

**Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
October Board Meeting  
Thursday, 14 October, 2021, 1:30 p.m.  
Video Conference**

In Attendance:

David Black – Town of Bayfield  
Olivier Bosmans – City of Durango  
Andrea Phillips – Town of Pagosa Springs  
Mark Garcia – Town of Ignacio  
Willy Tookey – San Juan County  
Shari Pierce – Town of Pagosa Springs  
Alvin Schaaf – Archuleta County  
Katie Sickles – Town of Bayfield  
Gloria Kaasch-Buerger – Town of Silverton  
Mike Lavey – City of Cortez  
Marsha Porter-Norton – La Plata County

Staff in Attendance:

Miriam Gillow-Wiles – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
Jessica Laitsch – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
Bryce Bierman – Southwest Colorado Council of Governments

Guests in Attendance:

Laura Vanoni – Archuleta County  
Mike Segrest – La Plata County  
John Whitney – Senator Bennet's Office

**Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:36p.m.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Consent Agenda**

- a. September 2021 SWCCOG Meeting Minutes
- b. August 2021 Financials

**Willy Tookey motioned to approve the consent agenda, Alvin Schaaf seconded, unanimously approved.**

**Decision Items**

- a. Additional Staffing Needs

Miriam explained that the COG has consistently been understaffed and believes the organization could be more successful with additional staff support. She described why a general project coordinator may be more appropriate than someone specific to broadband. Andrea asked if the intent is to move forward with this even if the grants are not awarded. Miriam replied that although there are continuously new projects, if additional projects did not move forward that would impact the necessity. Andrea asked what the potential impact would be to dues. Miriam replied she would get an estimate. There was discussion about changing the budget requests for the member jurisdictions. Marsha asked about the timing for award

notifications. Miriam replied most should be decided by the end of the year. Olivier asked what the typical process is for this type of request. There was discussion about providing notification to the member jurisdictions. There was discussion about the potential for increased dues if grants end in the future. Miriam clarified that this is intended as a one-time request. Mike Lavey mentioned that Cortez will be considering membership for 2022. Olivier requested additional information for Durango. Staff will provide additional information for the member jurisdictions.

b. MOU with Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County

Miriam described the purpose for an updated contract is that the RHA is being reinvigorated and is preparing to move to new staffing structure. Marsha added that this was vetted at the last RHA meeting. Mark added that the additional work is being compensated.

**Alvin Schaaf motioned to approve the contract between the SWCCOG and the Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County, Willy Tookey seconded, unanimously approved.**

c. Letter of Support Ratification – Axis Health Care

Miriam explained that Axis Health approached the SWCCOG for a letter of support for a USDA grant to expand the Cortez clinic, due to the timing of the grant the executive committee authorized the letter with ratification to be requested. There was discussion about having Axis give an update about their activities to the Board.

**Olivier Bosmans motioned to ratify the letter of support, Mark Garcia seconded, unanimously approved.**

## Reports

### Broadband report:

Miriam reported that final rules are pending for state funding and announcements for larger grants. Miriam added that the FCC had passed a number of rulings that limited local control. Mark asked about dark fiber leases and the COG's broadband plan. Miriam replied that the SWCCOG brings in quite a bit of funding through dark fiber and summarized various efforts to move broadband efforts forward. She will provide additional detail in future reports, although some specific efforts may not be appropriate as public information. Marsha asked if the broadband plan has been updated. Miriam replied this has not been updated, though generally the underserved areas remain underserved. She added that the report is specific to middle mile while some of the more recent efforts have been focused on to-the-premise. Miriam suggested that she could break down the priorities identified in the plan in relation to the COG's priorities and progress. Mike Segrest asked why fiber is not mapped through GIS. Miriam replied most fiber is privately owned and often not provided for public information. Miriam elaborated on additional issues that this causes related to government not having this information. There was discussion about challenges with not having this information. Miriam mentioned that jurisdictions can have requirements included in their codes to require additional conduit placement and notification of location of fiber when placed in the rights of way. Miriam added that the COG is a major player with broadband efforts in the region and regarding legislative matters.

### Fiscal update:

Jessica summarized the status of various projects.

### Grant report:

Miriam reported that the RHA and the SWCCOG were awarded funds for digitization of files. The SWCCOG was awarded a DOLA REDI grant to support the Montezuma Orchard Restoration Project. Mark asked for additional detail about the remote readiness grant. Miriam replied that staff has been working with the Durango Adult Education Center on literacy classes and is beginning discussions with the Cortez Chamber of Commerce related to a location for

additional classes. She added that staff is working with RCAC for technical assistance for Spanish language business development.

Transportation report:

Jessica summarized the SWTPR meeting and the status of the mobility hub project. Mark mentioned there was an update on the greenhouse gas rulemaking process during the SWTPR meeting and the comment period has been extended.

### **Community updates**

Olivier asked about the negative balance. Miriam this is due to a delay waiting for several large grant reimbursements. Olivier asked for follow-up on the letter regarding regional housing planning. Miriam mentioned that staff is nearly complete with the grant and awaiting commitment letters prior to submission. Olivier asked if there was a plan to have more information and action by the COG on housing issues. Marsha mentioned that the COG formed a housing subcommittee and that may be the appropriate forum for higher level detail. She asked about the intent to have a discussion about the strategies identified by Root Policy. Miriam suggesting including reports from the subcommittee on the Board packets. Mark asked if this is related to the housing code analysis grant. Miriam clarified that this is not just a code analysis, it would also include specific analysis. There was discussion about various efforts to compile specific analysis. Andrea mentioned that the housing subcommittee had discussed ties with transportation. She added that they have representatives from Archuleta and La Plata Counties, and it may be helpful to have representation from other parts of the region. Marsha asked how to manage the Root Policy strategies. Miriam replied that the housing subcommittee could play a role, but it is important to recognize that the COG could not implement all the strategies.

John reported that there has been some back and forth on the infrastructure and the budget bills, the budget bill is expected to be significantly reduced. He described the current expectation on various elements. He reported that they have not yet heard about the Congressionally Directed Spending requests. Bears Ears National Monument has been restored. John mentioned that the funding bill efforts would be funded by high income individuals and companies. David pointed out that this is a 10-year bill. Marsha asked if there are housing related grants anticipated. John replied there are efforts underway, but it is hard to say what would be cut. John described some of the current challenges, he will send out a joint document from CCI and CML.

Shari reported the Town of Pagosa Springs has a new council member. Sales tax is strong. The draft budget has been presented. They are working on workforce housing and improvements to the sanitation system.

Marsha reported La Plata County is working on an update to oil and gas regulations to incorporate state rules. They are working on the opioid settlement. They are working on a partnership with the City of Durango and Durango Fire and Rescue for mitigation around Durango.

Willy reported that San Juan County is getting snow. Sales tax is up more than 50% from last year.

Gloria reported the Town of Silverton had a special election, during which they lost power and had significant snowfall, the result was there were no recalls and AHVs have been banned effective immediately. They received a grant for various downtown business improvements.

Alvin reported that Archuleta County's sales tax is trending down, but still up overall. They are working on a building for the Assessor and Treasurer.

Olivier reported the City of Durango's sales tax is good. They are having budget discussions, fund balances are good, and there are a number of capital improvement projects. He provided an update on efforts to increase housing units.

Mark reported the Town of Ignacio is wrapping up the intersection project at Goddard and Becker. They are working on housing. Sales tax is strong, they are working on the budget, currently awaiting some direction.

David reported the Town of Bayfield's sales tax is up. They are working on the CR 501 trail project.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.