

Custer County Community Economic Development Committee
Minutes - Amended
March 31, 2008

In Attendance: Angela Arterburn, Charles Bogle, Robin Young, Lockett Pittman, Cindy Howard, Carole Custer, Kimberly Stein, Kathy Reis, Lynn Attebery, Wilbur Miller, Nora Drenner, Mike Liebman, Jim Austin, Angela Healy, Wanda Johnson, Bob Senderhauf, Chris Haga, Dee Hoag, Dick Downey, Mike Liebman, and Karen Crumbaker.

I. Karen Crumbaker shared a variety of grant information she received. Extra copies were available. Anyone interested in receiving future grant information should let Karen know and she will e-mail opportunities as they are received.

II. Stephanie Steffens, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, returned to Custer County for a second meeting with the Economic Development Committee following the Community Action Plan created in May, 2007. Stephanie asked each of the four groups report on their accomplishments.

~Tourism and Marketing – Community Leader: Angie Arterburn

- Angie reported that the Lodging Tax passed in Custer County last November.
- With the help of Elizabeth French, Zoning Clerk, a list of websites for Custer County was compiled and handed out at the meeting.
- An updated contact media list was made available to those at the meeting.
- Angie announced 21 individuals from lodging, various restaurants, town and county offices attended the Hospitality Tax seminar on March 26, 2008, in Westcliffe, Colorado. Those in attendance represented a number of neighboring counties, as well as business owners in Custer County.
- The Boat and Trade Show was held in Denver, Colorado on March 6 - 9, 2008. The Getaway group from the Chamber, as well as a couple of other volunteers, were there on Saturday and Sunday helping with the booth. Custer County had a strong showing at this event.

~Business and Community Development – Community Leader: Dee Hoag

- Kathy Reis provided additional information on the County Resident Satisfaction Survey being done. Out of the 6,238 surveys sent out, 232 had been received. Kathy expected the information from the survey to be compiled by May 1, 2008.
- Beginning May 1, 2008, a tourism survey will take place in Custer County.
- Charles gave a report regarding the National Veteran's Cemetery effort. Custer County has been chosen as one of eleven potential sites for the Colorado National Veteran's Cemetery. A landowner in the south part of the county has offered to

gift 930 acres for the site. The Committee for the National Veteran's Cemetery will visit the site now that the snow has melted. The cemetery administration's 2009 budget requests money and special permission to start shopping for land to expand cemetery space in Colorado, which may lessen the time to choose and establish a Veteran's Cemetery than initially expected.

~**Natural Resources** – Community Leader: Robin Young

- **Renewable Energy:**

The prefeasibility study from BEREC (Biomass Energy Resource Center) to the Custer County Schools is done. The study shows promising preliminary figures that suggest we move forward with a full feasibility study. Funding for that is the next obstacle, but Stephanie Steffens said there is funding from the EDC to show there is potential to help the local businesses. Robin will get in touch with Stephanie.

- **Water:**

Terry Scanga is to have the final draft of the water augmentation plan to the Custer County Commissioners by the 4th quarter. It will take 3-5 months to present and discuss the plan with the commissioners, and then there will be a public opinion process. Bob Senderhauf has asked for the plan to be reviewed by the commissioners before final approval. Bob asked Commissioner Dick Downey if they could write a letter to Terry Scanga telling him there is still interest and support. Dick said they wrote a letter a while ago with the same information and there was no need to write another one. There is \$150K invested in the plan so far, with costs to write the plan and attorney fees.

In the plan, there are 6-8 different sites for wells that have been monitored for 20 years for depth and gpm. The UAWCD and USGS are the cost sharing entities, and continuing studies with water quality. Ranchers have shown interest in putting water reservoirs on their property and working with UAWCD, but there has to be a trade off, maybe a fishing habitat. Another possible option would be Lake DeWeese storage upgrade, possibly enlarge a 2'-4' cap and reinforce the bottom. This has to be in conjunction with Lake DeWeese Dye and Ditch Company, DOW, and USGS for approval and hopefully there would be cost sharing. A 2' cap was done in the past to enlarge the lake; this would help with less transfer evaporation loss as opposed to Pueblo Reservoir. Grape Creek could possibly be another storage upgrade. Sites in Fremont and Chaffee counties are being considered for upgraded storage as well. Custer County could possibly see the most sophisticated water augmentation plan in the State. Another possible is Pueblo Reservoir Partners. We need proper management of our water.

- **Agriculture:**

Mike Sheilds was not in attendance to submit a report; Wilber Miller attended but needed to leave early. Robin will contact them to discuss April's meeting.

- **New Item:**

Oil and uranium exploration in Custer County was brought up for discussion. There was uranium exploration in the 70's and it could possibly happen again under House Bills 1098 and 1341. Oil and gas exploration needs to be watched. Maintaining the balance is important. Cindy Howard and Lockett Pitman said they would talk to JD Henrich in the Assessor's office to find out about where these explorations could take place. We need to explore what options we have to reduce the negative impacts and how we can cooperate with all entities involved.

Stephanie Steffens mentioned that oil and gas exploration was taking place in the San Louis Valley. There was a meeting in March to discuss how to work to decrease the negative impacts on the environment while taking advantage of the positive impact on the local economy. Stephanie stressed it is best not to wait until work begins to act on what the impacts may be. The contact person in the San Louis Valley is Chris Canaly, Executive Director of the SLV Eco-System Council, (719) 256-4758 for additional information.

~Human Resources – Community Leader: Kimberly Stein

- Kimberly Stein briefed the group on the work being done to attract a junior technical and trade school to the area.
- Jim and Helen Johnson are continuing their research on the possibility of an Elderhostel in Custer County.
- A housing related program and what is available in Custer County will take place on April 29, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at Cliff Lanes meeting room. This program is being presented by the Upper Arkansas Area Council of Government.

III. Stephanie Steffens will return to Custer County on October 27, 2008, to work with the Economic Development Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00pm

Next meeting: April 28, 2008, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Cliff Lanes meeting room.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Crumbaker
CSU Custer County Extension
(Minutes 3-31-08)