

5/19/2025 CAC Meeting
Chaffee County's Common Ground Program

Attendance:

Committee: Ben Lenth, Sydney Schnurr, Paul Muelle, Jim LaRue, Joe Stone

Staff: Chaffee County – Miles Cottom, Gabe Hobson,

CCCF – Betsy Dittenber, Anna Hendricks

2:04 – Meeting Called to Order by Ben Lenth. Discussed adjusted the agenda to accommodate schedules

2:05 – Guest introductions:

- Gabe Hobson – Senior Planner Long Term Implementation
- Bethany Freeman, USFS
- Casey Martin, Envision Chaffee County Legal Counsel
- Guinnevere, Mountain Mail
- Scott Gillilan, Candidate for open vacancy
- Jan Wondra, Ark Valley Voice

2:08 – Envision Transition Update, Miles Cottom

- Re-stated that Gabe Hobson will be the planning staff liaison that coordinated with the CAC, Commissioner Lucrezi is Commissioner Liaison. Gabe will be a point person to be able to answer questions and offer ability to check-in on various projects. CCCF will be the coordinating entity to facilitate the committee.

- As far as Envision update, County is not able to give an update at this time because there will be items on the upcoming Commissioners meeting agenda. Looking forward to offering a clearer update at the next CAC meeting.

- Ben Lenth notes that the grant agreements do not currently require notice if entity status or leadership changes occur to notify the CAC. The role of the committee is to vet projects and want to make sure they are in the loop on grantee status. Hope to incorporate into future grant agreements.

- CAC would like to invite Envision representatives to attend the June meeting.

2:15 – Minutes Approval – First from Syd, 2nd from Paul – Unanimous approval

2:15 – Chaffee CHIPS Partnership Proposal

- Chief Jones: Jeff's position (in the proposal) does several activities beyond just the events - including cost assessment for mitigation work, connects with community members, checks that numbers reported to envision is accurate, checks pile size, number and location to formulate a plan to pick up the piles. Coordinates with Forest Service on less accessible areas. Additionally connects with communities that are not selected for the Chaffee CHIPS events to do mini events in neighborhoods.

- CCFPD has been committed to the mitigation program since 2018 and will continue to do the program.

- Questions from the Committee:

- Wildland Fire Coordinator: How much of the position is allocated to the program? A – Hard to put a percentage specifically to the Chaffee CHIPS events. Position is dedicated to supportive work and the events themselves create a significant number of work following the events. Following each event, he responds to owner inquiries and offer free estimates. While the events target specific areas, the surrounding or not included communities submit requests for trailers. Sometimes the pickup extends beyond the events. At least 50% of Jeff's job relates around the Chaffee CHIPS event. The salary in the budget includes salary and benefits but does not include time off costs.

- Is the Fire District assuming tasks that were formerly Envision roles? A – Sign-up portion goes through Envisions website. Jeff attends all community events with Envision. It's been gray as to who does what. CCFPD can't speak to Envisions role. CCFPD does community contact through social media accounts, attends HOA meetings, and Jeff is on the decision-making committee that selects the events.

- Is this project contingent on Envisions status? CCFPD is ready and will continue to do this work. They were caught off guard by Envision's cancellation of the event in April as they were ready to do the events. We are trying to do the best we can for the community. The mitigation program will continue with or without Envision. CCFPD is fielding a lot of the PR outreach. Regardless of what happens, the mitigation program will continue as far as CCFPD is concerned.

- County staff indicated that the County is committed to proceeding with the Chaffee CHIPS program, with more details to come soon on the Envision entity status. Casey Martin asked how have neighborhoods and individuals signed up in the past? CCFPD indicated that while there has been confusion on who is responsible for what, Envision has typically hosted the sign-up link on their website. People who haven't done that – Jeff assists personally. Casey clarified that Envision has coordinated the sign-ups and communication/marketing for the

project. There is more working out as to how the programs get transitioned. Envision's goal is for the programs to continue and get better.

- CCCF clarified that the question in front of the committee is determining the staffing portion of the budget.

2:33 – CAC indicated that they need more information on what percentage of the position is dedicated to this grant. Chief Jones will need to track information on hours dedicated to the events specifically. Will share with Betsy, CCCF. Concerns expressed about timing of the funding given the time sensitive nature of the program. CAC asked if CCFPD could operate without the grant. CCFPD responded that they are counting on the grant funds, but can continue working on the project in the meantime. Decision will be referred to the June Meeting.

2:36 – Casey Martin asked if this is a new grant or a grant that was previously awarded to Envision. Ben clarified that changes to the grant recipient should stem from the original applicant.

2:38 – NFF Grant Update: CCCF clarified that they will be presenting at the June meeting.

2:39 – UACD Rangeland Project Updates: No funds have currently been spent due to forest service staff turnover. Projects require archeology surveys and due to low staffing, they have not been able to do so. Change requests are:

- Timeline request: Extend to 9/30/2026 – allows permittees 2 summers to complete. Permittees are anticipating completing this summer, but challenges and delays may come up. One last archeology survey needs to be completed and should be done tomorrow.

- Budget changes: The bear creek culverts will no longer be happening because the culverts would be outside of Chaffee. Requesting to move to cattle guard cleanings due to increase cost of cleanings, another line item. Fencing and installation of cattleguards costs have increased since the grant was requested. Signs will not be completed due to staffing concerns and requesting to move that line item to the cattleguard costs. The wildlife fence project was at \$4,100 – to be increased to \$4,400. Browns well increased from \$15,000 to \$20,000. Cattle guard maintenance moved from \$7,400 to \$24,800 based on engineers estimate.

