

EAST CENTRAL COUNCIL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

COLORADO'S CENTRAL PLAINS



128 Colorado Ave • Box 28 • Stratton, Colorado 80836 • 719-348-5562 • (FAX) 719-348-5887 • www.eccog.com

EAST CENTRAL COUNCIL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 8, 2025

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Steve Burgess called the January 8, 2025, meeting of the ECCOG Board of Directors to order at 7:08PM held at the Claremont Inn & Winery in Stratton, Colorado. Chairman Chris Richardson was not able to attend due to being sworn in to the Colorado legislature earlier today.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was not recited as there was no flag available.

Roll Call and Introductions

Roll call was taken with eight Directors in attendance: Rhonda Brown, Steve Burgess, Marc Dettenrieder, Ben Ferree, Dave Hornung, Sherry Jones, Hal McNerney, and Valerie Rhoades. ECCOG Executive Director Candace Payne and Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous were present. Directors who could not attend included: Ryan Fulmer, Derek Isom, Chris Richardson, Ron Smith, and Megan Vasquez. Guests at the meeting included: Jim Brown, Richard Jones and Margaret Burgess. A quorum was met.

Approval of September 4, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

The Minutes of September 4, 2024, regular meeting were provided in the board packet. Director Dave Hornung made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Director Marc Dettenrieder seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Financial Report of January 8, 2025

The December 4, 2024, Financial Report was approved by email ballot. The January 5, 2025, Financial Report, was distributed at the meeting. Executive Director Candace Payne and Senior & Transit Services Director Sean Vanous reviewed the fund balances through November transactions. Director Dave Hornung made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented. Director Hal McNerney seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Approval of Bills & Payroll

Payroll and bills for December 31, 2024, were provided at the meeting. The December payroll of \$48,352.11 was reviewed with attendees. December 2024 checks totaled \$100,665.54 including taxes, vendors, staff reimbursements, monthly utilities, provider costs, and a couple of Enterprise Zone contributions. Director Dave Hornung made a motion to accept approve payroll and the bills as presented. Director Hal McNerney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

COG Staffing

Executive Director Candace Payne reported ads would be placed again for the Program Specialist position as that position remains open. Job duties were briefly discussed along with a starting salary of \$43,000 or higher for a person with good computer skills including Microsoft 365. Currently, three employees desire to improve their Excel skills after their employee review so a class locally is being researched. Senior and Transit Services Director Sean Vanous reported Elbert County needs a replacement for a cook's assistant and a food transporter. Two drivers have been hired to cover Kit Carson County and Lincoln County, one per county. Other positions open include Cheyenne Wells senior services coordinator. Limon's senior services coordinator has been filled.

A/R360 Housing Needs Assessment

The Housing Needs Assessment is progressing through Phase II now. Prairie Development Corporation sponsored the HNA with \$10,000 to help fill the final financial gap. PDC also challenged PDC Administrator Candace Payne to use \$5,000 as

matching funds through other businesses like banks, renewable energy companies and economic development organizations. Currently, three banks and one economic development organization have pledged or paid over \$5,000 toward the challenge. Director Steve Burgess thanked Candace Payne for meeting with Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation early in the morning to make a pitch for support. LCEDC pledged \$2,500 toward the housing assessment. Outreach will continue to fill the remaining \$8,000 funding need.

Regional Grant Navigator

The Year 3 funding is now available explained Executive Director Candace Payne for \$100,000 paid up front as in previous years. Year 3 funds would be used potentially for grant research for the region and some staff time. Executive Director Candace Payne recommends not filling the contract staff vacancy as Stacy Salling would like to pursue other work in 2025 and it would be hard to catch up a new person on the efforts attempted and relationships established. Director Valerie Rhoades made a motion to apply for the Year 3 funds for uses as presented. Director Ben Ferree seconded the motion. Motion carried. The request will be formally submitted so there is no lapse in funds after February 2025.

ECCOG Outback Express Drug & Alcohol Policy & CDOT Transit Review

Senior and Transit Services Director Sean Vanous explained the Drug & Alcohol Policy included in the packet was necessary as a new policy was created as part of the recent CDOT Transit Review of the Outback Express program. This policy has been pre-approved by the performance review company, RLS & Associates, Inc., prior to presentation to the ECCOG Board using a policy builder program from Federal Transportation Administration. ECCOG would be a zero-tolerance program and must terminate any employee who tests positive for drugs or alcohol in safety-sensitive positions. The policy states employees may report to the Senior and Transit Services Director or the Executive Director for referrals or convictions. Director Dave Hornung made a motion to adopt the policy as presented effective January 1, 2025. Director Hal McNerney seconded the motion, which passed. The Policy will be shared with the appropriate ECCOG staff for training and provided to the compliance review firm. The response to the review compliance items will be submitted to RLS by the January 27, 2025 deadline.

