



ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS
OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

MINUTES

AGNC BOARD OF DIRECTORS & MEMBER MEETING

June 17, 2020

Town Hall, 175 E 3rd St., Palisade, CO 81526

9:00 am to 11:30 am

Call to order – Ray Beck, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:15 am. Introductions were made. Dave Reynolds is the alternate for Grady Hazelton.

Approval of Minutes – Mike Samson moved to approve the minutes from the May 2020 meeting; Chris Nichols seconded the motion, the motion passed.

Financial report: Bonnie Petersen provided an overview of the financials for May 2020. Total cash position at the end of May was \$547,273.88. Revenue exceeded budget for the month and continues to exceed budget year to date. Expenses were less than budgeted for the month and continues to be less than budgeted for the year. Net income for the month was negative, year to date net income is less negative than projected by the budget. A motion was made by Chris Nichols to approve the financial report; motion was seconded by Mike Samson, motion passed

Election of Officers: Andy Key can no longer represent Rio Blanco county municipalities on the board leaving the vice-chairman position open. Chairman Beck opened nominations to once again fill the executive committee positions fully. Nominations were opened for vice-chairman; John Justman nominated Mike Samson; Chris Nichols seconded the motion. John Justman moved that the nomination be accepted by acclamation, Chris Nichols seconded the motion; motion passed. Chairman Beck opened the nominations for treasurer, Mike Samson nominated Chris Nichols for treasurer, John Justman seconded the motion. John Justman moved that the nomination be accepted by acclamation, Mike Samson seconded the motion, motion passed.

Project and Committee Reports:

AAoA - Heather Jones reviewed guidelines for at risk populations to see family members which has not been allowed; this change will greatly benefit those isolated from family due to the COVID crisis. The AAoA funding recommendations for the next fiscal year were reviewed. Heather noted that the JBC is not taking the funds she had been concerned about and that AAoA expects to see fairly stable funding for this year. Most programs will receive more than they did in 2019 awards, but it is unsure what will happen with funding beyond this year given the budget impacts from the pandemic. Connection with Heather was lost so it was noted that if Heather needed board approval of the budget she presented, that would be determined, and an electronic vote would be taken. Heather did indicate that she needed approval of the budget presented; AGNC board members were asked for their vote via email on June 24, 2020. The board members approved the budget via email.

Legislative report –Richard and Diana Orf provided a wrap up overview of the 2020 Legislative session. is done.

- More than 650 bills and resolutions were introduced this year - AGNC evaluated 85 bills and resolutions. The status of some bills of particular interest to AGNC was reviewed (see presentation for details).
- SB20-214 suspended all interim committees so there will not be any meetings over the recess.
- There are several ballot initiatives to be aware of; wolves, tobacco, Gallagher to name a few.
- Next year may be worse given the economic distress from the COVID pandemic.
- We have a major election in 2020 that will have varying impacts in the age of COVID-19.
- A bill regarding waters of the state was being considered to fill gaps perceived left open by the WOTUS rulemaking. State waters are much more broadly defined, and the Colorado AG wants to have a new permit program - most groups were horrified by the bill; several large groups wrote opposition letters. When all was said and done the bill was not introduced. Expect that bill to come back in the next session - several groups will talk about it this summer.
- Health care bills introduced included HB20-1349 establishing a state option targeted to areas without competition. The bill was PId. SB20-215 was introduced to fund the reinsurance programs 2/3 of the funds was enterprised. It creates a tax on insurance based on profit or non-profit status and has a strange circular funding methodology. The measure provides revenues much larger than needed - if a state option bill runs next year it will end tax exemption. The bill says the state cannot implement a state option if this is in place. Reinsurance conflicts with state option at the federal level.
- From an ED standpoint, SB20-2 REDI and SB20-3 Rural Jump Start – both passed but with no additional funding and no additional appropriations will be made.
- Two major late bills HB20-1420 and HB20-1427 tobacco were introduced. HB1427 will go to voters asking for an 8 cent per cigarette tax to fund schools largely; it will also be used for housing assistance including legal aid to prevent evictions.
- HB 1420 was a broad-based tax increase bill removing exemptions on energy in all areas of industry; tied deductions allowed under CARES to be added back into state taxes and required those taxes to be paid at the state level. The bill would impact almost every small business in the state and would sever Colorado from the federal tax code. The argument against the bill from AGNC's standpoint was that it would hurt local governments when passing broad based business taxes would keep businesses from getting back to work thus reducing much needed revenues. HB1420 passed and increased the amount of pass through; removed much of the rest and the emphasis was changed to tax tobacco products.
- The tobacco tax, if passed, will bring in about \$80 million for education. If this recession persists; there is going to be a conflict. Many bills would suppress business recovery.
- The sick leave bill was continually amended right up till 5 pm on Monday - many businesses and local governments have a sick leave policy – the bill requires up to 48 hours of paid sick leave - DOL will come up with rules as to how it's all going to work.

