8.26.2025
Chaffee County Common Ground Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

Attendance:

Committee: Ben Lenth, Sydney Schnurr, Joe Stone, Dani Cook, Scott Gillilan, Paul Muelle
Chaffee County Staff: Miles Cottom, Gabe Hobson
CCCF: Betsy Dittenber, Anna Hendricks

12:01 – Meeting commences.

12:01 – Ben begins discussion the grant scenarios for the upcoming year. Betsy D discusses the timing of the upcoming grant cycle. She acknowledges the short time available for reviewing the grant application in 2025. She also explains the need for setting standards for multi-year grants.

  - Option 1: Limited cycle in Spring 2026 for Ag/Water Projects, Full Process in Fall 2026 for 2027 projects for all other categories.
  - Option 2: Host a small grant process in Spring 2026 for full applications.
  - Option 3: Focus review and awards of multi-year projects in Spring 2026 ($1.1 million committed). Host full grant process in Fall 2026 for 2027 projects.

- 12:04 – Ben L brings up the topic of how ag producers feel about a small cycle for ag and water products. Dani C notes that she likes option 3 because it provides the committee and her as a new member time to properly evaluate the process. Paul M notes that he likes option 3 and also thinks the small cycle for ag producers if the grant application process is refined. Sydney S agrees with option 3 noting that it would give time to deconstruct and rebuild the grant application process. She notes she does not like option 2. Scott G notes that he agrees with liking option 3, reflecting Dani S's concerns about being new. Joe S states that he supports option 3 as well.
- 12:10 – Ben L asks Miles C about how the county feels about option 3. Miles notes that county staff leans towards supporting option 3 as well. He points out that there needs to be an evaluation of the multi-year grants and that the additional time would help address those grants. Gabe H agrees that option 3 is a good option because it gives time to refine the process and for the fund to grow rather than allow it to continue to be depleted as taxes come in. Miles ads that the impending Ag Coordinator will help streamline water project proposals.
- 12:13 – Ben L notes that there needs to be details about a press release having good details on the reasoning behind the decision. He calls for a vote, but Dani C brings up the need to address the reserve fund first since they are related. Betsy D agrees and makes a note to vote on it later in the meeting.
- 12:15 – Sydney S asks who is drafting the press release since she would like to review it before it goes out. Betsy D explains the Chaffee County Community Foundation (CCCF) and the Chaffee County Government PR staff will work together

to draft the press release and CCCF will create social media posts and emails newsletters. She adds that the talking points will get cleared through County PR. She offers to allow the CAC to review any announcements before they go out.

12:17 – Ben L begins the discussion about the reporting structure. Anna H explains that that the grant reporting changed by including grant deliverables in the report form to guide the grant recipient to easily and clearly report relevant information. Betsy D adds a line about status of implementation and funding balances. She adds that they would like to see a consistent time of year that grant reports are received and reviewed.

- 12:21 – Sydney S asks if 6 months after the grant is distributed is the correct amount of time to require a report. Betsy D explains that reporting for grants varies widely but 6 months has been the standard for Common Ground and is the expected cadence by grant recipients. Paul M notes that many federal grants require monthly reports. Dani C notes that she thinks quarterly would be a good middle ground. Anna H suggests 6 months is good cadence because it isn’t overly burdensome to the applicant or the CAC but still provides for accountability. Ben L agrees with Anna H.
- 12:25 – Ben L notes that he would like to ask for a more comprehensive budget that gives more context about where they are with spending grant dollars and matching funds. He suggests final budgets be more detailed. Betsy D notes that they have flagged the budget sheet for reformatting and suggests that they (CCCF) can take these suggestions and bring back options for modifying the budget. Anna H adds that cash match and in-kind match are items that may be asked to be included in reporting. Sydney S worries about some grant recipients that might struggle with Excel and doesn’t want to make it too burdensome.
- 12:29 – Scott G argues that the CAC should have the more detail to make sure they can be held accountable. Sydney S states that she mostly means this for the ag grant recipients, suggesting that the new ag coordinator could help with developing budgets. Dani C agrees with Scott G about ensuring that applicants are asked to be accountable. Betsy D suggests that they table the grant budget but plan on asking grant recipients to report on the status of the budget.
- 12:35 – Dani C asks if there needs to be follow up site visits or reports to ensure that work has been completed as described. Ben L agrees that it would be helpful to have site visits or presentations about projects during or after implementation. Scott G agrees that there should be more site visits and suggests having CAC members available to do site visits on a rolling basis. Betsy D suggests developing standards for when site visits should occur. She notes that not all grants should require in person site visits. Sydney S agrees that presentations are helpful. Ben L suggests maps may also be helpful. Miles C agrees that maps would be helpful from the County’s perspective because of the story map they are working on.
- 12:39 – Scott G makes a motion to approve the revisions as discussed. Sydney S seconds the motion. All CAC members in attendance vote unanimously to approve the change.

