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COUNTY, COUNTY BEAT

BOCC examines solar opportunities, hears CDOT plans

by [Jared Henderson](#) — on June 17, 2026



Jared Henderson
Author

RBC | Last week the Rio Blanco County Board of County Commissioners met June 9 in Meeker, holding a morning work session followed by its regular meeting. All three commissioners were present.

During the work session, commissioners heard a presentation from Byron Kominek, owner of Jack's Solar Garden and executive director of the Colorado Agrivoltaic Learning Center, who discussed combining solar energy production with agricultural operations.

Kominek explained that his family's Boulder County farm transitioned from hay production to solar development after traditional farming became financially unsustainable.

"We were losing money on hay," Kominek said. "We needed to figure something else out, or we lose the farm over time, and solar was a way that we could come about piecing things together."

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The family converted an eight-acre hay field into a solar array in 2020, installing more than 3,200 solar panels capable of generating electricity for approximately 300 homes.

Research conducted through partnerships with Colorado State University and the University of Arizona has found that some crops benefit from the partial shade provided by solar panels.

“The lettuces, arugula, spinach — they would grow two to five times larger within the solar array versus outside,” Kominek said.

Kominek said research on forage production beneath solar arrays has also shown benefits during drought years.

“What we found in the solar array is that we actually grew 20% more grass in the solar array versus outside,” Kominek said.

He also discussed livestock grazing within solar facilities, noting that agricultural use can continue alongside energy production.

“We can have cattle and solar,” Kominek said. “It’s useful for the cattle because there’s shade available to them.”

Commissioners asked questions regarding wildlife movement, fencing requirements and long-term land management associated with solar projects.

County Attorney Rose Pugliese later provided legal and administrative updates, including recommendations for strengthening the county’s agenda review process to ensure legal review occurs before agendas are published. Commissioners also discussed pending contracts, concerns about liability provisions and Colorado’s 1041 regulations, which allow local governments to regulate matters of state interest, including renewable energy development.

Commission Chair Callie Scritchfield expressed interest in learning more about how the regulations could be applied locally. “I would like to understand a little bit more,” Scritchfield said. “I don’t understand that 100%.”

The board also reviewed a draft memorandum of understanding involving the Yellow Jacket Water Conservancy District and a proposed feasibility study grant application. Under the draft agreement, Rio Blanco County would serve as the grant administrator and fiscal agent for the project.

Commissioners also met Rio Blanco County's new Colorado State University Extension agent, Meghan Davis, and reviewed CSU Extension Advisory Board bylaws. No formal action was taken during the work session.

During the regular meeting, commissioners approved the agenda and consent agenda. The consent agenda included payroll and motor vehicle reports and approval of a Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment contract amendment providing an additional \$105,000 to Rio Blanco County Public Health.

The board then received its annual county update from the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Region 3 Transportation Director Jason Smith outlined CDOT's four primary functions.

"CDOT has four functions: construction, maintenance and operations, multimodal service, and asset management," Smith said. "All four of these areas can really incorporate safety, mobility and asset management, so that's really the center of what we do."

Smith said the department's priorities for the year include improving roads, transportation safety and transportation options.

"Fix our roads, advancing transportation safety, and sustainably increase transportation choices services," Smith said.

Smith noted that Region 3 covers 15 counties in northwestern Colorado and maintains more than 5,000 lane miles of roadway, 13 mountain passes, seven tunnels, more than 700 bridges and more than 15,000 culverts.

"We have over 5,000 lane miles roadways that we service and keep open, 13 mountain passes, 13 rest areas, seven tunnels, over 700 bridges and over 15,000 culverts," Smith said.

Smith also discussed workforce challenges and recruitment efforts following staffing shortages during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have a very inexperienced crew that we're trying to get trained and get them up to speed," Smith said.

District 6 Transportation Commissioner Rick Ridder and Regional Planner Mark Rogers also participated in the presentation. Rogers reviewed CDOT's approximately \$2 billion annual budget and

explained that a significant portion of transportation funding comes from federal and state fuel taxes.

Commissioners questioned CDOT officials about road funding formulas and regional allocations. Officials explained that a revised funding formula places greater emphasis on population, which is expected to reduce future funding allocations for Region 3.

Resident Engineer Justin Kuhn who covers Rio Blanco, Moffat, and Routt counties reviewed upcoming transportation projects, including resurfacing work on State Highway 13 north of Meeker and improvements along State Highway 139 south of Rangely planned for 2027.

Commissioners later approved a letter of support for the Yellow Jacket Water Conservancy District's Lake Avery expansion feasibility study.

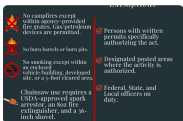
"Our goal there is to help Yellow Jacket get this expansion feasibility study in motion," Scritchfield said. "We'll know more in July."

The board also approved participation in an amicus brief supporting Suncor Energy USA in a case before the U.S. Supreme Court involving Boulder County's climate-related lawsuit against the company.

Commissioner Doug Overton said the case could have implications beyond Colorado.

"When Boulder County sued Suncor, it went to Supreme Court of the United States and they picked Boulder County to hear," Overton said. "The outcome of this decision by the Supreme Court will affect 100 other cases across the United States, so we felt that it was well worth our time and money to try and do the right thing."

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Commissioners also approved ratifying County Attorney Rose Pugliese’s authorization to inform Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado and Mesa County Attorney Todd Starr that Rio Blanco County will participate in the amicus brief and will contribute up to \$7,500 toward legal fees for the amicus brief.

Commissioners concluded the public portion of the meeting with updates on recent activities, including Commissioner Overton participation in strategic planning sessions, Commissioner O’Hearon legislative meetings, Club 20 events, Colorado Counties Inc, and Commissioner Scritchfield conferences and recovery efforts related to local natural resource projects.

The board then entered executive sessions to conduct performance evaluations, discuss negotiations related to APHIS Wildlife Services and receive legal advice.

The next meeting of the Rio Blanco County Board of County Commissioners is scheduled for June 23 at 1 p.m. at the Rio Blanco County Annex building in Rangely.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR – June 18th, 2026

June 17, 2026

TAGS: Board of County Commissioners, County Beat, Rio Blanco County



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