

EAST CENTRAL COUNCIL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

COLORADO'S CENTRAL PLAINS



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EAST CENTRAL COUNCIL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES MAY 4, 2022

Call to Order

Chairman Chris Richardson called the May 4, 2022, teleconference meeting of the ECCOG Board of Directors to order at 7:02 PM. The Stratton office at 128 Colorado Avenue was staffed for public audience. Attendees included: Chris Richardson, Rhonda Brown, Steve Burgess, Marc Dettenrieder, Ben Ferree, Dave Hornung, Derek Isom, and Valerie Rhoades as directors. ECCOG Executive Director Candace Payne and Senior & Transit Services (STS) Director Sean Vanous were present. Directors Ryan Fulmer, Troy Schultz, Ron Smith, and Megan Vasquez were unable to attend.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was dispensed with due to the nature of the meeting.

Introductions of Guests and Roll Call

Roll was called by Executive Director Candace Payne to determine a quorum was met. Matt Ashby from Ayres Associates was introduced as our guest presenter this evening.

Roadmap to Recovery Report

Mr. Matt Ashby was given the floor to present the Ayres Associates report for the eastern plains region. Mr. Ashby stated the results from their work would allow Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) staff to aid the rural regions better with funding and technical assistance. In the report provided in the board packet, the consulting team identified housing, tourism and travel, live and work local, and agricultural diversification as development areas. These categories were consistent with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Scope of Work. The community presentations were presented this week and tonight reported Mr. Ashby. The development areas will be identified in their report to DOLA by July. Board Chairman Chris Richardson thanked Mr. Ashby and his staff for their work in the region and for the report this evening.

Approval of March 2, 2022, Meeting Minutes for Re-organization & Regular

The Minutes of the March 2, 2022, re-organization and regular meeting were provided in the board packet. Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous recommended a correction to the Senate Bill 290 paragraph to read \$491,584 as the amount awarded to Region 5 senior centers. Director Steve Burgess made a motion to approve the Minutes as corrected. Director Dave Hornung seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Financial Report of May 4, 2022

The Financial Report for April 6, 2022 was approved via mail ballot. The May 4, 2022, Financial Report was emailed earlier today to the board. Executive Director Candace Payne recapped the fund balances, payments, and receipts noting large payments or unusual items with input from Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous. Two Enterprise Zone contributions were received in April. Director Dave Hornung made a motion to accept the financial report as provided. Director Valerie Rhoades seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Approval of Bills & Payroll

Payroll and bills for March 31, 2022 were approved by mail ballot. The April payroll totaled \$39,030.25 for the office and field staff. Debit card transactions were \$3,009.86 which included Carousel web hosting, CASTA conference registration, expenses for Deb Brown's overnight stays, brochure printing and the Hartford insurance premium. Monthly expenses were shown to be \$65,638.71 which included HelpMATE vendor payments, EZ contributions, consultant fees, raw food, staff reimbursements, office rent, utilities, and marketing expenses. Director Dave Hornung made a motion to ratify the payment of payroll and Accounts Payables. Director Valerie Rhoades seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

ECCOG Board Member

Executive Director Candace Payne explained the Cheyenne County municipality vacancy could be filled by June. Cheyenne Wells made a nomination and Kit Carson did not have one at this time therefore Cheyenne County commission will consider the nomination later in May to approve the nominee. The new board member will be eligible to vote at the June 8th meeting.

COG Staffing Update

Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous reported the same field staff positions as last month need filled across the region. The Senior Services Program Coordinator position in the Stratton office has been filled by Amy Hutton. An interview for the Senior and Transit Services Assistant Director was conducted and the position was offered to a qualified candidate. The candidate should give notice to the employer this week. Executive Director Candace Payne sought input on offering a part-time receptionist position to a high school student this summer. Hiring from the local school might gain ECCOG a future employee and help get them excited about our work. The Special Projects Assistant position will be advertised soon.

2022 Our Journey Brochures

Executive Director Candace Payne reported the museum brochures have arrived and printing will be done locally for the other two brochures. All brochures are expected to be in hand by the middle of May. In other tourism news, the region will have video and photography recordings conducted in Burlington and possibly Limon to promote the plains this June or July. The counties to the north will also be included in this marketing effort. This marketing effort is part of the Pioneering Plains and birding niche created by the Colorado Tourism Office. Year-round locations were the best suited for the promotion so potentially Old Town Museum would be featured along with restaurants, venues and attractions.