- Deliverables: Two of the archeology surveys are done. Materials will be purchased. The Brown's creek well survey is done, waiting on scheduling and weather. The cattle guard cleanings will be contracted out pending the CACs decision. Cleaning was previously \$1,300 and now is \$2,400. There is also an increase in the amount of cattleguards that could be cleaned.

· CAC requested changes in writing. Bethany indicated that requesting the changes would not slow down the project. The remaining \$25,000 would go to cattle guard cleanings, which would be better to do sooner rather than later as cows are beginning to go into pastures.

2:49 – Agricultural Initiative Update, Miles Cottom (filling in for Gina Lucrezi). County is finalizing scheduling of two open house discussions taking place next week – Tuesday and Thursday evening. Goal is to solicit input. Communications to go out tomorrow after confirming logistics. Hope to compile information from the meetings by end of June. There will also be an online survey for folks who can't make the meetings.

Questions: What is the goal in doing the events/survey?

A: To solicit input about the agricultural initiative or more accurately the working lands resilience plan and coordinator position. Goal is to take this out to a broader field of those impacted to get a sense of what does the county need to know to be successful in this initiative. This is a first round of collecting input on the concept.

Q: Has the CAC received a pre-application specific to this concept from Central Colorado Conservancy, Cattleman's association, or UACD?

It does not appear that anyone has applied on the agricultural initiative concept specifically. The CAC would prefer to see requests for use of funds to come through as an application. Miles Cottom clarified that requests do need to come in front of the committee, but do not need to be in an application format to receive the recommendation. The CAC's input/Recommendation does not need to look like a yes/no, but could be input on a proposal or thinking of things that need to be considered in approaches. Things like how to get the best public outreach, not being in direct competition to another project, or who should be engaged in the project. CAC's role is not going to always be a yes/no, but consideration of broader impact and considerations of a project can voice recommendations on elements to consider. A recommendation that a proposal go through a=na application process is of course a valid recommendation but it does not need to be limited to that.

3:01 – Discussion on funding allocations

Ben L: There is a little tension between CACs ability to run the competitive grant cycle and the funds that the County has earmarked as potentially for the ag initiative. We recognize the initiative has value, but this is our smallest amount of funds available for a grant cycle and the CAC is interested in providing as much funds as possible. A part of our job is to consider the earmark and to see if we can recommend effective allocation of funds to meet the needs of the grant cycle. Can we pull funds back into the grant cycle until there is more details or a proposal?

It was clarified that the request for fund allocation would go to the commissioners. Ben requested input from the committee on best way to manage the priorities of the common ground demands. The CAC weighed the total amount of grant asks (1,357,571 total requested as of meeting date and \$791,171 in ag), timing of the hard expenses of ag initiative program, and the current forecast of funds available. Consensus was that it would be good to invest the funds in the ag community now with proposals that are ready to go. It's good to "get the funds out and get them working."

Motion was made to request to increase the budget available for the 2025 grant Cycle by \$150,000. CAC voted to approve a recommendation to increase the grant funds available in the 2025 competitive grants in the amount of \$150,000.

3:14 – Update of Pre-Application

Anna provided an overview of the pre-application process. Just over 1.3 million in requests. Only 5 have been pre-approved and we are still reviewing the last minute requests that came in. The CAC can expect more emails in the next few days. Anna created a summary document to see the requests, amounts, grant period, and status. Document will be sent out as soon as possible to CAC Members. The Agricultural turn-out in the pre-application was really positive and CCCF indicated they were pleased with the results on the outreach efforts.

3:17 – Miles Cottom shared that he is departing and Tara is now the host.

3:20 – Committee discussed adjusting the meeting times for the review meetings and moved the Monday meetings to 10 am.

3:23 – Multi-Year Grant Updates

Betsy asked the CAC for confirmation of what steps should be followed on multi-year proposals. CAC confirmed that all multi-year proposals should come to the full committee. Betsy suggested that the Committee could approve if all the materials are submitted, in compliance and straight forward without an in-person update. If there are any questions or major red flags then they would be requested to come in for an in-person update on the project. Going forward the CAC will get a full packet on all pending multi-year grants including past reports.

Betsy gave an overview of the status of contacting the backlogged multi-year or pending grants.

3:31 – Position vacancies

The CAC discussed questions that they would like the Commissioners to consider as they are reviewing and appointing people to the vacancies. The CAC recommended the BOCC take the

following areas into considerations when interviewing candidates for the Citizen Advisory Committee vacancies:

In the role of providing input on the administration of the Common Ground Tax Program fund disbursements, the CAC benefits from individuals with experience, knowledge and connections to the community. Ideal candidates will be able to leverage all three of these areas to offer meaningful recommendations to the BOCC.

Candidates with local recreation experience and knowledge would offer balance to the existing members.

It is important for candidates to understand that while 15 hours per month is an accurate estimate, the time commitment increases during grant review periods to an estimated 30 hours per month. It is critical that candidates are aware that their time and attention will be demanded during the review process.

The CAC also discussed the role of the SME and it was determined that because it is a more fluid program that is there to gain insight when needed, that it does not need to be listed in the job description.

CCCF confirmed they will share the suggestions along with the monthly recommendations to go before the Commissioners.

County staff provided an update on the current applicants.

3:41 Meeting adjourned.