

**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
September Board Meeting  
Thursday, 07 September 2017, 1:30pm  
La Plata County Administration Building Board Room  
1101 E 2nd Ave., Durango CO**

In Attendance:

John Egan – Town of Pagosa Springs  
Michael Whiting – Archuleta County  
Mark Garcia – Town of Ignacio  
Fred Brooks – Town of Mancos  
Ron LeBlanc – City of Durango  
Karen Sheek – City of Cortez  
Gwen Lachelt – La Plata County  
Shane Hale – City of Cortez  
Chris La May – Town of Bayfield  
Kari Distefano – Town of Rico (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:

James Torres – La Plata County IT Manager  
Michelle Haynes – Region 10  
Brad Blake – La Plata County Commissioner  
Julie Westendorff – La Plata County Commissioner  
Roger Zalneraitis – La Plata Economic Alliance  
Bonnie Brennan – La Plata County resident  
Mark Catlin – State Representative  
Jack Llewellyn – Chamber of Commerce  
Lynn Black – San Miguel County  
Mary Shinn – Durango Herald  
Mike Gardner – CenturyLink  
Freddy Hight – CenturyLink  
Dennis Collinge – CenturyLink  
Tim Kunkleman – CenturyLink  
Abel Chavez – CenturyLink  
Pattie Adler – La Plata County resident (via phone)  
Erin Bergman – Colorado Counties Inc. (CCI) (via phone)  
Heather Alvarez – Town of Mancos (via phone)  
John Whitney – Senator Bennet's Office (via phone)  
Jim Olstrem – Town of Rico (via phone)  
Barbara McLachlan – State Representative (via phone)

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:31pm. Everyone introduced themselves.

## II. CenturyLink Presentation and Discussion

Abel began the CenturyLink presentation with federal program highlights to include:

- In 2015, CenturyLink accepted \$159 million over 6 years
- The program is funded and overseen by the FCC who determined the locations for the project
- The FCC identified 80,000 locations but only funded 50,000 that would be 10 down 1 up minimum.

Abel said after 2 years of working on the project, CenturyLink has enabled 14,374 of the 50,000 locations and are on track to finish the 2017 milestones required by the FCC. CenturyLink is required to file progress reports to the FCC that will be made electronic where anyone can view the reports and find information on the FCC website sometime in September 2017. Abel said after the 2017 build is complete and 2018 plans finalized, CenturyLink will share the results and information. Abel presented a map that depicted locations enabled in the first 2 years of the project. Some locations will see 10 by 1 and some will see less. Speeds must be improved over time but right now the focus is getting the infrastructure in place to be able to provide higher speeds in the future.

Abel said the FCC defines customer locations as a census block address. A map of the eligible locations by county was provided to the COG. John Egan asked if the locations are state-wide. Tim confirmed, yes. Roger Zalneraitis asked if customer locations include vacant lots where someone wants to build. Tim said probably not. Roger said the build-out numbers are good and asked how many customers are in those areas as Alison could have 1 person and Dolores 1,000. In other words, Roger asked what the customer totals are. Abel said he does not have the number of customers as the FCC locations are identified by addresses versus customers.

Abel said CenturyLink has identified the high end users as using 66 Mbps, so the company's goal is to provide between 40 and 100 Mbps over time. Improving infrastructure is essential to providing these speeds in the future. John Egan asked if 40-100 Mbps is the goal then why is CenturyLink applying 10 Mbps at this time. Abel said 10 is the minimum and that this falls under the FCC terms and conditions. The FCC requires that CenturyLink build for speeds of 10 by 1 minimum with 25 by 3 being a new goal. Abel said they know CenturyLink is behind but to reach 25 by 3, they need a network capable of reaching those speeds. Right now, speeds cannot be the concern but rather getting infrastructure in place and/or improved. Essentially, without the infrastructure there is no speed. Michelle Haynes asked what improving the infrastructure means. Abel said this means getting fiber close to neighborhoods by building fiber towards neighborhoods.

Abel said CenturyLink is working to create partnerships and would like to partner with the COG. This would help to accelerate the work being done. John Egan said every community in the COG chose to opt out of SB152. Since then, it seems CenturyLink has gone out of their way to get this reversed, which does not point to a partnership as CenturyLink's actions circumvent what communities want. Tim said CenturyLink does not oppose SB152 opt out but that opting out does not solve the problem. CenturyLink just wants a level playing field so communities cannot give themselves opportunities while not giving the same to providers. John asked what other entities they have spoken to about partnerships. Abel said they are currently talking with CDOT and Mammoth.