Senate Bill 290

Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous reported that earlier today the state Purchase Order was received for the four senior center projects. All funds may be drawn down now or in increments, but all funds must be drawn by December 31, 2022 from the state. Projects do not have to be completed by December however it would be great if they were. Notice will be given to each senior center board that projects will need updated bids in order to proceed. Discussion was held regarding the draw down of funds and monitoring/reporting of each project's progress. Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous stated new protocols and processes will be implemented similar to a construction loan at a lender. All draws require documentation and periodic inspections of the project's progress will be required.

2022 Enterprise Zone Contribution Project

The World's Wonder View Tower in Genoa was presented by Executive Director Candace Payne for consideration as a contribution project. This location in Genoa was once a museum in the Our Journey program and may rejoin the program once the facility is updated. Funds received through the Enterprise Zone will be used to install infrastructure, rehabilitate the facility, add camping space, a café, and creative arts venue. The Friends of the Genoa Tower board has also applied for multiple grant funders in hopes of receiving more financial report. The Tower anticipates receiving cash and in-kind donations up to \$212,500. Another EZ application is also being discussed for the Hugo Roundhouse. Lincoln County commissioners met with a grant writer who wrote grants for the Tower to engage her on the Roundhouse project. A motion was made by Director Steve Burgess to approve the World's Wonder View Tower as a contribution project. A second to the motion was made by Director Dave Hornung. Motion passed unanimously.

Long-term Care Ombudsman Evaluation Report

Senior & Transit Director Sean Vanous drew attention to the Advocate letter enclosed in the board packet. The letter stated East Central COG is in compliance with the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. Program improvements included monitoring the electronic system for complaint trends and timely input of reports. In addition, the ECCOG ombudsman staff could be involved in budgeting.

Energize Colorado Gap Funds

As part of the Prairie Development Corporation loan functions, Executive Director Candace Payne and other ECCOG staff have worked in conjunction with the Energize Colorado Gap Funds to award grants to local businesses in ten counties. This year grant awards were given to 52 businesses/individuals expending \$267,487. Of those funds, twenty awards were made in Region 5's communities totaling \$108,843. The balance of funds were provided to thirty-one businesses in the northern counties. All funds have been expended by April 31st and no determination has been made for more funds at this time. Energize Colorado also reimbursed ECCOG for the cyber and crime insurance policies premium increases. It is anticipated that these policy limits will be required to participate in the Start Up Colorado funds later this year.

EDA CARES and Planning Grants Update

The EDA CARES funding set to expire on June 30, 2022 has been submitted for an extension due to the consultant's various delays in completing the scope of work. Howard Pierpont has experienced a few setbacks since last year which justified the extension request to December 31st. The follow up presentation from Deb Brown's visit will be held in September 2022 with Becky McCray which is supported by the EDA CARES funding. Deb Brown reported 81 people attended the April workshops in our four counties. Those attendees made a request for 193 various things in their communities ranging from signage to hang out spaces. The formal extension request has been submitted and is being reviewed by the Denver EDA staff. An approval is expected by May 31st.

The Planning Grant application for 2022-2025 has also been submitted. This funding is our three-year cycle award which expires June 30th. The Planning Grant match is an 80-20 split again. The Scope of Work will expand the work on tourism, regionalism, broadband, entrepreneurship, workforce, Brownfields, transportation and new partnerships. EDA will contribute \$192,500 over 2.75 years which ECCOG will match at the 20% rate. The end date will then be March 31st to match all other Colorado Economic Development Districts to make managing the projects easier for EDA.

2022 Title III Surveys

Sean Vanous, Senior & Transit Services Director, explained the survey results were tabulated with good responses. One frequent request was to reduce the amount of carbohydrates in the meals. Staff will replace carbohydrates on the menus to address this request from the meal participants.

NEW BUSINESS:

State Unit on Aging On-Site Visit

State Unit on Aging staff will be visiting the region on May 17 and 18 as part of the on-site evaluation for 2022. The visit will include seeing Hugo and Burlington's meal sites with a visit to the Kit Carson County homemaker program.

