

Chaffee Common Ground – Citizens Advisory Committee (CCG-CAC)

Minutes from Meeting on Friday April 8, 2022

Meeting Called to order at 9:04 a.m.

CCG-CAC Members present: (all attending virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic) Cindy Williams, Michael Hannigan, Dan Omasta, Sydney Schnurr, Brink Messick and Ben Lenth. Also present Greg Felt BOCC liaison and Ben Doon, Administrative Support.

CCG-CAC Members absent: Kit Kuester

Agenda review

Cindy reviewed the agenda. Ben D will provide a sales tax collection/financial update. Ben L will facilitate a conversation about Committee member involvement with applicants that have questions during the grant cycle. Committee members can provide feedback or ask questions about the videos Kim put together about the CWPP and Chaffee Rec Plan. Finally individual proposals will be reviewed. The group will look at applications with evaluation questions that have wide-ranging scores to try to bring down the standard deviation and conduct a high-level review to determine if any follow-up questions need to be asked to the applicant or SMEs.

Approval of minutes from previous meeting and approval of agenda

April 8, 2022 agenda and February 28, 2022 minutes were approved as presented. Motion Michael. Second Dan. Vote unanimous.

Sales tax collection/financial update

Ben D said he met with Rick for about two hours on March 30th to update Rick's spreadsheets that track expenditures and track and forecast sales tax collections. He said sales tax collections have cooled-off from the consistent 15-20% increases from the previous year that we have seen for some time now. November 2021 collections landed in the county accounts in January 2022 and were about 20% higher than what was collected in November 2020, however, the collections from December 2021 and January 2022 were 9% and 7% higher respectively. In addition, there was a \$150,000 tax refund given to the Live Nation concert promoter that negatively impacted the January 2022 collections, so in actual numbers, the January 2022 collections were a -7% over the previous year due to the refund. Sales tax received in the first three months of 2022 is \$356k. This is \$10,000 lower than what was projected with 10% growth and \$42,000 lower than what was projected with 20% growth. It is possible that there will be less than the originally anticipated \$800,000 available for this grant cycle. The February 2022 sales tax collections should land in the county's accounts around April 18th.

Board involvement/pre-review of applications

Ben L said a question about the budget template was brought to him. He said that GOCO's current approach is more of a collaborative process. Grantees are partners to an extent. He said it can be valuable to provide input and share knowledge in an equitable way, but not in a way that creates conflicts.

Cindy said she and Ben D have had conversations with applicants. She feels a conversation with a couple of people is more appropriate than an applicant giving a presentation at a meeting or involving the full Committee.

Dan said that GOCO has moved toward a more flexible process involving a program officer working with partners. He believes in the end this process creates better projects.

Michael said the Committee has empowered Ben D to work with applicants. He said the Committee may want to consider clarifying the directive to have him act more like a program officer.

Greg said he has struggled with due process designed to deal with the lowest common denominator. He said the group can't afford to risk credibility or compromise due process, but he is supportive of getting the best projects possible.

Cindy said there are groups such as the Forest Health Council, the Rec Council and the Ag Dinner event where conversations have taken place about what kinds of projects could fit.

Ben L said he felt that some of the applications this year were not final products and there were applications where the rubrics just didn't fit as well.

Michael said this was an unusual round of grant applications and there were more outlier proposals than in the past.

Syd said some of the evaluation forms didn't match well with the proposals and she had trouble ranking them because they didn't fit well within the guidelines.

Brink said from his experience as an applicant, there are usually presentations involved with grants of this scale.

Ben L said he is not looking for resolution of this issue at this time, but he wanted to bring it up and reconsider some of these issues in the future.

CWPP and Chaffe Rec Plan videos and polling data

Kim sent an email to Ben D stating she was asked to present on the CWPP and Chaffee Rec Plan objectives and tools, but she's not able to make the April 8 meeting so she made videos on these topics for the Committee Members. The idea for the review is to support upcoming scoring, especially for the new committee members.

Michael said the videos were very helpful.

Dan suggested considering a new survey at the end of 5 years to gauge community preferences. This can help to be more flexible and adaptive as grant makers. The current survey is pre-COVID and things have changed since then.

Cindy said there are plans to update the Rec Survey.

Review of application evaluations

Chaffee County Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration Assessment for Forest and Watershed Health

Greg said he ranked this application high and the project could lead to some incredible benefits for watershed health, but he wants to acknowledge that this could be on a collision course with water rights legislation. Big picture this could be beneficial to the watershed and water supply, but increasing evaporative surfaces and riparian vegetation could impact peak flow. Seeing pushback where there is tight water administration.

Dan said he had the same concern involving junior water rights and timing. The proposal is a planning grant to identify sites, stakeholder and conduct outreach.

Cindy was looking for details on the plan to engage stakeholders including the State Engineer's Office and the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District.

Michael said due to this being a planning grant he initially gave it a lower score since the impacts are either perceived or potential.

Syd said she was unsure how to score it since it is a planning proposal and the outcomes because of the project are down the road.

Dan also questioned how to score a planning proposal versus an implementation project.

Michael said he looks at whether he believes the applicant can move it from plan to reality based on capacity and track record.

Ben L said this set of techniques is gaining momentum. USDA NRCS just added it to the EQIP schedule of activities. It is a topical and relevant planning effort.

