

**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
December Board Meeting  
Thursday, 07 December 2017, 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  
Gwen Lachelt – La Plata County  
Kari Distefano – Town of Rico  
Mark Garcia – Town of Ignacio  
Dick White – City of Durango  
Chris La May – Town of Bayfield  
Heather Alvarez – Town of Mancos (via phone)  
William Tookey – San Juan County (via video)  
Chris Tookey – Town of Silverton (via video)

Staff in Attendance:

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

Guests in Attendance:

Dr. Rick Smith – Data Safe Services  
Patrick Rondinelli – Department of Local Affairs  
Ann McCoy-Herald – Senator Gardner’s Office

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm, everyone introduced themselves.

**II. Consent Agenda**

- a. 2 November, 2017 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes
- b. October 2017 Financials

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

**III. Reports**

Director’s Report

Miriam reported that she is working on the forums requested by the board and will be sending a survey to gather what board members would like to discuss in 2018.

Miriam said the SWCCOG was awarded the DoLA 8011 grant in mid-2015 as a pass-through grant for the four communities of Bayfield, Ignacio, Pagosa Springs, and Silverton. The grant was closed out on October 31, 2017, however, there was approximately \$54,800 left in the grant with M&A of slightly over \$7,000. To prevent this type of loss in the future, the SWCCOG will include a clause in all contracts for pass-through grants that the member jurisdictions will be responsible for any loss of funds resulting from incompleteness of the grant.

Miriam reported that she will be scarce for the last two weeks of December while on PTO.

Miriam said the COG was awarded the DoLA 2018 Technical Assistance Grant. The request was for \$119,000 and the award for \$110,000, so Miriam is researching to find out why the full amount was not awarded and what parts of the application were denied.

#### Broadband Report

##### *FCC Rural Healthcare Funding/Colorado Telehealth Network*

Miriam reported that staff is working with NeoConnect and Colorado Telehealth Network to prepare the FCC broadband application for submission on January 1. She outlined various elements, including match that are being addressed. The funding currently identified would total \$26 million over three years of the needed \$40-55 million as estimated in the Regional Broadband Plan. There will be ongoing discussions regarding private equity to backfill funding for the project.

##### *Net Neutrality*

Miriam said the FCC is proposing to eliminate the Obama Era ruling requiring net neutrality. Net Neutrality is the principal that ISPs should allow access to all content and applications regardless of the source without favoring or disallowing specific information, products, and/or websites. This is important, as an ISP may be able to block a specific website, Netflix for example, unless that website pays a premium to the ISP or the consumer pays an additional cost to access specific content. Essentially, without net neutrality, the ISPs will be able to censor the content received by the end user. Miriam said staff has a draft letter to send to the FCC chair and a template for communities to use if desired.

**Mark Garcia motioned to have staff send the letter to the FCC chair supporting the continued use of net neutrality and for staff to send out the template to all members, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

##### *Broadband High Cost Fund – Grant Application Updates*

Miriam reported that of the two Broadband High Cost Fund requests from local ISPs in the SWCCOG area, one was funded. Forethought/Brainstorm's proposed project for Cascade Village in San Juan County was selected for funding. AlignTec's application for fiber to the premise (FTTP) in the eastern La Plata County subdivision, Deer Valley, was not approved. CenturyLink has until Wednesday, December 6, 5pm, to protest these awards and provide a plan to provide the same, or better, services as the awarded application. Miriam said Forethought/Brainstorm thanked the SWCCOG for their support of the Cascade Village project.

##### *Broadband Coordinator*

Miriam said that as part of the FCC/CDOT/DOLA funding, staff recommends hiring a contracted Broadband Coordinator. The Northwest Colorado COG has a Broadband Coordinator and has approached the SWCCOG about potentially sharing this position. This arrangement would be exceptionally beneficial for the region both in the cost savings for the position and the expertise that local communities would have access to. John requested that this contractor from NWCCOG be invited to the next COG meeting.

#### Transportation Report

Jessica reported that the TPR met this morning. There is a possibility of a ballot initiative for funding transportation, possibly a sales tax.

Based on references and clarification received regarding the proposals from potential transportation consultants, staff is negotiating a contract with Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates for the 5304 Four Corners Coordinated Transit Plan.

## VISTA Report

Dylan summarized potential impacts resulting from China's new recycling policies going into effect January 1.

Dylan said he recently began a 10-week intensive online Data Analysis course that will teach intermediate data analysis skills. This course will be beneficial to Dylan's work for the COG.

### IV. Discussion Items

John asked the new representative from DoLA, Patrick Rondinelli, to please introduce himself. Patrick introduced himself and said he has been with DoLA for almost 3 months. He came from the City of Ouray after 13 years and is familiar with the region. Patrick said that DoLA funding will not see much change as grant funding for tier 1 and 2 will remain the same throughout 2018.

### V. Decision Items

a. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from October 19, 2017

**Chris La May motioned to approved the Executive Committee meeting minutes from October 19, 2017, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

b. Adoption of 2018 Budget

Miriam said the 2018 budget is the best prediction staff can provide in light of the anticipated mid-year broadband development funds. The budget does have a positive net income that will help offset the 2017 budget deficit. The budget includes two additional staff in quarter three when the broadband funding should start and includes the purchase of additional office equipment. Some items are still in fluctuation, which is inevitable for a heavily grant funded organization. Dick asked if there are issues around office space with additional staff. Miriam said yes, but she will work with the city to find additional space or consider creating shared space for staff. Mark asked if the entire \$5 million in consultant costs is directly related to broadband. Miriam confirmed yes, that most of the consulting cost is for broadband. Dick said with a much larger budget comes a much larger fund balance requirement, which will not be met. Miriam confirmed this is correct, when more solid numbers are known staff will begin working on the fund balance issue.

