

**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
October Board Meeting  
Thursday, 25 October, 1:30pm  
1188 E. 2nd Ave., Carnegie Bldg., Durango, CO 81301**

In Attendance:

Chris La May – Town of Bayfield  
Mark Garcia – Town of Ignacio  
Fred Brooks – Town of Mancos  
Kari Distefano – Town of Rico  
Gwen Lachelt – La Plata County  
Joanne Spina – La Plata County  
Ron LeBlanc – City of Durango  
Andrea Phillips – Town of Pagosa Springs  
Michael Whiting – Archuleta County

Staff in Attendance:

Miriam Gillow-Wiles – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
Sara Trujillo – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
Jessica Laitsch – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
Martina Pansze – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

Guests in Attendance:

Ann McCoy-Herald – Senator Gardner’s Office  
Bob Fifer – Colorado Department of Transportation  
Ashely Greco – Congressman Tipton’s Office  
Karen Thompson – DoLA Grant 8573 Consultant  
Paul Roithmayr – DoLA Grant 8573 Consultant

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:36 pm, everyone introduced themselves.

**II. Consent Agenda**

September 2018 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes  
September 2018 SWCCOG Special Meeting Minutes  
August 2018 Financials  
September 2018 Financials

**Gwen Lachelt motioned to approve the consent agenda, Mark Garcia seconded, unanimously approved.**

**Reports**

Director’s Report:

Miriam reported that in addition to the director’s report in the board packet, she was recently invited to Washington DC in December 2018 to be on a panel about regionalism on broadband and how policy plays into broadband.

Broadband Report:

Miriam said there is an agenda item in section V. that will cover broadband.

Legislative Report:

Chris said the legislative report covers items on the November ballot and asked if there were questions or comments. There were none.

Transportation Report:

Jessica had nothing to add to the written report. No questions.

VISTA Report:

Martina reported that she attended some VISTA training workshops and completed an online course called the Harwood Institute Public Innovators lab that focused on community outreach. In addition, Martina has been assisting with the HDGP grant in collaboration with the non-profit Housing Solutions for the Southwest that will hopefully secure funds to create working groups in each of the five counties of Southwest Colorado.

### III. Discussion Items

2019 Membership:

Chris said that at the September board meeting he had asked members to confirm their 2019 membership so staff can make accurate 2019 budget preparations. The understanding is that the City of Durango and Town of Mancos will not participate. Chris asked if any other communities plan to withdraw their membership. All other members plan to participate in 2019.

2018 Budget Update:

Miriam said there were contracts signed in 2013 that have and will likely continue to negatively impact the budget. The FastTrack contract for \$900/month is utilized by just one community and the COG pays over \$7,000 per year with no revenue to offset the cost. In addition, there has been a substantial amount of money spent on broadband work in 2018 as staff was directed by the board to tackle broadband and apply for FCC funding. Aggregation of services for connectivity has a revenue stream built-in for the COG, but this is not used by members. The culmination of these issues has left the budget in a deficit of approximately \$30,000 for 2018. Miriam said the approved 2018 budget had FCC and DoLA funding for half the year, but neither grant was received, if awarded they would be received in 2019. Staff applied for no other grants as broadband was the focus in 2018. Gwen asked if there are other potential sources of funding to offset the deficit. Miriam said not likely and that staff have talked about some internal solutions, such as skipping a few payrolls in November and December 2018, but as a leader Miriam does not want to do this. Miriam said the fund balance is a little more than \$50,000. Sara confirmed the audited fund balance as of 1/1/2018 was \$59,000. Miriam said this item is just an update and that an amendment will be presented for approval in January or February 2019.

### IV. Decision Items

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from August 16, 2018:

**Gwen Lachelt motioned to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from August 16, 2018, Chris La May seconded, unanimously approved.**

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from October 11, 2018:

**Gwen Lachelt motioned to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from October 11, 2018, Chris La May seconded, unanimously approved.**

CEBT Participating Employer Certification and HIPAA Confidentiality Agreement:

Miriam said this agreement is a formality that CEBT has the SWCCOG sign every three years, this states that we will adhere to the confidentiality agreement.

**Mark Garcia motioned to approve the CEBT Participating Employer Certification and HIPAA Confidentiality Agreement, Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

Region 9-SWCCOG Collaboration:

Miriam said in 2017 the COG Board felt that a collaboration effort with Region 9 would be worthwhile to explore. The COG received a DoLA grant to fund this and staff hired a consultant. After the consultant breached contract and was terminated, staff contacted Karen Thompson and Paul Roithmayr to see if a collaborative effort with Region 9 was feasible and if so, what it would look like. An official contract between COG and Karen and Paul needs to be signed, but Karen and Paul wanted to talk with the Board first. Miriam introduced Karen and Paul.