Wolf Simulator – Larry Desjardin is a Steamboat Springs resident, conservationist, volunteer with a strong math and science background, has had a long career in the high-tech industry and is President of Keep Routt Wild. His comments in this setting are his own and not reflective of Keep Routt Wild. Larry has developed a wolf impact simulator in an effort to move the dysfunctional discussion regarding the impact of wolves to a quantitative analysis of those impacts on ungulate herds. It is intended to ignite discussion and move people closer to

agreement – the number of wolves’ matters. Larry developed a tool that allows the simulation of wolves and their impact in Colorado by inserting certain parameters; the tool measures the impact to species. He will be happy to share the simulator after this presentation. (Presentation and simulator are available upon request to AGNC) Larry reviewed inputs to simulator. Just looking today on impact of wolves and their prey. Larry demonstrated the simulator for attendees including a specific impact snapshot related to Northwest Colorado.

We need to use the best available science on where to introduce wolves. Larry noted that we could do a controlled study on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Rocky Mtn. National Park (RMNP). It would make sense to introduce wolves in RMNP as that is where the environmental issues really exist, yet that area is excluded from introduction by the ballot initiative. Larry presented data and noted that he is not trying to minimize the hunting impact – he is just trying to remove the emotion from the conversation. Based on the simulator results, he noted there is no reason to believe hunter success would drop; indeed, he would expect it would remain the same. In response to a question regarding the threat to our fledgling Colorado moose population, he noted that the Yellowstone moose population has declined 3000 to 1000 since wolves were introduced although it is not clear that it is singularly due to wolves. Wolves are definitely a risk to moose they are a prey. We will have to watch wolf behavior - a wolf tends to avoid unnecessary risk and will tend to stay away from moose because they are a greater danger to them than an elk. The model only looks at impact to ungulates. From a livestock impact, Larry has only looked at Montana evidence and noted that we wondered how many people just give up claiming wolf depredation with having to prove a wolf kill. This is something the legislature must get their hands around; they are not doing that, and this is part of the reason for the reluctance from county commissioners - definitely something that must be fixed.

CMU Economic Impact of Coal losses in NW Colorado – Dr. Nathan Perry provided an overview of the economic study regarding the economic impact of coal and solar and natural gas in Northwest Colorado. He considered - A - what are the losses and B - what could be the potential gains. The report can be viewed on the CMU website at <https://www.coloradomesa.edu/energy/documents/economic-impact-of-coal-solar-gas-nw-co.pdf> or by contacting AGNC to have the report sent to you.

The study shows that coal peaked in Northwest Colorado in 2009 and has exhibited a downward trend since then. He examined three scenarios with regard to loss of the coal industry across the counties of Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt. He calculated the direct and indirect employment impact, the region GDP loss, severance and mineral tax loss and ad valorem impact. In all scenarios, Moffat county has the greatest impact with a reduction of 47% in GDP and employment reduction of 20%; Hayden station is coded in Moffat county in the IMPLAN model. Western Routt county is more intertwined with Moffat than eastern Routt. The impact in Routt county could be as high as an 11% reduction in GDP and Rio Blanco county could see as much as a 26% reduction in GDP. Phase II of the study considered replacement of the power generated in the region by solar projects with a natural gas component. The solar projections were done in two ways; 1) the construction phase and 2) the ongoing operations phase. The construction phase lasts generally two years and requires a number of workers as charted in the report. The number of jobs required in O&M phase is based on size of the generation facility; either way, the job numbers are very small in comparison to the jobs that will be displaced with the loss of the coal industry. The report includes a 400-megawatt natural gas generation facility which would serve to replace more jobs than the solar facility but still far short of the number lost in the coal economy.

CPW Update – JT Romatzke, Northwest Regional Manger for CPW was in attendance and provided an update on that organization’s management due to the COVID-19 crisis. The crisis has caused financial concerns for CPW as they had to close campgrounds and as they move to reopen some of the, they worked with county partners to be in line with the counties. CPW is finally at a place where it seems they are regaining some normalcy - swim beaches are still not completely open, but campsites are. Some places are having phenomenal visitation and CPW may need to start inserting influence. The Parks cash funds are negatively impacted. Wildlife actually had an increase in applications for big game hunting; CPW worried there would be a decline in hunting license applications but had significant increase instead. Hopefully, August won’t see a lot of tags turned in. Lot of things are happening; he pointed to the West Slope mountain lion plan which will aid in transitioning the way CPW manages mountain lions in the state. CPW will manage not preserve wildlife the new plan will allow management of plans. The Plan will be heard in front of the CPW commission in July in Durango. Commission meetings have been on Zoom and are recorded – people can pull up last week’s meeting to get a sense of topics being considered. JT thanked Palisade and Mesa County for everything that’s happened at Cameo; things have been stagnant CPW closed the offices but left the range open. The virus resulted in Cameo cancelling about 61 events there which would equate to approximately 2,200 participants mostly from out of state. It is a significant hit to the West Slope, but it is hoped that this Saturday Cameo will open its sporting clay courses. This will put sporting clay competition on the map.

