

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

Minutes from Meeting on Wednesday May 4, 2022

Meeting Called to order at 9:03 a.m.

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

CCG-CAC Members absent: Brink Messick

Agenda review

Cindy reviewed the agenda. The main item is to agree on funding recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Approval of minutes from previous meeting and approval of agenda

May 4, 2022 agenda was approved as presented. April 13, 2022 minutes were approved as presented. Motion Michael. Second Dan. Vote unanimous.

Sales tax collection update

Ben D said the sales tax collected in February that landed in the county's accounts in April were 5% over the 2021 collections. There was doubled digit growth in 27 of the last 30 months and that growth was regularly between 15% and 20% above the previous year. That trend continues to cool down. Sales tax growth has been between 5% and 9% the past three months and due to a refund, the tax collected in January that landed in the accounts in March was -7% from 2021. The March 2022 collections are due to hit the county's accounts in mid-May before checks go out for this current grant cycle. With 0% growth over March 2021 there will be \$776,626 in unallocated funds in the Common Ground accounts. With 5% growth there will be \$782,655 in the accounts for this grant cycle.

Review of application evaluations and agree on funding recommendations

Cindy shared her screen and presented a spreadsheet with two tabs. One tab has all the scores for each application by evaluator with average score and rank from 1-14. The other tab summarizes the scores and includes average score, rank, request amount, minimum request amount and request by year along with Committee comments.

The top 10 rated applications can be fully funded in 2022 for \$615,000. Proposals ranked 11-13 have scores a step below the top ten and will require more discussion on whether to fully fund, partially fund or provide no funding. The Salida Seed Library proposal was ranked 14th and had the lowest score by a fairly wide margin. This application will likely not be funded. There are also five mini-grant proposals with a total request amount of \$22,326.

Kim stated that to date 60% of the Common Ground grant awards have gone to Forest Health projects. 33% have gone to Sustainable Ag projects and 7% have gone to Recreation Impact Management projects.

Greg stated that forest health plays a role in the viability of ag and recreation. A catastrophic wildlife could have very negative impacts on agriculture and recreation activities.

Chaffee County Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration Assessment for Forest & Watershed Health
Average score – 75%. Rank #1.

Greg said he spoke with Emily Olsen with the National Forest Foundation about his concerns regarding water rights impacts with this project. He said there is a lot of discussion and movement both locally and with the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Department of Natural Resources about how these projects may or may not impact water rights. He said there is a lot of agreement that these types of projects can be beneficial and a lot of discussion about potential impacts to water rights. He said his initial concerns about water rights related to this project have been addressed.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

GARNA Porta-Potties on Public Lands
Average score – 67%. Rank #2

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Upper Arkansas Virtual Fencing - VENCE
Average score – 67%. Rank #2

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

M&S Quarry water point project
Average score – 65%. Rank #4.

Ben L had questions about water rights and well permits during the previous discussion. Ben D reached out to the applicant and provided their response to the water rights question to the Committee. Syd suggested having funding contingent on some kind of written acknowledgement about water rights and a well permit. Ben L said the answers provided were a little murky to him, but the water rights are owned by the US Forest Service and he assumes the feds will know what they need to do to stay in compliance with well permits and water rights.

Kim said this project could be a sustainable ag program or a recreation impacts program. Cindy said it was identified as a priority in the Chaffee Rec Plan.

Ben L said the proposal was presented by an ag producer perspective.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Colorado Firecamp Forestry & Prescribed Fire Module project

Average score – 63%. Rank #5.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Whipple Trail Restoration Project

Average score – 61%. Rank #6.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

CCFPD Wildland/Mitigation Coordinator

Average score – 61%. Rank #6.

The Committee suggested that funding for year three of this project be contingent on a budgeted line item for this position in the Chaffee County Fire Protection District's budget.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Mesa Antero Fuels Reduction Project

Average score – 60%. Rank #8.

Cindy suggested recommending that the applicant avoid proposing additional spending in this area as a lot has been invested already. Greg said the minimum request is \$140,000 as opposed to \$202,000 and he asked what would be accomplished if the minimum request was granted. Cindy said if less funding is granted there would be less acres and less miles of road treated. She said 17 landowners have signed-up according to the applicant. Ben L said he is still hung-up on the budget and the fact that landowners aren't providing any matching funds. He understands that this is an important and strategic project, but it will enhance private property values. He understands that equity is not a program goal, but he still feels uneasy about it.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Missouri Park Ditch Bank Vegetation Management

Average score – 60%. Rank #8.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Enhancing Watershed & Forest Health Through the Monarch Park Improvement Project

Average score = 58%. Rank #10.