Karen said some preliminary research was done through document review and conducting interviews. With information gathered up to this point, Karen and Paul would like to share some concerns, perceptions, and talk about expectations. Karen said there is little to no cost savings as potential cost savings will be offset by increased costs. For example, the inequality between the two organizations in terms of salary, PTO, and benefits are significant. This can lead to a lot of consequences; if one side is lowered to match the other, there could be morale issues, alternatively one side be raised to match the other, which could substantially increase costs. There are consequences both ways. Karen said Region 9 feels they would be saving the COG and the only aspect of the COG that Region 9 would be interested in saving would be broadband. They are not interested in any other projects the COG is working on or intends to work on. Karen said the cultures and management styles between the two organizations are vastly different and culture issues can get in the way of being successful. Karen said Region 9 is a well-established organization with good history, narrowly focused and wanting to grow their loan portfolio, increase funding sources, and build upon banking relationships. Region 9 is a stronger organization and therefore would have the upper hand in negotiating a relationship. Paul said after looking at the mission of the COG and the goal of expanding services, this does not match Region 9's narrow focus of enhancing current services. There is no indication that Region 9 wants to expand their scope or take on other programs aside from broadband, integrating with Region 9 would dilute COG services. The COG would have to decide if they want expand services or dilute down to just broadband. Karen said the other option would be for the COG to partner with other organizations where there is coalition of the willing to build vitality and strength of the COG. Karen also mentioned that Region 9 recently purchased an office building with zero space for additional staff. This indicates that Region 9 is not interested in expanding. Gwen said after hearing Karen and Paul's report, she does not feel it wise to pursue collaboration at this time but perhaps in the future. Gwen would like to see the COG reach its full potential. Miriam said there is approximately \$35,000 left in the DoLA grant to spend and asked the board how they would like to spend those funds. Michael said the COG needs to establish identity and feels the remaining funds should be spent on this. The Board agreed. Karen said she and Paul will close with Laura Lewis and her board.

**Mark Garcia motioned to cease formal engagement with Region 9 at this time, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

Joanne said that she is supportive of the action the Board has taken but said with two partners exiting in 2019, the COG has a sustainability issue and questioned if the COG can survive with remaining members and what the focus should be. Joanne voiced concern with the 2018 budget deficit and using the fund balance.

Executive Committee, Selection Committee:

Miriam said the board needs a volunteer committee to help nominate the 2019 Executive Committee as the board chair position cycles out each year.

**Mark Garcia motioned to appoint Michael Whiting, Gwen Lachelt, and Karen Sheek as the nominating committee, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

#### CDPHE Housing Solutions – SWCCOG Grant

Jessica reported The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has announced a Health Disparities Grant Program (HDGP) for FY20-21. Staff proposes a partnership with Housing Solutions for the Southwest to develop systems to address affordability and housing stability with the goal to overcome health disparities in the prevention and early detection of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic pulmonary disease. Staff would also work with Region 9 Economic Development District and Axis Health System to ensure a multisector, comprehensive approach. The maximum grant request per fiscal year is \$400,000. This will be a 2-year grant. Funds cover expenses for personnel, supplies and operating, travel, contractors, and indirect costs at a rate of 10%. This project supports the SWCCOG's goal to work with existing housing providers in the region to develop a variety of strategies to improve affordability and accessibility of housing. These strategies are also closely tied to the related goals of working with the changing needs of citizens and communities as the population ages and working to improve transportation throughout the region. There is no match required and the application is due October 30.

**Michael Whiting motioned for staff to move forward with the application for CDPHE Housing Solutions Grant, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

#### Letter of Support: Forethought Broadband Grant:

Miriam said Forethought/Brainstorm Internet approached the SWCCOG requesting a letter of support to the State Broadband Fund for funding to help offset the cost to connect Tamarron to their existing fiber network. This project is the result of currently offered speeds being less than 10 Mbps and that the current provider has given notice that they will no longer be able to provide internet and voice services. A draft letter of support was included in the board packet. Ron said in line 1 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, it should say "City" of Durango versus "town" of Durango. Miriam will update.

**Gwen Lachelt motioned to approve the Letter of Support for Forethought/Brainstorm Broadband Fund Grant Application as amended by Ron LeBlanc, Mark Garcia seconded, unanimously approved.**

#### **V. Other Items**

##### CDOT Fiber Plan – Bob Fifer

Bob Fifer introduced himself and summarized his background. He gave a power point presentation explaining:

- Fiber planning and development
- Building partnerships to expand CDOT's fiber footprint
- The internet on roads
- CDOT's smart mobility plan

#### **VI. Community Updates**

Time did not permit.

Adjourned at 3:47 p.m.