

**10 Nov 09**  
**Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council**  
**Regular Members Meeting**  
**Mountain View Restaurant, Monte Vista, CO**

The meeting was called to order by President, TJ Brown.

There were no changes to the agenda.

The minutes were approved on a motion by Jim Clare and a second by Bonnie Asplin.

The Treasurer's report was unchanged and approved on a motion by Mike Hurst and a second by Shon Davis.

Jim Clare reminded everybody about the Action 22 meeting on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> at SLVREC at 6:30 pm. There will be a presentation by Cathy Garcia. They are hoping to generate more membership here in the Valley; to that end they have a \$25 coupon to go in with any new membership. They would like to have more members representing agriculture.

A reminder about the visit to the Valley by the new Director of OEDIT, Don Marostica. Director Marostica along with Stephanie Stephens will visit several sites over two days in an effort to get acquainted with the valley.

Donna Wehe said there would be a Leading Edge graduation on the 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at San Luis Valley Pizza in Alamosa.

Arlen Barksdale of Desmon Energy then gave a presentation on a cooperative economic development project he is undertaking. He has lived in Lake City since 2004, but was working in Colorado in the 1970s. He chose this region of Colorado because it balances his high tech business with living in the mountains. Grant funding and investment tax credits are helping to make solar projects competitive. He intends to build a factory to do the sub-set businesses that are necessary to build a solar plant. He is working on a 100 MW facility that is currently being built in the north Baja region. He is proposing a 3 to 5 MW solar park here in the SLV.

His plan is to do it as a stake holder value. He would like to ally with local economic development needs. Local jobs would be created in fabrication of steel, steel cutting, and assembly. The proposed Cap & Trade Bill in Congress will create a need for green off-set credits. He estimates the entire project to be around \$20 million to \$30 million. This facility would not have a back up storage system and consequently will have peaks and valleys due to clouds. He hopes to align with Tri State's system, which has a large enough transmission facility to use solar electricity somewhere whenever it's available. This would be built above ground to minimize impact on a 30 to 40 acre site. It will be a "behind the fence" operation, primarily utilizing cameras and computer monitors. At this elevation they would even be able to generate power from the full

moon. He is currently affiliated with ten major traded public companies, which will facilitate the handling of all the necessary pieces, even security.

He intends to start the project in June of 2010 and commission the facility in 2011. Local jobs would include assemblers, installers, clerical, management, operations, maintenance, security, technical, and engineering, all at the factory. The solar facility would have a minimal to zero environmental impact and can be put on grazing land. The only water usage would be to wash the collectors a few times a year. There would be no fluid emissions or effluent.

He expects the annual payroll at the site to be \$500,000 to \$1 million during construction. The fabrication facility would require 30,000 square feet and eventually employ 50 workers with an annual payroll of \$2 million. He is currently seeking economic development incentives. The solar park property could remain in Ag zoning with only 15% being in manufacturing. He currently has projects totaling 750 MW in their pipeline and expects to see a 14% success rate in acquiring these contracts. The manufacturing plant he would build here would supply all of the projects he is working on in the West. He is willing to put up \$3 to \$5 million of his money to build the manufacturing facility. He is looking for favorable terms on the balance such as 5.5%, 20 year amortization, with a ten year call. He expects a profit margin of 5 ½ % to 6%. He would be interested in working with SLVREC via contract, also Rio Grande County or Alamosa County.

#### Municipal reports:

Monte Vista reports a sale pending on the Don Shank property. There are currently no serious offers on the Monte Villa Inn. They are working with a consultant to look at downtown and other facilities. They are working on their water needs. The Ski Hi project is moving along nicely and is currently \$170,000 over budget. Don said he was pleased with the outcome of their elections.

Del Norte reported that the town board was preparing to vote on purchase of the Potato Growers property. The Brownfields phase one survey of that property had begun. Upcoming events were the Parade of Lights on 4 Dec. and the Stuff Stocking Auction on 5 Dec.

South Fork reported their Chamber membership was up from 50 and now has 102 members. The Greater South Fork Community Foundation is considering a Master Plan for trails and river corridors throughout the South Fork area as a project.

Rio Grande County is primarily focused on sorting out their budget needs. Suzanne said they had applied for the second half of the CDOT grant for the runway in Del Norte.

Next meeting will be in South Fork at the Hungry Logger.

Don made a motion to adjourn; everyone voted yes.

Submitted, Marty Asplin