Cindy noted that there were previous concerns about the high cost of mitigation per campsite, but a number of activities are included in the proposal such as sediment reduction in the adjacent ponds. Ben L said the minimum request is \$55k as opposed to \$60k and suggested keeping that \$5k in mind if some additional funds are needed elsewhere.

Unanimous agreement that the project should be fully funded.

Cindy said with fully funding these top ten applications the cost would be \$615k for 2022; \$173k for 2023 and \$79k for 2024. The group decided to postpone a formal vote on these recommendations until all the proposals had been discussed.

Mini-Grants

Soil Health and Grazing Speaker Series

Unanimous agreement that the \$5,000 request should be fully funded.

SMT Portable Toilets on 3 Trailheads

Cindy said this project was funded two years ago and part of the deliverables was for SMT to develop new sources of matching funds and that has not happened.

Greg said the previous grant was conditioned on finding long-term solutions to the human waste problem. This is a temporary fix and a better solution is needed. No sign that they have planned for the future.

Michael said they did not meet the terms of the previous grant.

Syd said this is still a big issue and a big challenge.

Greg suggested partial funding to provide leverage to find solutions. He can't deny that there are problems in the field and he doesn't want to lose leverage.

Syd said from a fundraising standpoint this is strong.

Cindy suggested providing a grant of \$2,500 on the condition that SMT will raise the other \$2,500.

Unanimous agreement to provide a partial grant of \$2,500.

Chubb Park Dispersed Camping Clean-up

Unanimous agreement that the \$5,000 request should be fully funded.

Shavano Front Public Perceptions of Mitigation Activities

The Committee has concerns about the expense per person and the effectiveness of sending surveys through the US Mail.

Michael said the US Mail is very slow and inefficient.

Ben L questioned the need for additional data about public perceptions on mitigation work. He believes most of the data is already there and he doesn't expect to see a change in the understanding of the values.

Ben D said this proposal was offered a partial grant in the last round and it was rejected by the applicant because they said they were unable to complete the required work with partial funding.

Kit said the money could be used better elsewhere and the project seems redundant.

Kim said a similar survey was done in Chalk Creek and it would be good to know how that study has been used effectively.

Unanimous agreement not to fund the project.

Farm to Table Berry Patch Project

Cindy said the idea of partial funding through a challenge grant was discussed last time. The request is \$4,000

Michael said this proposal is a good fit for a \$2,000 challenge grant.

Unanimous agreement to offer a \$2,000 grant on the condition that the additional \$2,000 can be raised.

The cost of funding two mini-grant fully and two partially is \$14,500.

Applications ranked 11-13

Michael said there is a lot of strength in the scoring rubrics and low scores may not qualify for funding.

SMT Strategic Trails Plan for Chaffee County

Average score =54%. Rank #11.

The Committee has concerns about the site analysis/wildlife review portion of the proposal which costs \$20,000. There is a good model already in place with the CPW Wildlife Tool.

Greg said the Wildlife Tool is being introduced across the region. Trail advocates and motorized trail users hired a consultant to basically undermine the Wildlife Tool. He said it is not hard to hire people to

get the opinions that you want. CPW's reaction was borderline outrage. He is concerned that the wildlife review would be used to usurp and undermine the Wildlife Tool. It is not just CPW biologists involved with the Wildlife Tool, but also USFS and BLM biologists. If this analysis of wildlife impacts doesn't concur with CPW, USFS and BLM, it could create a mess. There is concern about this being an end run on NEPA. Trails assessments and planning are very important, but he doesn't want to fund something that undermines investments that have already been made.

Michael said he shares these concerns.

Ben L said Common Ground's participation in the process might give us some influence. It's not all about new trails. The outside consultant is critical. It could be overreach for Common Ground, but he'd like to be a part of the vetting of the personnel. He appreciates the concerns expressed, but it is important and planning processes are only as strong as the participation.

Dan suggested approaching them to re-envision the ask. The project is less urgent and not much work would be done this summer. He'd like to see a more robust package of what they want to do. CPW Regional Partnerships and GOCO also fund this kind of planning work. August would be the next time they could submit a proposal to GOCO.