ECCOG Board Members

Executive Director Candace Payne reviewed the upcoming changes to the Board as county commissioners will be changing in January 2025. Director Marc Dettenrieder expressed his interest in serving at the Prairie Development Board's direction on the ECCOG Board for another 2-year term. Municipal positions appear to be stable according to Executive Director Candace Payne.

NEW BUSINESS:

EDA Partnership Planning Grant in 2025

Executive Director Candace Payne explained it's time for a new Partnership Planning Grant in 2025 as the current contract expires March 31st. After a brief discussion of the application and use of funds, Director Hal McNerney made a motion to submit an application. Director Rhonda Brown second the motion, which passed unanimously. Due to the executive officer impending election, Director Ben Ferree made a motion to authorize Treasurer Dave Hornung or Secretary Valerie Rhoades to sign any documents needed for the application as Chairman Chris Richardson and Vice Chairman Steve Burgess will no longer serve in their current county roles. The motion was seconded by Director Hal McNerney. Motion passed unanimously.

CDOT 5310 & 5311

Senior and Transit Services Director Sean Vanous explained the current situation for CDOT's reimbursement to include Limon and Burlington 2024 expenses. The CDOT staff has been in contact with ECCOG staff but no solution has been determined yet. CDOT is holding internal conversations on how to help cover Limon and Burlington incurred costs and will let ECCOG know what they can approve this week. Calendar Year 2025 contracts for Limon and Burlington are expected in January to them separately from ECCOG's contracted funds. Those operations will be eligible for more reimbursement funds than they currently receive through ECCOG's contract.

Outback Express Routes

Senior and Transit Services Director Sean Vanous stated a recent bus rider inquired about expanded demand-response services, which entails more costs to the counties upon expansion. Discussion was held about the impact and need of such services; the decision of the Board was to maintain current service levels and let other transportation providers meet the individual needs of riders.

Senior and Transit Services Director Sean Vanous suggested Lincoln County might want to consider replacing their 2002 bus when the "Call for Projects" is open from CDOT. Matching funds would be required as usual.

Senior Center Expenses Paid by ECCOG

In recent service contract reviews, Senior and Transit Services Director Sean Vanous determined that some costs may no longer be serving the centers or ECCOG. LAN lines are paid monthly by ECCOG for several senior centers, but their purpose may no longer be valid as cell phones are used more frequently. The Board of Directors agreed that a conversation needs to be held with those senior centers to determine need and purpose of the LAN lines. Executive Director Candace Payne mentioned conversation was initiated with local telephone companies who might provide free or reduced internet costs to the centers in lieu of phone service. Follow up with be conducted.

Renewal Energy Impact Study (REIS)

The Renewal Energy Impact Study will begin in 2025 as soon as the Department of Local Government contract is executed with South East Colorado Enterprise Development (SECED) in Lamar. ECCOG's matching funds will then be paid and the monthly committee meetings will start in March. Executive Director Candace Payne asked for two volunteers to serve on the committee to represent this region. The frequency of meetings and length of meetings has not been shared yet. The Directors chose to wait until March when new county commissioners are seated on ECCOG's Board to select members for REIS's committee.

Mileage Rate Increase to .70 per Mile

The current policy manual states we will use the IRS Federal rate for reimbursement of mileage. Open discussion ensued as office and field staff currently get reimbursed for mileage transporting meals, attending meetings/trainings/conferences required for work. Office staff who regularly travel for work tasks are insured on the ECCOG vehicle insurance and may drive the ECCOG Impala or one of the vans if available. The field staff provide their own vehicles and are not insured through ECCOG vehicle policy with Gordon Insurance due to the proximity to Stratton and limited vehicle inventory. Discussion was conducted on maintaining the two vans and COG Impala which may not be used often for weeks at a time. This conversation was tabled to the March 2025 meeting pending analysis of vehicle expenses and employee reimbursements.

Enterprise Zone

Executive Director Candace Payne explained that the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade manages the enterprise zone program. OEDIT is verifying that current EZ administrators are willing and able to conduct business involving the tax credit program. Recently, the OEDIT staff learned some agencies do not want the task so after a brief discussion, the ECCOG Directors agreed ECCOG is willing and able to continue as EZ administrator for Region 5. The OEDIT may need letters of support stating this regional approval. The Board directed Executive Director Candace Payne to email the towns and counties to gain their support as needed.

Other

Executive Director Candace Payne presented a request for County Health Pool representatives for 2025. For previous years the Fiscal Officer and Executive Director were ECCOG's representatives and could remain as such. Director Ben Ferree made a motion to select Executive Director Candace Payne and Fiscal Officer Paulette Thompson to serve in this capacity for the CTSI insurance known as County Health Pool (CHP). Director Hal McNerney seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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

February 5th – Email ballot

March 5th – Limon in-person for new board & election of officers

April 2nd – Zoom or email ballot

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Steve Burgess adjourned the meeting at 9:18PM.

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