

9 Aug 11
Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council
Regular 7:00 am Meeting
Mountain View Restaurant, Monte Vista, CO

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 by President Asplin. In attendance were Deanne Elliott, Donna Wehe, Brenda Felmler, Ray Culp, Bill Mathews, Shon Davis, Glynn Polter, Gwen Heller, Kathy Rogers, Dennis Murphy, Jim Clare, Cheryl Jones, Suzanne Benton, Rodney Reed, Don Van Wormer, Jon Boyd, and Marty Asplin.

There were no changes to the agenda.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Jim Clare and a second by Suzanne Benton.

The Treasurers Report showed a balance of \$6297.25. Suzanne introduced Glynn Polter, President of the South Fork Chamber of Commerce which is a new member. We had no new bills. The Treasurer's Report was approved on a motion by Jim Clare and a second by Don Van Wormer.

There was no old business.

Under new business Marty Asplin pointed out that Alamosa County Commissioner Darius Allen has been appointed to the state's Economic Development Commission and that Roni Wisdom has been appointed to the Council on Underserved Communities by the Small Business Administration.

The Board of Directors of the URGEDC is recommending that 1 sheet, which represents 4 pages, be added to the "Community Profile" with the next printing. This would represent 1 successful valley business per page. Each would have a brief description and then would answer a set of questions about doing business in the valley, the advantages, the problems to overcome, their market, labor force, etc. This was approved on a motion by Suzanne Benton and a second by Jim Clare. The Board of Directors will work out the details and questions.

The Board of Directors urged an experimental hiring of a contract person to duties of an Administrative Assistant. It is always difficult to fill the Office of Secretary due to the amount of time it requires. The hired person would attend Board and Regular meetings taking and transcribing minutes along with handling contacts and sending letters of support. The suggestion is \$15 per hour. Jim Clare said the Monte Vista Commercial Development Corp may be interested in participating in this program. Bill Mathews, Town Manager of South Fork, said they may have a need of this service for a couple of their meetings every month also. The suggestion was made that each organization might do a \$50 per month retainer for a baseline income. Approved on a motion by Shon Davis and a second by Don Van Wormer the Board of Directors will pursue and set up this program.

The floor was then handed over to Kathy Rogers and Gwen Heller to speak about the San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center. They discussed the opening of Dr. Pinkerton's Office as a clinic in Monte Vista. They continue to work with Rio Grande Hospital and Conejos County

Hospital. They feature the only digital mammography in the valley. They are working on upgrading their ultrasound equipment and streamlining services. They partnered with Centura Health Care over a year ago which provides ready access to the Centura system of doctors with just a phone call.

They are looking hard at the future of health care. There are many impacts coming from the multitude of legislation that is already passed and what is being talked about. The work force is one of the largest issues here in the valley. They are encouraging local high schools to increase math, science, and computer learning to qualify our kids for the jobs that are here already and the jobs that are coming. Training locals who have family and connections to the valley would be the best source of workers. Recruiting professional staff to move here is very difficult. Recruiting young doctors is helped by the credits they can get towards their college debt because we are rural but the pay scale here is so low retaining them is a challenge.

All the organizations in the valley can help. Things as simple as the Community Profile we print help in recruiting. They continue to try to get more Medicare grants which help offset the costs of screenings and some treatments for a lot of the valley's residents. Scholarships to help valley students obtain training can yield staff that will remain here to raise their families. If we can grow our own nurses and doctors we will gain substantially on our needs. It is becoming clear that Well Care and not sick care is the future of this industry.

Town Reports:

- Monte Vista is zooming along on the \$27,000,000 BEST school and the improvements to the other school. They are designing the new park at the intersection of US285 and US160. They are preparing for the US160 project through downtown. The Montez Park Skate Park is moving forward. They just lost their Public Works Director. They are undertaking Historical Assessments on the old Police Department. Sales Tax is flat but County Taxes are up.
- Del Norte Covered Wagon Days was well attended. The Mud Run was new and brought in over one thousand people. The restaurants and grocery reported terrific and in a few cases record sales for the weekend. Aug 13th is the annual "Keep the Dream Alive" fundraiser for the Rio Grande Hospital. The solar project is beginning to draw their permits and should be starting before the end of the month. The kids from the Southwest Conservation Corps have completed their work on the trails system in a great fashion. Phase I of the design work on the former potato co-op is complete and phase II is about to begin. The Windsor Hotel has signed an agreement with a great Chef and is plunging headlong in to getting the restaurant open for business.
- South Fork is reporting that sales tax is up for the year. They have sent out their request for bid on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. They are working on signage and trying to create districts to facilitate better advertising.
- Alamosa will be holding their ribbon cutting on their new BEST schools and at the Adams State College north campus remodel project. The City and ASC are going to work together to build the High Altitude Training Track that has been discussed for quite some time. They are finishing up some street projects and are hoping to open the new Town Hall early to mid October. Their sales tax is steady to up just a little. There is a new Ace Hardware in the old K-Mart building along with a rent-to-own. The hotels are reporting full occupancy. The Alamosa EDC has hired a new Director, Randy Wright.

- Donna Wehe from SBDC announced a customer training day to be held in South Fork then Del Norte, and finishing in Monte Vista this month. It will be taught by Liz Thomas. On Nov 10th there will be a Military Veterans Resource Support Schooling. It will cover mental health, housing, and starting small businesses.
- Rio Grande County is working on a GOCO grant for the Pavilion at Ski Hi Park. It is coming in under \$300,000. They are looking at a Marketing District Tax to help advertise the entire county. They are working on some enforcement issues about sewer systems and blight. They will be submitting a grant for the lights at Rominger Airport. Property values are holding and commercial is still low. The budget process is about to begin.
- Jon Boyd reminded everyone about “Rhythms on the Rio” in South Fork next weekend and the “Dancing Under the Stars” foundation fund raiser this weekend. He said that Colorado 600 now the Trails Preservation Alliance was again holding its annual meeting in South Fork.

There was nothing else. On a motion by Jon Boyd and a second by Bill Mathews the meeting was adjourned.