

**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
January Board Meeting  
Thursday, 04 January 2018, 1:30pm  
1188 E. 2nd Ave., Carnegie Bldg., Durango, CO 81301**

In Attendance:

John Egan – Town of Pagosa Springs  
Michael Whiting – Archuleta County  
Ron LeBlanc – City of Durango  
Chris La May – Town of Bayfield  
Fred Brooks – Town of Mancos  
William Tookey – San Juan County  
Chris Tookey – Town of Silverton  
Karen Sheek – City of Cortez  
Kari Distefano – Town of Rico  
Mark Garcia – Town of Ignacio (via phone)  
Heather Alvarez – Town of Mancos (via phone)

Staff in Attendance:

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

Guests in Attendance:

Ann McCoy-Herald – Senator Gardner’s Office  
John Whitney – Senator Bennet’s Office  
Jonathan Ramos – The Foresite Group (via phone)  
Lauren Bender – The Foresite Group (via phone)  
Steve Garcher – Dolores County Commissioner (via phone)  
Nate Walowitz – NWCCOG (via video)  
Jose Alanis - Congressman Tipton’s Office (via phone)  
Laura Lewis – Region 9 (via phone)

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:34 pm, everyone introduced themselves.

**II. Consent Agenda**

- a. 7 December 2017 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes
- b. November 2017 Financials

**Michael Whiting motioned to approve the consent agenda, Ron LeBlanc seconded, unanimously approved.**

John thanked the board and staff for their support during his time as Chair and turned the meeting over to the new Chair, Chris La May. Chris said 2018 will be a make or break year. With telecommunications and shared services, it should be exciting.

**III. Reports**

**Director’s Report**

Miriam reported that the RFP for the FCC Funding will go out soon and staff will know about funds awarded mid-year.

The Board had previously discussed hiring a part-time Broadband Coordinator. Miriam said Nate Walowitz, Regional Broadband Program Director at Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, is the person proposed to fill this Broadband Coordinator position.

Miriam will be in Denver later in January for CCUA Legislative Day.

Contractor selections for the DoLA Technical Assistance Grant will be in the February board packet.

#### Broadband Report

Nate Walowitz introduced himself and gave his background in broadband that included working with The Foresite Group and being employed with the NWCCOG for the last 4 years. Currently, Nate just finished a strategic plan and is working with existing ISPs that have fiber as well as CDOT and DoLA to develop new fiber. In the past, Nate has been able to bring fiber to areas with no broadband or cell service through wireless and microwave delivery. Nate said he is hoping to bring lessons learned to the SWCCOG. John asked what kind of experience Nate has working with CenturyLink. Nate said he communicates with CenturyLink often with mixed success; although over the past couple of months CenturyLink has become more cooperative. Karen asked if there is talk about an equal partnership where CenturyLink uses their fiber and they use CenturyLink's fiber. Nate said yes, and CenturyLink has talked of coming down on price to be more competitive with other ISPs. John Whitney said Senator Bennet has sent letters to the FCC regarding the CAFII Funding and more transparency with CenturyLink's involvement with no response. Senator Bennet plans to send another letter soon. Mark asked what the next steps are for moving forward with broadband in 2018. Miriam said work is currently underway to secure broadband funding from the FCC for up to \$17 million. Staff will apply for a DoLA grant up to \$2 million for the Broadband Coordinator position and admin funding. The rest will need to come from private equity that the board will need to discuss. The COG is currently in the planning and application phase. Further conversations will take place later in the year when staff knows whether funding will be awarded. Nate said letters of support from DoLA will be most helpful with the application. Miriam said the NWCCOG will need a letter of support to support Nate's position as well and will send this letter to members.

#### Transportation Report

No questions.

#### VISTA Report

Miriam said Dylan is heading to Orlando to run a Disney World marathon on Saturday. He is currently taking a data analysis class through Fort Lewis and will cycle out in August 2018.