Federal Delegation Updates

George Rossman from Congressman Tipton’s provided an update. She offered here congratulations on the AGNC meeting, which had some technical challenges at the beginning, but we still made it work. Not a lot is going on in the House right now, Congress is not scheduled to go back into session until July 4, but the representatives have been called back next week. They will be taking up the police reform bill; Congressman Tipton is opposed to defunding police. The House is expected to take up the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) – should it pass the Senate; it will be in the House next week. The Congressman is not supportive of \$900 million in mandatory funding for LWTC.

Betsy Bair provided and update from Senator Gardner’s office. The GAOA passed the Senate this morning – it was Gardner’s legislation and one provision permanently funds LWTC at \$900 million for five years. The bill also addresses maintenance backlogs for our national parks; we have billions of dollars of backlogged/deferred maintenance issues in Colorado alone. There was a lot of talk about things that could be in the bill including the CORE act, but 850 organizations asked for no amendments to the act which helped it move forward cleanly. The Senator had some calls and texts from commissioners who have asked for a no net gain provision and access to public lands is prioritized. A \$60 million grant for I-70 near Eagle will be coming to CDOT from the federal government. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is where the Senate is headed next; the Senate will continue to work until they go on the July 4th recess.

Alyssa Logan provided an update from Senator Bennet’s office. The Senator echoes the GAOA excitement for passage; Senator Bennet has been working on these issues since he came into the Senate. He had a call with forest service leadership on fire preparedness; he is getting into the conversation for wild land firefighters making sure agencies have what they need to fight the fires we will see this year. The Senator is rolling out legislation for mental health care that will be expanding access in rural areas across the US and address the impact COVID has had on people; broadband is part of that conversation as well. He is also looking at addressing food supply issues identified through the pandemic.

Administrative Update

Bonnie Petersen provided an Administrative Update on the following topics:

- EDA non-competitive grant/AGNC EDA RLF – AGNC will not apply for an EDA Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant after learning about the parameters of the state’s application. In order to proceed, AGNC would have had to ask the state to exclude our region from their application and, if AGNC was not successful in obtaining a grant, the region would be without any access to an EDA RLF. The area outside Denver will be managed by Region 9 and staff has a reasonable amount of confidence that Region 9 will be a positive entity to work with in terms of marketing and access to EDA/RLF funds. Staff has completed the grant application for the non-competitive funds allocated for EDD’s to EDA from the CARES Act and will look forward to hearing its status as applications are considered.
- Rangely will act as the new fiscal agent for the Dinosaur Welcome Center. Lisa Piering is working with previous employees and the state to re-open the center as guided by CTO. We are very pleased Senator Rankin was able to identify funding with CTO to re-open the center. AGNC staff will work with Rangely to ensure a smooth transition.

New Business: *Next Meeting July 15, 2020, The Haven, 300 S. Shelton St., Hayden, CO 81639*

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 1:33 pm.

Attendance:

Ray Beck, Moffat County
Mike Samson, Garfield County
Tiffany Pehl, AGNC
George Rossman, Congressman Tipton’s Ofc.
Heather Jones, AAoA
Dave Reynolds, Town of New Castle
Chris Nichols, City of Craig
Keely Ellis, Town of Rangely
Jeff Comstock, Moffat County
Makala Barton, Rio Blanco ED
Lisa Cook, Town of Meeker
Karen Desjardin
JT Romatzke, CPW
Larry Desjardin, Wolf Simulator
McKenzie Webber, Rangely
Greg Mikolai, Town of Palisade
Kimberly Bullen, DOLA
John Whitney, Senator Bennet’s Office
Kris Middendorf
Paul Millhouser
TWard

Bonnie Petersen, AGNC
Betsy Bair, Senator Gardner’s Office
John Justman, Mesa County
Doug Monger, Routt County
Diana Orf, Orf & Orf, P.C.
Alyssa Logan, Senator Bennet’s Office
Patrick Pratt, No on Wolf
Richard Orf, Orf & Orf, P.C.
Jeannie Caldwell, Town of Rangely
Drew Kramer, Tri-State
John Bristol, Routt Chamber ED
Matt Nunez, City of Glenwood Springs
Nathan Perry, CMU
Carly Thomson, Rio Blanco County
Kris Melnikopf, Town of Collbran
Chelsie Miera, WSCOGA
Carolyn Tucker, Colorado Workforce
Cedar Beauregard, Beauregard Construction
Adam’s iPad
Marilyn McCaulley