12:40 – Ben L begins discussion on the reserve policy. Betsy D explains that they (CCCF) have created a draft reserve policy which the CAC can provide input on to shape the policy for their recommendation.

- 12:41 – Dani C suggests that there should be a 2 year timeline for multi-year grants since there is likely to be a 2 year timeline for reviewing the reserve policy. Betsy D shares her thoughts on those topics being separate and distinct policies and that the reserve policy is more directly tied to fluctuations in annual tax revenue.
- 12:42 – Ben L breaks down some calculations of how much reserve might be expected depending on how much tax revenue comes in and what percentage is reserved. He also expresses a need for there to be a balance between investing money and having the liquidity to address needs on an ongoing basis. Sydney S asks about allocation and who approves "interest bearing vehicles" and where the earnings from interest will cover "operational costs and provide stability during tax or revenue fluctuations". She expresses the need to make responsibilities clearer.
- 12:46 – Scott G asks for clarification of "Strategic opportunities requiring extraordinary funding, subject to board approval." Ben L clarifies that it would allow them to continue to offer grants when there is a shortfall in tax revenue.
- 12:48 – Ben L asks Betsy D what she would like to do moving forward. Betsy D notes that she liked Syndey S's points and suggests meeting with her then running revenue projections with County staff before the September meeting. Sydney S asks if the BOCC will pass it in a resolution and the County attorney should review it. Miles C agrees that the County Attorney should review it but notes that the process is moving faster currently.

12:50 – Ben L returns to the grant cycle review. Dani C makes a motion to approve option 3. Paul M seconds the motion. All CAC members in attendance vote unanimously to approve option 3.

12:52 – Ben L begins discussion on priority and initiative projects and what process there should be for providing feedback on proposed initiatives, adding that they need this specifically for the working lands initiative and other initiatives moving forward.

- 12:53 – Scott G asks Ben L to point out the gaps in communication that he has observed. Ben L explains that due to turnover in the BOCC and the CAC new initiatives would now be moved forward with the input of the CAC. He notes the CAC felt a little sidelined in the process and that the communication was little, late, and still forthcoming. He suggests it may just be a sequencing issue but there needs to be a more formal process for the CAC to provide feedback.
- 12:57 – Betsy D notes that the CCCF works through this process a lot in other programs and having a set of questions standardized will help keep everyone informed and move the projects and initiatives forward. She notes the need for it to be known where initiatives and project ideas are coming from and if they align with the Common Ground ballot measure.

- 12:59 – Dani C asks for more clarification. Sydney S agrees there is some confusion and that there needs to be more clarity in what the CAC's role is and how it is in compliance with the Comon Ground ballot measure. Betsy D clarifies that the "initiatives" are projects outside the grant cycle that are subject to the CAC's review and recommendation. Dani C volunteers to help dive into the issue. Miles C provides some perspective from the County that the recommendations of the CAC are not binding decision but rather providing expert input for the County Commissioner's consideration. He notes that the CAC will make recommendations for initiatives and projects in addition to grant applications.
- 13:06 – Ben L and Miles C discuss how the CAC would like to have initiatives brought to them so they can provide feedback. County staff agree to provide regular updates on initiatives to the CAC.
- 13:14 – Paul M asks how the protocols for the grant process will be related to the initiative process. There are brief discussions on how the councils/subject matter expert boards can help provide input on initiatives and how initiatives will affect the grant cycle. Miles C explains that there will be an opportunity to bring to the BOCC the CACs vision for how initiatives are brought to them.

13:19 – Ben L begins discussion on scheduling recurring meetings. The group agrees that they will meet on the 4th Tuesday from 1pm to 3pm every month moving forward.

13:25 – Betsy D notes that two awarded grant applicants have requested a change to the scope of work and budget, suggesting that these changes be approved over email in order to make the approval quickly.

13:26 – Meeting adjourns.