Shane Hale asked what opposition CenturyLink has to communities receiving funds from the state and how they spend those funds. Tim said there are 2 reasons, one being that

communities are focusing on middle mile and while this is important, it does not solve the last mile issue where people live and work. The second is that the community anchor institutions are not middle mile, they are last mile. Tim said CenturyLink is not against government spending money, they are against money being spent where it won't make a difference. Tim added that a lot of infrastructure is being built where there is already infrastructure because government wants to own and control but doing this does not solve the issue. Shane said CenturyLink has taken \$159 million for 50,000 homes where \$11.7 million has been spent this far; however, there is still a dearth of service in the area. It seems CenturyLink has no issue taking \$159 million from tax payers when governments are taking much less. Abel reiterated that the CAFII funding is not a CenturyLink fund but an FCC fund based on the FCC's determination of consumer needs. Shane said it seems CenturyLink is working hard at the state level to make sure the playing field is not level by dictating how money can be spent and that money can only be spent on middle mile. Abel said that was a DoLA requirement. Shane said the DoLA restrictions come from industry pressure.

Pattie Adler said she lives in the Lightner Creek area and is the director of a health clinic in La Plata County. Conducting a great deal of work from a home office and owning rental properties in Lightner Creek makes having internet connection extremely important. Patty said in the past, internet has never been fast, but it has worked. However, within the past several months the internet has been completely inaccessible hurting her ability to work to rent her rental properties without being able to offer internet access. Patty has been in touch with the La Plata County Economic Alliance and Darlene Marcus at Senator Tipton's office. Abel said he did recall this issue and welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Economic Alliance. The challenge is to overcome the math problem.

Julie Westendorff said many rural customers will not be CenturyLink customers due to being so rural; therefore, part of the plan must be to deliver broadband wirelessly. Julie asked what opportunities to partner there would be to hook up with a wireless provider and then service rural customers. Tim said they are currently looking at ways to partner with fixed wireless partners, such as Mammoth who recently purchased Skywerx. Julie asked if a timeline for this is known. Tim said too many factors are involved to give a timeline.

Michael Whiting asked how we structure public private partnerships to get things done as a partnership would require more transparent and frank relationships. Abel said we need to identify partners that are out there, understand the expectations of customers as far as speed, and understand the ways in which we can reduce costs for any provider in that particular locale. Michael said another thing to look at is connecting to community anchor institutions. CenturyLink says this is not middle mile but last mile, Michael said he disagrees; if sending a connection from the roof of a fire station, the fire station is middle mile and the shot to the house is the last mile. Michael said there is work to be done so that we are all on the same page and that we understand each other clearly. Abel said the other piece involves understanding who the COG has been working with because this cannot be just a CenturyLink solution but will require all providers to contribute. Abel asked what other providers the COG works with. Miriam said the COG works with all local providers.

Ron LeBlanc said the COG is strapped at the staff level for working on broadband and not attending to other issues and asked if CenturyLink would consider providing grants to local governments to help get staff back-up to address current broadband issues. Abel said he would take this question to the business leaders and see if it is a possibility. John Egan said he would like to invite CenturyLink back in 90 days to talk about progress made and a possible partnership. Abel said they would be interested to know what the COG and this region would

bring to the table. Abel added that if there is a sincere and genuine effort to partner he could bring the VP of operations and higher level of leadership personnel in the future.

The CenturyLink presentation concluded at 2:57 pm and there was a 10 minute break. The regular COG board meeting resumed at 3:10 pm.

### **III. Consent Agenda**

- a. 26 June, 2017 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes
- b. 3 August 2017 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes
- c. July 2017 Financials

**Ron LeBlanc motioned to approve the consent agenda and added a motion to approve that the COG send a letter opposing cuts to USDA funding, Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

### **IV. Reports (Staff will be available for questions on the written reports)**

#### Director's Report

Miriam reported that she will be out most of next week at the NADO conference; she will be working, just not locally.

Chris asked about the Enterprise Zone (EZ) contribution project. Miriam said Region 9 is the EZ administrator. A contract between Region 9 and the COG was approved by legal and will be on the October agenda for decision.

#### Broadband Report

There were no questions.

#### Transportation Report

There were no questions.

#### VISTA Report

There were no questions.

