended the group on working together collaboratively.

Marsha Porter-Norton motioned to direct current staff to form a Professional Services Agreement with Region 9 that will allow us to have consulting leadership services until we meet to develop a longer-term plan, Olivier Bosmans seconded, unanimously approved.

Olivier Bosmans motioned to employ Miriam Gillow-Wiles for approximately 5 hours per week for the first three months of 2022 as an employee of the SWCCOG non-benefited to assist with the transition, Marsha Porter-Norton seconded, unanimously approved.

d. 2022 Meeting Dates

Miriam explained these were based on Region 9's meeting dates and explained potential considerations with this approach, alternatively the Board may wish to maintain the existing schedule. Marsha expressed concern about skipping meetings early in the year. David agreed that meeting more often may be important at first. Mark suggested tabling this discussion and focus on finding a time in January for a retreat. Laura suggested that, considering Region 9 also meets on Thursdays, the Board consider setting some meetings for the afternoons after the Region 9 meetings to help the two Boards build collaboration and trust. David asked about the

SWTPR meetings. Miriam suggested exploring holding Regional Transit Council and SWTPR meetings on the same day. There was discussion about holding the Board retreat the week before the next Region 9 meeting. There was discussion about meeting with the Region 9 Board for lunch after their January meeting.

e. Grant Applications

Miriam described some grant funds that will be becoming available and summarized the proposed projects. Mark asked if this is the right timing. Miriam replied that the EDA grant would cover staffing, so someone could be hired. She added that the broadband grants are one-time opportunities. Laura asked who would be writing the grants. Miriam suggested working with a contractor to write the applications and mentioned that the Board can later choose not to apply. Marsha asked about the deadlines. Miriam replied that while they are due in February and March, they will take some time to prepare. Olivier asked if grant writing costs could be covered. Miriam replied that one does cover pre-grant expenses, the other does not.

Olivier Bosmans motioned to move forward with the applications and ratification of the application, Andrea Phillips seconded.

Andrea expressed concern about not having staff capacity if awarded. Miriam replied that awards can be declined if necessary, this authorization to apply gives the Board maximum flexibility. Mark expressed concern about the timing. David expressed support for seeking eligible funding opportunities for beneficial projects. Miriam mentioned that there are a number of partnering opportunities.

Mark Garcia abstained, the motion was approved.

f. MOU with Onward! A Community Foundation

Miriam described the project. Mark asked who would be managing this. Miriam replied Jessica would be staffing this, staff expects the workload to be minimal.

Mark Garcia motioned to approve the MOU between Onward! and the SWCCOG, Alvin Schaaf seconded, unanimously approved.

Shari mentioned updating the responsible party in the contract. Miriam replied that staff would work with DOLA to make that change.

g. Executive Committee Selection

Miriam mentioned that Willy has said he would be willing to continue to serve as Vice Chair. Mark asked if could wait until after the retreat. David said he would be willing to continue to serve as Chair through the retreat. Laura pointed out that even if the COG becomes more aligned with Region 9, there would still be a need for separate boards.

Alvin Schaaf motioned to table, Mark Garcia seconded, unanimously approved.

h. Letters of Support Ratification

David explained that Executive Committee had authorized a number of letters of support which are being presented for ratification.

Mark Garcia motioned to ratify the letters of support, unanimously approved.

Reports

Marsha commended staff and Region 9 for working collaboratively and asked that staff keep the Board updated if there are any challenges. She added that La Plata County staff is available to help with the RHA if needed.

Miriam thanked the Board for their support.

Grant report:

Miriam reported that she is still waiting for notification regarding the housing planning grant.

Transportation report:

Jessica provided an update on the SWTPR meeting and the transit FTA grant application.

Community updates

David reported the Town of Bayfield is working on a connection to the trail.

Marsha reported that La Plata County has started holding meetings regarding ARPA funds, one possible project is to expand senior transit. She summarized the current intended breakdown for distribution.

John reported they are awaiting final rules for ARPA, they are encouraging flexibility for use by local governments. Congress is working on appropriations bills; he detailed the Senator's priorities. He provided an update on the SHRED Act to allow the Forest Service to retain a portion of the money paid to rent ski areas. He mentioned that the Senator sought input from Miriam on the infrastructure bill. He reiterated that the COG would be eligible for certain funds that Region 9 would not be. Marsha pointed out during the retreat the Board should factor in strategizing maximizing funding opportunities for the region.

Helen commended Miriam. They have been having discussions on broadband gaps. She updated that infrastructure monies are beginning to come into the region. David commended senator staff for participating in these meetings.

Andrea reported the Town of Pagosa Springs approved their budget, they will be redirecting dollars from tourism to workforce housing. They will begin negotiations on a public-private partnership for a workforce housing project. They are completing the trail project and preparing a Christmas celebration. They will have an election in April, they mayor and three seats are open. There is a citizen petition to add a fee on short term rentals.

Mark reported the Town of Ignacio is close to passing the budget, they have seen increased sales tax and are working on affordable housing. They have a second stoplight in town. The Transportation Commission is considering adoption of the Greenhouse Gas rule, this would be the first in the nation. There is a lot of money coming in for transportation.

Olivier reported the City of Durango sales tax and property tax collections are good, fund balances are good, they have an ambitious capital project plan, and a number of new staff positions. Marsha added that La Plata County is concerned about snow plow drivers, they are looking to coordinate with other local governments and agencies.

Gloria reported the Town of Silverton received funding for and is working on two housing projects. They will be adopting the budget on Monday.

Alvin reported that Archuleta County is working on the budget. The Justice Facility will open the beginning of the year.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 p.m.