

Custer County Community Economic Development Meeting Minutes September 24, 2007

Committee members in attendance were Angie Arterburn, Robert Weisenbach, Charles Bogle, Bob Senderhauf, Dee Hoag, Jim Johnson, Mike Shields, Cindy Howard, Wanda Johnson, and Karen Crumbaker. Guests included: Kathy Reis, Ken Felty, Nora Drenner, Lockett Pitman, Dick Downey, Linda Hardeman, Dana Meek, Jan Lee, James Malm, Mike Liebman, and Mike Nielsen.

1. Angie Arterburn updated the Committee on the status of the Steering Committee members. Peggy Quint stepped down from the Committee. Robin Young will replace Peggy, with Allen Butler acting in an advisory capacity.

2. Kathy Reis, Town of Westcliffe, updated the Committee on 1A Road and Bridge Mill Levy increase to appear on November's ballot. Kathy reviewed past and current expenses, the decrease in the number of personnel over the past 10 years, the consequences if the Mill Levy is defeated, the current equipment the County has and the need to replace older equipment, and the benefits to both Towns if the Mill Levy passes.

Cindy Howard discussed the 1B Lodging Tax initiative which will also appear on November's ballot. A 2% lodging tax is proposed, which is the maximum that can be collected by law. If passed, the revenue received by Custer County will be solely used to promote tourism in the county. The revenue is to be used exclusively for advertising and marketing of local tourism. Cindy pointed out the marketing benefits to everyone.

A public meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2007, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the meeting room at Cliff Lanes to discuss the Lodging Tax and the Road and Bridge Mill Levy.

3. With the commitment by the Economic Development Committee (EDC) and interested community members in the Community Action Plan (CAP) this year, we do not want to ignore the work the EDC did prior to the intervention of the State Office of Economic Development. Karen Crumbaker reminded the Committee of projects which were in the works: (1) the creation of a website and brochure; (2) County inventory of assets; and (3) measurable goals. The Committee felt the previous projects are being incorporated into the current work being done by the four teams.

4. Karen Crumbaker discussed with the group what the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade expects in November when they return to Custer County for a 6 month follow-up visit following the CAP. An invitation will be sent to all who participated in the CAP in May. The date for the follow-up meeting has not been set; it is expected to last two hours. During that meeting, each team will have an opportunity to report on its progress to date. Afterwards, individuals will break into working groups to discuss what has been done, what needs to be done, and what should be abandoned. The teams will reconvene and report back to the group.

5. Jim Johnson reminded each team to prioritize the recommendations outlined in the Community Action Plan. Many of the recommendations had long-range goals or goals that were more difficult to attain. He suggested each team identify the top three key items on the list.

6. The Business and Community Development, Natural Resources, Human Resources, and Tourism and Marketing teams broke into groups. When the groups reconvened, each group reported on its accomplishments.

(1) **Business and Community Development** – Dee Hoag reported the project with the highest priority was to conduct a community satisfaction survey. The next priority would be the importance of networking among businesses in the County, including the real estate community. Charles Bogle updated the Committee on the progress and criteria to establish a National Veterans Cemetery for Southern Colorado in Custer County.

(2) **Natural Resources** – Lockett Pitman reported that the focus on developing a county-wide water plan continued to be a priority of the team. Robin Young reported (via e-mail) there should be three sub-topics within the Natural Resources team. These are water, agriculture and land use. Robin hopes to divide the Natural Resources team in order to cover these sub-topics over the next few months.

(3) **Human Resources** – Jim Johnson identified three key issues concerning human resources. The first priority is higher education, to develop a bachelor and master degree program. James Malm, Dean of the Division of Continuing Education at CSU-Pueblo, has had discussions with Lance Villers to bring programs to Custer County High School students. The next priority would be to continue to look into viable Elderhostel Programs in the County. Dina Meeks has been working with Jim Johnson on this project. Next, affordable housing is moving forward and the team is watching the progress of Habitat for Humanity. Mike Liebman is waiting for the approval from Habitat for Humanity to begin projects in Custer County.

(4) **Tourism and Marketing** – Angie Arterburn reported that supporting and promoting the Lodging Tax initiative is well on its way. The parties responsible within this team to spearhead the marketing plan will meet next week to begin working on identifying the market area, people, etc. Dana Meeks reported on the efforts of advertising via the internet. He spent a significant amount of time researching various county websites. Dana stressed the importance of linking websites between the towns, the Chamber of Commerce, the County, the Extension office, and the many real estate offices in Custer County.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 29, 2007, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Cliff Lanes.

Submitted by: Karen M. Crumbaker
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