Cindy said Envision has been approached about using \$10,000 from their existing allocation from their CPW Regional Partnerships award as a first step for assessments.

Dan suggested funding the trail conditions assessment part to get the project moving forward.

Cindy said there is a desire from CPW to maintain what we currently have, to see the entire network and understand what has been developed the last ten years and why.

Ben L said he is looking for proof of concept. Are they able to look at the entire trail network in the county and not just the mountain bike trails around Salida?

Greg said the assessment needs to include not just trails, but also parking, infrastructure and bathroom facilities. There are a lot of infrastructure needs and safety concerns beyond just the trails. He wants to see a bigger picture design and funding plan.

Dan suggested funding consultant time and the assessment.

Cindy said the trails assessment portion of the budget is \$20,000.

Dan suggested funding the \$30,000 minimum request for the assessment and to get the consultant going on outreach.

Michael suggested providing the applicant feedback to repackage and refocus the proposal. He prefers a tabled no for now.

Cindy said there are two options. Option A is to partially fund the request and Option B is to tabled it and provide feedback for a new proposal next round.

Greg said given this discussion, he would like to fully fund the mini-grant proposal for the porta-potties. He would like to challenge SMT to focus on the bigger picture question and not just solutions for a couple of bathroom facilities.

Unanimous agreement to fully fund the SMT porta-potties mini-grant proposal.

Cindy would like to see a revised proposal with better clarification.

Kim said the Committee has questions about the scope of the project. There is concern about how the Wildlife Tool fits or doesn't, but there is support for the assessment of trails and support for maintenance and infrastructure.

Dan said he'd like to see the applicant address how the project ties-in to existing initiatives like the National Forest Foundation's 14ers Initiative. If they come back with a more dialed-in proposal, it can be helpful in the long-term.

Greg suggested providing feedback in a conversational setting, not just an emailed note. He'd like to see engagement with applicants to help craft proposals.

Michael suggested engaging applicants before proposals are submitted in the portal. Maybe create a subcommittee to do this.

Unanimous agreement to not fund the proposal at this time.

Keeping Working Lands Viable: Strengthening the Guidestone Colorado - Hutchinson Ranch Partnership

Average score = 47%. Rank – #12.

Michael said the project itself seems peripheral to the big goals of the sustainable ag program. He said the proposal looks more like a capital campaign for bricks and mortar.

Syd said the proposal doesn't address how much this project would add to the bottom line.

Ben L said it seems like a murky fit with the capital equipment policy.

Unanimous agreement to not fund the proposal.

Professional Fee's and Studies for Crippen's Processing Expansion to Slaughtering Project

Average score = 47%. Rank – #12.

Syd and Kit said the project has merit, but it doesn't fit the rubric very well.

Cindy agreed and also said this is a priority identified by the ag community.

Ben L said he'd be more comfortable supporting the proposal if it came through another organization like the Cattlemen's Association. He'd like to see an emphasis on partnerships and use an ag organization as a fiscal agent. He's uncomfortable with public dollars going to a private enterprise.

Unanimous agreement to not fund the proposal at this time.

Salida Seed Library Expansion and Infrastructure Improvements

Average score = 32%. Rank – #14.

Agreement that the proposal is not a fit for the sustainable ag program goals.

Unanimous agreement not to fund the proposal.

Final Funding Recommendation

The top 10 ranked proposals fully funded and four mini-grants are being considered for recommended funding for a total cost of \$890,005. \$633,020 will be distributed in 2022. \$179,036 for 2023 and \$78,949 in 2024. Three mini-grants are being considered for full funding at \$5,000 each and one mini-grant is being considered for partial funding for \$2,000.

Unanimous vote to support the proposed funding package.

Other Business

Kim will work on a document to be included in the Commissioners' work session packet for Monday May 9th. Ben D and Michael will present the information to the Commissioners at the work session. It is expected to be heard at 10:45 on Monday. The funding recommendations are currently scheduled on the consent agenda for the BOCC meeting on Tuesday May 10th. If any of the Commissioners want to have additional discussion, it may be moved off the consent agenda to a regular agenda item on Tuesday. Greg will inform Ben D and Cindy if the Commissioners plan to have additional discussion about the funding recommendations on Tuesday.

Next Steps

The Board of County Commissioners will hear the recommendations and discuss them at a work session on Monday May 9th and consider the recommendations for approval at their regular meeting on Tuesday May 10th. The Committee will take a break from meeting and reconvene in a couple of months.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.