#### **IV. Discussion Items**

None

#### **V. Decision Items**

a. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from December 21, 2017

With Gwen Lachelt absent, there were not enough Executive Committee voting members, so this item was tabled until the next meeting.

b. DoLA Technical Assistance Contract

Miriam reported that the amount awarded was less than applied for, DoLA reduced the personnel funding. The total amount awarded was \$110,831. Miriam is working with Patrick at DoLA to resolve this issue as DoLA guidelines state that they will pay for existing staff to work

on projects. Miriam is requesting approval for the COG Chair to sign the contract when the final budget is in place. Miriam said the awarded amount will not change, but there may be adjustments to the line items within the budget. Karen asked if COG staff could be considered consultant services. Miriam said no, DoLA wants a third party, which has been an ongoing challenge because COG staff cannot do work on grants without funding and third party contractors are more expensive than COG staff. Miriam summarized that the grant was awarded for the project between Region 9 and the COG, the shared services project for local storage solutions, and capital funding for Bayfield and Ignacio to finish up their downtown planning projects.

**William Tookey motioned to approve the COG Chair to sign the contract when a final budget is in place, Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

c. DoLA Broadband Grant Application

Miriam requested approval to apply to DoLA from the broadband funds for up to \$2 million. Karen asked how much money was in this fund. Miriam said approximately \$2 million, but since the COG has never requested these funds, Miriam feels confident DoLA would award a good portion of these funds to the COG. Chris La May asked about matching funds. Miriam said the FCC grant would be matching funds for this grant along with CDOT funds.

**William Tookey motioned to submit the DoLA grant application for up to \$2 million, John Egan seconded, unanimously approved.**

**VI. Other Items**

Miriam said she will be sending forms to designate 2018 voting members, primary and secondary, and is working on an annual report for 2017 to be sent by month's end. All ROIs were positive. Members should have received their COG 2018 dues invoices.

Miriam presented John Egan with a thank you gift for serving as 2017 Board Chair. John thanked the board. He will not be running for office again in Pagosa Springs and David Schanzenbaker has been appointed COG rep.

**VII. Community Updates**

Ron LeBlanc, City of Durango:

- Work continues on the sewer plant.
- A new hotel is under construction on Camino.
- The lack of snow is negatively impacting sales tax.
- The CDOT project to finish the US 550/160 bridge to connect the interchange has been approved; the city hopes to see some regional retail activity as a result.

Fred Brooks, Town of Mancos:

- The 2018 budget has been adopted.
- Work is being done on the bridge project.
- The 2017 budget turned out better than expected.

Chris Tookey, Town of Silverton:

- The new Town Administrator started in November.

William Tookey, San Juan County:

- There is a contract to build affordable apartments that will be funded by DoLA and Division of Housing grants. This will be a \$1.3 million project.

Michael Whiting, Archuleta County:

- The county is reformulating the court house project to fit voter expectations.
- Feedback from local businesses and restaurants is positive even with the lack of snow; Wolf Creek is open.

Kari Distefano, Town of Rico:

- Locals are getting creative with no snow and going up to Trout Lake to skate or ski on the lake.
- The elementary school may close with a final decision coming in February.
- The winter carnival is still planned; however, if the no-snow trend continues, this may be cancelled.

John Egan, Town of Pagosa Springs:

- Andrea Phillips was appointed the new Town Manager and is doing a great job.
- The town and county dedicated \$200,000 each to affordable housing, broadband, and early childhood education.

Karen Sheek, City of Cortez:

- The 2018 budget has been approved.
- Sales tax revenues have been positive.

Steve Garcher, Dolores County:

- Two new buildings are nearly completed, a senior service center and a public service center.

Mark Garcia, Town of Ignacio:

- There is a capital improvement sales tax slated for the April election along with three trustee seats.
- Many grants are in the works that will make 2018 busy.

Chris La May, Town of Bayfield:

- The town is updating the comprehensive plan.
- A reconsideration of retail marijuana is being discussed.

Miriam stated that the Justice Department has rescinded the policy for legalized marijuana. Miriam will send out the article. Ann McCoy-Herald said there is concern about the ability of those in the marijuana retail business to have secured banking as running a cash business is dangerous. John Egan said Pagosa has had the same retail store robbed twice at gun point.

The next meeting is February 8, 2018.

**End 2:43 pm**