Transit Update

Staff awaits news from CDOT's Super Call on the bus acquisition process. Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous will attend a special session in late May to learn more about the process and disposition. The manufacturer, Ford, is only filling government vehicle orders we have learned.

TravelStorys

Our partners to the north have their first phase of TravelStorys published now. Our public relations person, Danielle Dascalos, will be marketing our tour this summer as will we. Business advertising on the application platform is the next step. A quarterly report was provided and reviewed with the board showing 82% of downloads are for Apple systems and the balance to Android. The most interesting fact was that people now spend one hour more per day on their phones than they do on television watching which came to 4.1 hours for cell phone usage.

Broadband

On April 26th in Flagler, ECCOG hosted the Colorado Broadband Office through a hybrid meeting for the region. There were eighteen attendees online and in-person who learned more about the upcoming funding to support broadband. This meeting was conducted by Sarah Smith of CBO but she will be replaced soon by Brandy Reitter as our representative. We will keep convening the regional group and Broadband Steering Committee as funding criteria is announced.

Internal Controls Procedures

Executive Director Candace Payne stated the 2021 ECCOG audit was wrapping up but a couple items had come up which need the board's input on. One of the items is the Automatic Clearinghouse (ACH) transactions used to pay bills and payroll which the Fiscal Officer does although she's not an authorized signer on the account. Discussion with the board included making a decision on either keeping the process the same which allows the Fiscal Officer to initiate and approve bill and payroll payments in the online banking system, adding the board treasurer to the online banking system to approve transactions in the Executive Director's absence, implementing segregation of duties for initiation and approval for the ACH transactions between Fiscal Officer and Executive Director, or setting more limits on the transaction amounts the Fiscal Officer makes. Adding the Fiscal Officer as a signer on the checking account was not an ideal solution. Discussion emphasized the board was concerned about operations being timely and efficient with limited staff for access and approval. There is a daily ACH limit set to allow payroll and bill payments as the mail system is not reliable or dependable. After consideration, the board chose to keep the process the same as each bill is reviewed and approved by either the Executive Director or Senior & Transit Services Director before processing by the Fiscal Officer for final payment. The board believed the checks and balances are in place which included their review within 30 days of payments to be sure they are timely.

Adding new vendors or providers to the approved payee list was a topic of discussion among the auditor, Executive Director and Fiscal Officer. The Fiscal Officer's process and ability to add names to the approved vendor list in Cougar Mountain Software was reviewed during the audit. Currently, ECCOG staff obtains an IRS W-9 form for each new vendor or provider, which the Fiscal Officer uses to generate payments for invoices or bills. Each payment is supported by a check request form signed by a director including debit card transaction receipts. The board was made aware of the current process and felt the process was sufficient given the size of the operation and the staff's diligence. A monthly review of the vendors' list may be performed by the staff to protect the organization and reduce risk.

The final topic discussed with the auditor and staff was the debit card limits and who has authority to raise the limit and for what reasons. Currently, Executive Director Candace Payne submits a written limit increase via email to the bank staff when we need to pay expenses that exceed the current \$1,500 card limit. The board considered the risk and questioned the frequency of need to raise the limit which may occur two or three times per year. Adding another signer like the chairman, vice chairman, secretary or treasurer to the account was discussed but was not approved by the board. Leaving the process as is was also discussed. Director Steve Burgess suggested opening a credit card account. Card limits could be set once approved by the bank as \$5,000 limit for Payne and possibly \$2,000 for Vanous to eliminate the need for a limit increase and remove direct access to the checking account. The board agreed this was a feasible solution for most cases and directed Executive Director Candace Payne to apply for credit cards for herself and Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous to mitigate the risk. If a credit card is not approved, then we'll reconsider other options.

Other

No other discussion came before the board.

Next Meeting Dates/Locations (1st Wed of each month)

June 8th – In Person in Limon – audit presentation if a quorum can be reached to receive the audit report or the date may be changed

***Note – June 8th is the meeting date and audit presentation**

July 6 – Mail ballot/TC/In person

August 3 – Mail ballot/TC/In person

Adjournment

Chairman Chris Richardson adjourned the meeting by declaration at 8:56PM.

All handouts and reports are retained in the permanent file of ECCOG Board meetings.