### **V. Discussion Items**

- a. DoLA EIAF December Grant Cycle

Miriam explained that the SWCCOG would like to request funding from DoLA for broadband development. Funding from DoLA would provide money for existing staff and consulting, such as a broadband coordinator. NWCCOG and Region 10 both used DoLA funds to start a permanent position as a contract position. DoLA only has a very small amount of money in the Broadband Fund, and as a result the SWCCOG may need to apply during the standard grant cycle. Miriam said with all the members utilizing this same DoLA funding, she wanted the board to have a discussion about the SWCCOG potentially applying for DoLA funding at the same time as the membership. Shane said the COG and members will almost always be competing. Michael suggested a general policy to check in with each other. Ron requested that the new DoLA representative be invited to a COG meeting.

### **VI. Decision Items**

- a. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from July 20, 2017

**Chris La May motioned to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes from July 20, 2017, Gwen Lachelt seconded, unanimously approved.**

b. Cascade Village Broadband Letter of Support

Miriam reported that Forethought/Brainstorm Internet approached the SWCCOG requesting a letter of support to the Broadband Fund for funding to help offset the cost of the two mile build from Purgatory Ski resort to Cascade Village in San Juan County. Cascade Village is the only population center outside of Silverton in San Juan County that is currently under/unserved (depending on location). Funding requests to the Broadband Fund are due September 12th. Shane asked what the COG would gain. Miriam said this project would fall in alignment with public private partnerships, being community partners, and supporting broadband development. This project also falls into the Enterprise Zone and the goal of the EZ was to encourage broadband builds.

**Karen Sheek motioned to approve the Cascade Village Broadband Letter of Support, Fred Brooks seconded, unanimously approved.**

c. Colorado Tourism Office Grant

Miriam said the Colorado Tourism Office has a marketing grant available. Staff proposes this as the match for the DoLA Technical Assistance 2018 Grant. Staff suggests creating a regional tourism website; ideally we would be able to provide this to an existing agency rather than starting from scratch. In addition to a website there would be significant marketing to increase traffic to the website. This marketing may include advertising, promotional materials, printed materials, and even media placement (radio, TV, digital etc). This grant also provides funding for planning and research. Miriam said this idea came about from the CCUA meeting that was held in Durango in July. The CCUA had asked for information on regional activities. It took about two hours to put together regional information, and not just community specific information. Shane said additional information may make this even more confusing and asked who would update and maintain the website. Miriam said update and maintenance would be outsourced and paid for a length of time through a DoLA grant. A plan would need to be in place to replace the DoLA funds after they have run out. Shane said he is unsure how a website would ensure equal presence for each community and suggested instead of creating a whole new website to just put links on the COG website to each member's tourism website. Ron agreed and said Durango spends a lot of money on brand and this endeavor seems to conflict with that. Keri said this seems a bit out of the COG realm and that marketing should be more community based. Chris reminded the members that tourism is one of the COG initiatives and if this is something members do not feel the COG should be doing, maybe tourism as an initiative should be reassessed.

**Chris La May motioned that the COG not apply for the Colorado Tourism Office Marketing Grant but establish a link on the COG website referencing local tourism options, Ron LeBlanc seconded, unanimously approved.**

d. DoLA 2018 Technical Assistance Grant

Miriam reported that the DoLA Technical Assistance Grant is due October 2nd. This funding will help provide a path forward for Region 9 and the COG to work together. Currently, both Executive Directors and Executive Committees have seen this as needed work but have been unable to move forward on this for multiple reasons including ED time constraints and the inability to be completely unbiased. If grant funds are awarded, staff would hire a facilitator. The cost would be approximately \$35,000. Region 9 will be providing an \$8,000 cash match. SWCCOG management and coordination of the project will provide matching funding as well. There would be no cash match from members.

**Chris La May motioned for staff to apply for the DoLA Technical Assistance Grant due October 2, 2017, Michael Whiting seconded, unanimously approved.**

## **VII. Other Items**

John reported that recently the Four Corners Film Office sponsored a screen writing class. From this event John learned that the film office falls under Region 9 and is mostly volunteers with no budget and no full-time staff. John suggested that the board consider making an investment and working with Region 9 in making a budget that could help build the film industry in the region as this could bring in a lot of money. Shane asked if John was asking the COG to contribute money to Region 9 to support the film industry. John said yes, to contribute money in conjunction with Region 9. Ron said he does not feel this is a role of the COG and would have issues funding the COG and Region 9 only for the COG to give funds to Region 9. Michael said he would like to hear a bit more information from Region 9. John recommended asking Laura Lewis if she would be interested in talking about the film office and her vision for the future. Miriam will contact Laura Lewis to check availability.

## **VIII. Community Updates**

There were no community updates as time did not allow.

**Karen Sheek motioned to adjourn the September board meeting, Ron Leblanc seconded, unanimously approved.**

**End 4:10 pm.**