

Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 2, 2015

1188 E. 2nd Ave., Durango, CO 81301

Board in Attendance:

Dick White – City of Durango

Andrea Phillips – Town of Mancos (via video)

Michael Whiting – Archuleta County

Shane Hale – City of Cortez (via phone)

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

Chris Tookey – Town of Silverton

William Tookey – San Juan County

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

Sara Trujillo – SWCCOG Assistant/Accountant

Shannon Cramer – SWCCOG VISTA

Guests:

Karen Iverson – Regional Housing Alliance

1. **Call to Order/Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dick White at 1:35 pm; everyone introduced themselves.

1. **Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County Presentation**

A presentation related to expanding the Homebuyer Assistance Program was given by Karen Iverson, the Executive Director of the La Plata Homes Fund (LPHF). Recently, the La Plata Homes Fund Board created a new initiative to expand the home buyer program regionally. Karen is presenting to local jurisdictions and realtors to see how this new initiative will be received and to see how much interest there would be for communities to participate.

Essentially, wages are not keeping up with the cost of housing. With a tight rental market, student loan debt, mortgage insurance premiums, and rising home insurance premiums, saving for a home is difficult. The LPHF does not address the cost of housing but tackles other issues around housing affordability, such as loan assistance by providing capital to underserved markets.

The current home buying assistance program consists of a homebuyer education class, one-on-one counseling, and 2nd mortgage assistance. The LPHF has financially assisted 135 families and created over 330 homeowners. Goals for 2016 include expanding the program regionally by established MOU/contracts for service, building partnerships with local housing groups (Habitat for Humanity), securing loan capital, and obtaining matching funds from a membership base for grant operations. In order to accomplish these goals, the LPHF will need membership participation from the region’s communities and funding to not only meet the needs of assisting families but to meet business projections as funds are needed to increase sustainability. The LPHF would like to diversify their funding sources as currently funds come from state, federal, and money from the Regional Housing Alliance. Additional funding from loan fees, foundations, and local government will help improve the LPHF operations and ensure this non-profit remains operating within the region when grant funds are no longer available.

The towns of Bayfield and Ignacio have previously expressed interest in this creating a membership with the LPHF and Karen asked if other communities would be interested. Michael Whiting stated that housing is a priority of Archuleta County and a housing task/work group is being put together to work on housing issues. Michael invited Karen to come talk to this group.

John Egan asked Karen to come talk to the Pagosa Spring’s Town Council as they would be interested in this initiative. John also mentioned the concern over news that a Durango trailer park may be sold, torn down, and condominiums built and sold at a high price. Retaining the affordable housing the region currently has is extremely important and should not be ignored.

William Tookey said the Town of Silverton and San Juan County are very interested and have already been talking with Karen.

Lana Hancock, Andrea Phillips, and Shane Hale all requested additional information as they are interested in learning more about the program.

1. **2015 Budget Amendment Hearing**

Chairman Dick White officially opened the public hearing for the 2015 budget amendment at 2:07 p.m. The Chairman asked if any member of the public would care to speak to the 2015 budget amendment. No one cared to speak. Chairman Dick White closed the public hearing to the 2015 budget amendment.

1. **2016 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

Chairman Dick White officially opened the public hearing for the 2016 preliminary budget at 2:07 p.m. The Chairman asked if any member of the public would care to speak to the 2016 preliminary budget. No one cared to speak. Chairman Dick White closed the public hearing to the 2016 preliminary budget.

1. **Consent Agenda, September 2015 minutes & August 2015 Financials**

Chairman Dick White asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda with September minutes and August financials if no further discussion was requested.

**Motion to approve the consent agenda: William Tookey, Second: John Egan. Pass by unanimous voice vote.**

1. **Discussion Items**

There were no discussion items.

1. **Decision Items**

2015 Budget Amendment:

Ron LeBlanc asked why the SWCCOG was not involved in the SWIMT (Southwest Incident Management Team) fiscal coordination with the Animas River incident. Miriam said that she spoke with Sherri Dugdale and Drew who is a state coordinator in Crested Butte, and was told the SWIMT did not get called out as a team but individually, so the State intends to pay the agencies on an individual basis versus using the COG. Some board members are curious whether this was with the intent to circumvent the SWCCOG as a fiscal agency and avoiding the 10% fee paid to the SWCCOG. The Board requested that Miriam gather more information on this item.

Chairman Dick White inquired why account 5571 – Housing Allowance was in the actuals for 2015, but not in the amended budget column. Staff explained the $3,217.75 includes a $2,400 housing allowance and $817.75 rental deposit to assist the VISTA with high housing costs in this area. The $817.75 rental deposit will be returned back to the SWCCOG, but the $2,400 does need to be in the amended column making the final net income $187.35.

**Motion to accept the 2015 budget amendment with the $2,400 housing allowance adjustment made in the amended column: Michael Whiting, Second: Michelle Nelson. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

2016 Preliminary Budget:

Chairman Dick White expressed concern about the significant amount accounted for in the Consultant Account -5640, in the amount of $246,917. Miriam clarified that the consultant account includes $17,541 for Lori Johnson (the All-Hazards Grant Coordinator), $64,376 for the DoLA TA contactors, $90,000 for the DoLA Downtown Contractor, and $75,000 for the DoLA Broadband Contractor; all of these amounts add up to the $246,917. Miriam also pointed out that the preliminary budget includes the Fiber Replacement Fund, the administrative assistant position, and the removal of the 2% COLA. No further questions were asked. The final 2016 budget approval will be conducted at the December board meeting.