**Chris La May motioned to adopt the 2018 final budget presented by staff, Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

c. Selection of 2018 Executive Committee (Treasurer)

As part of the selection committee, Ron LeBlanc recommended Karen Sheek as the 2018 Treasurer. Miriam has asked Karen about her interest serving in this position and Karen said yes.

**Dick White motioned to elect Chris La May as 2018 Board Chair, Gwen Lachelt as 2018 Vice Chair, and Karen Sheek as 2018 Treasurer, Mark Garcia seconded, unanimously approved.**

d. Approval of 2018 Meeting Schedule

Miriam said the July meetings tend to be difficult each year due to the holiday. The same happens in October due to budget season. Miriam said the board can merge the June and July meetings for a June 28<sup>th</sup> meeting date and the October and November meetings for an October 25<sup>th</sup> meeting date to avoid loss of quorum. Dick said the February meeting conflicts with the climate conference in Denver. Miriam said the February meeting could be pushed to the 8<sup>th</sup>. In summary, the 2018 meeting calendar would be:

January 4  
February 8  
March 1  
April 5  
May 3  
June 28 (Combined June and July)  
August 2  
September 6  
October 25 (Combined Oct and Nov)  
December 6

**Michael Whiting motioned to approve the updated 2018 meeting schedule as summarized by staff, Dick White seconded, unanimously approved.**

e. RREO Regional Studies Grant Application

Miriam said at the November meeting the board had elected to not apply for a Recycling Resource Economic Opportunity (RREO) grant to avoid the COG being in competition with the City of Cortez for those funds. COG staff has since found another RREO grant through CDPHE that is due December 13th and allows requests of up to \$50,000 with no matching funds required. The grant is for regional studies to identify existing diversion activities and establish goals that will guide future efforts to minimize waste sent to landfills.

**Dick White motioned to approve the grant application for up to \$50,000 with staff providing an update in January of the exact request, Chris La May seconded, unanimously approved.**

f. Executive Session: Executive Director Evaluation Overview and Merit Raise

Miriam asked if the board would like to allow participants on the video/phone conference to participate in the Executive Session. She added that there is no policy for this situation at this time.

**Mark Garcia motioned to allow folks utilizing the conference system to remain active for Executive Session, Dick White seconded, unanimously approved.**

John asked if the board would like to make this a regular policy. Miriam said she would like to do some research to see what other COGs do in this type of situation. John said allowing conference attendees will be exclusively for this session only.

**Gwen Lachelt motioned to move into Executive Session at 2:40pm, Mark Garcia seconded. Unanimously approved.**

The Executive Session was concluded and the board returned to the regular board meeting at 3:19pm.

**Michael Whiting motioned to award a salary increase to the Executive Director of 3.5% effective January 1, 2018, and in addition, should the COG receive the FCC Broadband Grant mid-year or during the fiscal year, that the COG will increase compensation for the Executive Director in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for increased work load that might be encountered in receiving grant and project funding, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

**VI. Other Items**

None

## **VII. Community Updates**

Mark Garcia, Town of Ignacio:

- The town put a sales tax increase on the April ballot for 1% that will go towards a capital improvement fund.
- The town is talking about a new town hall.

William Tookey, San Juan County:

- The voters approved a 1.5% increase in sales tax for emergency services.

Heather Alvarez, Town of Mancos:

- The town has hired a contractor to update the land use code.
- The design phase has begun to replace the main street bridge.

John Egan, Town of Pagosa Springs:

- The transaction to acquire additional land to complete the trails program has been finalized.
- The Town Council had an extensive discussion of improvements they would like to see in the 160 corridor that will be forwarded to CDOT.

Chris La May, Town of Bayfield:

- The bridges project is complete.
- The town has adopted a 2018 budget.

Gwen Lachelt, La Plata County:

- The county will be adopting a 2018 budget on Tuesday.
- A “We are La Plata County” project will launch next month to address the declining revenues due to low prices of natural gas. The county will be seeking input from the community about how to address the issue since voters have declined a mill levy increase for the last 2 years.

Michael Whiting, Archuleta County:

- The county brought roads back into width compliance using recycled ditch gravel that saved approximately \$600,000.
- The county will be putting \$400,000 into their 3 strategic priorities of housing, broadband, and early childhood education.

Dick White, City of Durango:

- The city has an unsustainable funding gap in the transit system. There is talk about keeping the same routes and increasing intervals or doing a smaller number of routes and improving cycle time. In addition, there is talk about going to 7 days a week, 365 days per year.
- There was a joint meeting with county commissioners regarding the homelessness and panhandling issues. Money has been pledged to support a homelessness services coordinator. In addition, a temporary camp site is being looked into.
- The waste water plant construction continues.

Kari Distefano, Town of Rico:

- The town has started conversations with the community regarding a ballot initiative around infrastructure.

- A shuttle service will begin shortly to transport folks to and from Telluride. This is a pilot program funded by the San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation with a small fee to riders.

The next meeting is January 4, 2018.

**End 3:42 pm**