Dan said the treatment areas can support ag through grass production and stock water and it can benefit water management. These are real techniques that can have an impact on water quality.

Cindy said it would be interesting to connect these folks to the VENCE project. She said there are more than 5 organizations involved in the project.

GARNA Porta-Potties on Public Land

Cindy said there are a lack of restrooms on public lands. This proposal is for a series of porta-potties across public lands spaces for 3-years. The USFS and BLM are undergoing NEPA for a Camping Plan that could provide a more permanent solution for this problem.

Dan said he likes the project. It addresses key objectives of the Rec Plan. It's a stop-gap until a long-term solution can be addressed.

Cindy said the rubric is tied to campsites. There are more than 2,800 in the county. Human waste management is a big issue for the Rec Council.

Greg said after 3-years there will be a data set to address more permanent solutions.

Dan said this could help address the rec/ag conflict by having less people go further off trail and off campsite which can create more impacts to grazing areas.

Ben L said he scored some of these impacts lower because the activity will happen at trailheads and not further up.

Michael said the off-trail/off-campsite use might degrade grazing areas, but there is no grazing in areas where the porta-potties will go.

Syd said she didn't know how to figure out acres impacted since the applicant didn't provide any numbers.

Michael said the applicant was fuzzy on this question.

Ben L said he gave it a low score for wildlife since these trailhead/camping areas are already impacted and people will continue to be at these sites even with porta-potties.

Cindy said the habitat map shows these areas with a higher percent of winter range.

Ben L said he didn't see how the metrics would be measured.

Cindy said she assumed they would get data on volume from the sanitary company.

Ben D will check the cash match, in-kind match and administrative costs for all the evaluations to make sure the scores are consistent with the numbers in the budget spreadsheets.

Salida Seed Library

Michael said seed libraries are a good thing but usually more geared towards gardeners than ag producers, farmers and ranchers.

Dan asked if it might start a precedent of funding small projects for small growers rather than larger ag production.

Greg said the program goal is to deal with landscape challenges.

Crippen's Processing

Cindy said local livestock processing and process capacity is a key priority for ag operators and an important need.

Greg said a Needs Assessment is what is missing.

Dan received clarification that the project involves processing and slaughter.

Greg said any future sight for slaughter will need to be in an industrially zoned area with access to water and sewer.

Dan said the Forest Health and Rec Impacts Management considerations don't really fit-in here, but this could have a big impact to the ag community.

Michael said he gave it a low score, but sees it as an important project.

Cindy said the applicant didn't answer some of the questions, but you can make assumptions that if the project is successful, it could support the sustainability of ag lands.

Michael suggested Ben D reach out to the applicant to see if they can build-out their responses to narrative questions 2-7 and speak to how the project would leverage with other grants.

CCFPD Wildland Mitigation Coordinator

Cindy said the proposal is for a staff position with the Chaffee County Fire Protection District to help sustain special programs like Chaffee Chips and the Burning Together program for ag lands.

Brink said he was conflicted about the benefits because these programs are already there and already funded. He did not see new benefits.

Dan said he saw overlap with the Fire Camp proposal. He said there are a lot of resources available from the state and feds for fire.

Cindy said most of the available funding out there is for treatment. This proposal is for a local staff position. She said a proposal like this could benefit more people than a specific treatment project.

Cindy suggested Ben D reach out to the applicant to see which is the priority, the staff position or the purchase of the UTV. Explain the need for the two. If the staff position is not funded, what impact would it have on Chaffee Chips and Burning Together. Ask about acres impacted.

Guidestone/Hutchinson Ranch Partnership

Michael thought this proposal might be peripheral to the big three program areas.

Cindy said this could put a lot of dollars in the hands of one ag operator. The property is already under a conservation easement.

Syd was unsure about the cost benefit question.

SMT Strategic Trails Plan for Chaffee County

Cindy recused herself from rating this application and from the conversation about the proposal.

Michael Hannigan, Vice-Chair, led the discussion about this application.

Michael asked if Salida Mountain Trails (SMT) is the right entity to manage it. It may make rec impacts more difficult to manage.

Dan said a trails conditions assessment is relevant. He would like to see the full project budget, not just the Common Ground elements. Include municipalities and not just public lands.

Greg was surprised how low building more trails ranked in the 2018 survey. That data might need to be refreshed given growth and what has happened since COVID.

Dan said the group running it advocates for more trails.

Syd doesn't want to fund new trails.

Brink said there has never been a comprehensive plan for trails in this area. Things are being piecemealed and it has been a bit backwards. Planning will be beneficial. We are not going to stop seeing new trail proposals. He would have concerns if SMT managed the project, but it will be contracted out. The Outside 285 effort had a third-party manage the project and it went very well.

Cindy suggested reaching out to CPW to ask for comments about impacts to local wildlife populations

Other Business

Syd asked if the feature in the grants portal that allows the reviewers to see other people's comments and scores can be enabled. Ben D will look into it.

Next Steps

An additional meeting to finalize the funding recommendations has been scheduled for Wednesday May 4th from 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. The Board of County Commissioners will now consider the recommendations on Tuesday May 10th. This was originally planned for Tuesday May 3rd.

The next meeting to continue reviewing proposals and evaluations is Wednesday April 13th from 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.