Downtown DoLA Grant IGA:

The IGA for the DoLA Downtown Grant between Bayfield, Ignacio, Pagosa Springs, and Silverton involves each community signing a contract with the COG as the grant for the four projects will run through the COG. The contract with DOLA is for work in each community for two years. The contract presented in the board packet is for one year due to timing and the number of people needed to comment on the document. Miriam requested that the Board direct the Executive Director to develop this contract into a two year contract as well as give her signing authority to get this project moving forward. Any significant changes to the contract would need to come back for approval from the COG Board. Shane Hale requested confirmation that the contract numbers in the board packet would double with a two-year contract revision. Miriam confirmed, yes, that the budget would need to be modified with the two year contract revision.

**Motion to authorize the Executive Director to develop the contract into a two year contract including budgetary modification with signature authority: Michelle Nelson, Second: John Egan. Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

1. **Reports**

Director’s Report:

Miriam reported that at a conference last week her email account was hacked; if members receive spam email from her, please delete and not open the email. All measures have been taken to ensure the SWCCOG network and computers are secure.

Miriam reported that she will be on vacation the week of October 5-9. She will check her email sparsely and will have her SWCCOG phone turned off.

Broadband Report:

*152 Elections*
Miriam reported working closely with the La Plata County Economic Development Alliance to develop the 152 election flyers provided in the board packet. Each community/county has their own flyer unless the county and town have a joint election. Most flyers will go out to the public in the utility bills. There are print and electronic versions available. Miriam verified with Jeff Wilson, who was involved in writing the Fair Campaign Act, at the last CML conference that Miriam’s time spent on this endeavor would be paid for from the dark fiber lease revenues, as this is an appropriate use of those funds according to the Fair Campaign Act although the SWCCOG is not for or against SB152, but simply providing educational tools.
*Silverton*
Miriam reported working closely with San Juan County, the Town, and the School District to
sort through the quagmire of EagleNet, CenturyLink, and open access fiber to the Town. Senator Bennet’s office has been involved to help resolve some questions with EagleNet and the NTIA. Hopefully some resolution will be reached soon as it has been a very long time coming.

Michael Whiting mentioned reading an article about a large broadband grant acquired by Century Link to bring high-speed internet to the region; however, the speed at which the contract is for does not qualify as high-speed according to the FCC. Miriam mentioned the possibility of Century Link receiving that grant prior to the FCC determining a definition of what qualifies as high-speed internet.

Transportation Report:

The SWTPR meeting was help just prior to the SWCCOG meeting. An updated report will be provided at the next SWCCOG meeting.

A transit meeting will be held in November to identify 2016 goals. The meeting is tentatively to be held in Mancos. Specific meeting information will be sent out soon.

VISTA Report:

Shannon Cramer has been working diligently on a shared services model that could reduce cost while providing services that were formerly not available in the area. She sent out an email to all community leaders asking for input as to what services are currently lacking. Some communities have responded while others have not. Shannon encouraged those who had not responded yet to please do so as she is not able to proceed without community input as this endeavor is specifically for the communities.

Community Updates:

Dan Naiman reported that the Town of Ignacio has a new Interim Town Manager, Mark Garcia. Farm Fresh will have its grand opening on October 3, 2015 and the foundation is set for the new Family Dollar.

Michael Whiting reported that the Archuleta County Courthouse is a top priority at this time. The building is very old and deteriorating. Some in the community would like the building demolished and a new one erected while others in the community feel preserving the historic building is necessary. An estimate of $3.2 million was obtained by engineers to preserve the building, however, this would not provide for the necessary additional capacity. In addition, Archuleta County is in need of a new jail that is not on the main tourist thoroughfare. Therefore, two sites - one for county administration and one for the justice center - may be necessary.

Michelle Nelson reported that the Town of Bayfield is working on their water treatment expansion and environmental issues with the bridge replacement.

William Tookey reported that San Juan County just opened its first marijuana growing operation.

Chris Tookey reported that the Town of Silverton just celebrated the 90th birthday of Molas Lake. A deed from 1929 deeding the Lake to the Town signed by Herbert Hoover was unearthed. The train is still running until the end of October, but stores and restaurants are starting to close down for the winter.

John Egan reported that the Town of Pagosa Springs is having some infrastructure issues. The pipeline project is ongoing. The Town is very interested in what Archuleta County is planning to do with the courthouse as it is viewed as one of the most important historical pieces of property in the downtown area. The Town has been very involved with advising the County Commissioners with restoration ideas. The Town will celebrate its 125th anniversary in 2016 with large events throughout the year. The transportation program, Mountain Express Transit, has seen ridership increase significantly with approximately 7,000 passengers in September alone. An application was submitted to apply for new vehicles and a new facility for parking the new vehicles.

Dick White reported that in Durango there are two ballot issues, SB152 and the bonding authority from citizens for new waste water treatment plant. There is major controversy as to where the new waste water treatment plant will be located. Options include a remodel of the current plant at Santa Rita Park or to move the location of the plant. At this point, consultants have found one adequate site that is on private property; however, the owners are unwilling to sell the river front property. In addition, the purchase of new property to build a new plant would increase costs significantly. The utilities commission will meet on Monday. In regards to the major renovation of the airport terminal, the City Council and the County Commissioners have identified a new terminal as the preferred option.

Lana Hancock reported that the Town of Dolores might be getting a Family Dollar. The Town is currently working on the budget in addition to two projects for next year involving the water and sewer plants.

Andrea Phillips reported that the Town of Mancos held an arts and balloon festival last weekend. The Family Dollar is nearing completion. The Town is also finishing up the water system improvement project with pump house and water line updates.

Miriam Gillow-Wiles reported that she submitted the 2016 DoLA TA Grant yesterday to work on transportation, shared services, and recycling; the grant is in the amount of $100,000.

**Adjourned at 2:56pm**