



ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS
OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

MINUTES

AGNC EDD BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

August 19, 2020

Ute Water Conservancy District,

2190 H ¼ Road, Grand Junction, CO 81505

Online: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2510562431>

By Phone: +1 301 715 8592 Meeting ID: 251 056 2431

1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

11:30 A.M. 1. Call to Order – Chairman Beck called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. Introductions were made. Mike Samson made a motion to approve the May 20, 2020, AGNC EDD Minutes; Grady Hazelton seconded the motion; motion passed.

2. Update from EDA on COVID Impacts and CARES Act Response – Trent Thompson from EDA provided an update on grants being requested in the region through the CARES Act; he also introduced Jeanie, a new rep for EDA. There was \$1.5 billion of CARES Act funding allocated to EDA; the funds are to help with economic priorities. Fires in Colorado may become federally declared disasters; if that happens the areas impacted would have the additional ability to focus on funding for issues related to the fire. There is a lot of demand for funding throughout the US - about 1/2 of the funding went to existing grants. The AGNC EDD was created just in time to get a \$400,000 grant from the CARES Act; the Mesa County revolving loan fund got \$550,000 which was just awarded this week. As always, there is higher demand than there is supply. Trent highlighted applications under review that will affect region CMU is requesting assistance for the construction of a facility to provide better health professionals and healthcare in the region. The State put in statewide RLF application so much of AGNC would be included in that. The State is doing a rural economic development recovery roadmap as well as statewide tourism program focused on planning and how to operate in the rural areas. Region 10 is connecting their network to THOR which down the road could help AGNC region. Craig is working on a project for whitewater rafting; the application not in yet but Trent, Bonnie and Tiffany are working with community. There is a mix of applications still under review versus some that have been decided one way or another. It is not normal to have this many applications under review at the same time. Generally, another supplemental appropriation is not expected before the election and if one is approved, it is unsure if EDA would get additional funding through new bills. Communities can get funding forever as long as requests can be linked to COVID in perpetuity. The assumption is that ACC funds will be available in October. Many of our counties are eligible for ACC funds.

3. Report on EDD Activities: Tiffany Pehl & Bonnie Petersen

Coal to Products Project Update – The EDA Coal to Products project is moving forward and has reached the point that it is time to hire an Economic Innovation Advisor. The job posting is being drafted and, upon finalization, will be distributed to begin accepting applications for the position.

EDA non-competitive grant opportunity – AGNC was notified by Congressman Tipton’s office on July 20th that the grant has been approved but we are not allowed to make announcements until after the official announcement is made by the EDA. Staff will complete the GAP document for the grant and submit that to EDA as required. Once that is approved, we will be able to move forward with implementing the scope of work.

EZ Redistricting Discussion – During a recent EZ administrator call, it was noted that OEDIT has decided to reconsider EZ designation in 2021 or 2022 rather than at the 10 year mark originally anticipated. There is a legislative requirement for review of EZ’s at least every 10 years. The current re-designation was done in 2016; staff has concerns that some counties might not qualify next year and that COVID impacts will not be included in the criteria which lags current circumstances. Staff wants to keep as much as possible in the EZ in the region give the challenges being faced over the next several years.

Representative Perry Will provided an update on this weird year; he is ready for 2021. He noted that it is challenging to be in the legislature when the governor cuts out legislature regarding matters of state. An urban exodus is happening and will continue to happen - people will look to rural communities to escape the challenges in urban areas. We are likely to see a boom to rural areas with or without broadband. There is concern about education as people not sending kids back to school; some parents are looking for other methods, some families are getting together to hire a private teacher. Wildfires are expanding because it is as dry as it has ever been. Fires put out massive amounts of carbon in the atmosphere. One cause of these massive fires is the lack of timber cutting, we can either cut it, graze it or watch it burn. Managed forests have a smaller fire footprint. Representative Perry went to the C3 business base camp and would like to work with them to bring a tour to this region. Natural gas and coal run the grid; this was very clear when the group went to the Xcel distribution station - wind and solar brings very small amounts of energy. Really concerned about the reliability of the grid. Need to educate people that the grid is not going to be able to provide reliable service with only renewable energy sources. It is important to consider changes to the law so solar pays industrial rates on land; that would help counties.

Other discussion centered on the I-70 closure due to the wildfire; the impact through the winter will be astronomical. There was some discussion about the need for an alternate east/west transportation route. The Commissioners are doing all they can - Michael Ghoulby said they will open Independence Pass if necessary but Cottonwood pass would be expensive to open up. This may be the ammunition needed to go to the powers that be to ask, “how many times does this have to happen?” Glenwood has been hit very hard as a tourist town; the fires will damage the landscape and create more slides, etc. A suggestion was made that perhaps AGNC could draft a letter requesting alternative routes. Trent could make a case that whatever the project might be although EDA rarely works on highways as it is tough to make connection with the

business benefit for highways. Have to talk through what project might be. Railroads are not running through Glenwood Canyon were diverting all the way through Wyoming.

The meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m.

Attendance:

Ray Beck, Moffat County
Mike Samson, Garfield County
Tiffany Pehl, AGNC
George Rossman, Congressman Tipton's Ofc.
Heather Jones, AAoA
Grady Hazelton, Town of New Castle
Chris Nichols, City of Craig
Lisa Piering, Town of Rangely
Jeff Comstock, Moffat County
Rep. Perry Will, HD 57
Alyssa Logan, Senator Bennet's Office
614-519-2547

Bonnie Petersen, AGNC
Betsy Bair, Senator Gardner's Office
John Justman, Mesa County
Doug Monger, Routt County
John Bristol, Steamboat ED
Makala Barton, Rio Blanco ED
Dave Reynolds, Town of New Castle
Michelle Haynes, Region 10
Jeannie Caldwell, Town of Rangely
Brandon Bainer, Congressman Tipton's Ofc.
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