

**9 Dec 2008 South Fork, Colorado**  
**Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**The Shaft Restaurant**

The meeting was called to order by president, Don Van Wormer.

On motion by Ray Culp, and a second by Suzanne Benton, the previous regular meeting minutes were approved.

On motion by T.J. Brown and a second by Bonnie Asplin, the Treasurers Report was approved as explained by Suzanne Benton.

The re-written By Laws were reviewed for the second time and were accepted unanimously on a motion by Suzanne Benton and a second by Bonnie Asplin. Don explained that to even out the terms on the Board of Directors, Suzanne Benton had resigned and was now re-running for a new term and would continue as Treasurer. T.J. Brown introduced Josh Gilliam, who has agreed to serve on the Board of Directors. Josh said that he was interested in becoming a part of the business community as a builder and owner of some rentals. It was decided we would continue to seek a third director. On a motion by Marty Asplin and second by Bonnie Asplin, Suzanne and Josh were unanimously elected as Directors for the next two years.

Suzanne reported on the meeting with Tom Malecek and two other members of the Forest Service that was held at the Little Wing Amphitheater site in South Fork. Since the site is less than 640 acres, the county can contract out an EIS and will have to drill to check for hazardous materials. The Forest Service expressed concern about this being a wildlife habitat area. The county will need to have an appraisal done to establish the value of the land. If the county leases the land it will be at 9 ¾% per year. The commissioners have decided that after the first of the year, they will re-visit this project and try for a Permitted Use permit. While this site is ideal, the \$100,000 plus annual lease is presenting an obvious problem. The membership discussed the possibility of Ken Salazar as Secretary of Interior being of some help. Suzanne said she was going to try to get a conversation with Dan Dallas.

T.J. Brown gave a report on the November Del Norte EDC meeting held at the Del Norte Airport with representatives from CDOT. T.J. said Center is currently not receiving any FAA money. The biggest issue is Flight for Life, which currently takes two hours from time of call to time of evacuation. If they could land in Del Norte it would reduce that time to one hour. T.J. stated that the 3,800 foot run way needs to be extended to 6,500 feet and that a 75 foot width would be preferable. Travis from CDOT said he was impressed with the showing of support and thought CDOT might be able to commit to \$250,000 per year for four years as a way to help raise money. As an example of the need T.J. discussed the recent house explosion in South Fork where seven people were air evacuated out of the valley, six of them via helicopters. By comparison, one King Air can carry three patients at a time. Travis has met with airport design engineers and hopes to schedule a meeting in January with the Del Norte Airport Board. Ray Culp

made a motion for a letter of support to the county with a copy to CDOT. This was seconded by Vern Rominger and passed. Suggestions were that possibly Arlene Harms could work on obtaining some foundation money and that possibly Mike Wisdom could establish an Enterprise Zone at the Airport.

T.J. passed out an abridged version of the Target Industry Study that had been carried out by SLVDRG. One of the things mentioned was that the Valley already has some positive growth going on and is out-pacing other rural areas. A suggestion was that the Valley try to recruit people from those who have left for education and business reasons. These people are already familiar with the climate and the remoteness of this region. The study suggests that development be approached as the San Luis Valley and not as individual counties.

Don Van Wormer updated everybody on Monte Vista, which just received the donation of a building in the 200 block on Adams from Valley Publishing. He said Valley Wide Medical Clinic is working on relocating to a different building. The Housing Act to combat foreclosure should bring \$32 million to rural Colorado. Rio Grande County has the second highest foreclosure rate in the State. The money is to buy, fix-up and resell properties or also to abate run down properties. Next summer Monte Vista will update their Master Plan and the city of Monte Vista has voted to fund an Economic Development Coordinator position.

Marty Asplin updated the progress and current search for a chef for the Windsor Hotel restaurant space and told that Colorado Cowgirls was now in two of the renovated store fronts in the Windsor hotel building. Marty also explained that the Del Norte Trails Master Plan had been adopted by both the Town of Del Norte and the Rio Grande Country Commissions, and that the Trails Organization had submitted a large grant request that with the matching funds will total \$220,000.

Mel Semrad updated on South Forks progress. They are currently planning a follow-up meeting about the Wharton Town Center Project. He said they had recently done a presentation about the Beaver Creek Children's Youth Camp to Team SLV. He further said that the South Fork Vision Council had a good turn out for the Christmas Home Tour. They are currently going to give funds to the Library to help with a portion of the landscaping. He said the community came out in a large way to raise money for the injured police officer and that the community had been shaken by the recent house explosion. The Vision Council is considering the establishment of a Community Relief Fund to help with these kinds of incidents in the future.

Suzanne Benton updated that the county is going to take over plumbing inspections as of the first of April. The county is currently reviewing gas and oil regulations and any support would be appreciated.

Don Van Wormer adjourned the meeting, thanked everybody for the year, and wished all a Merry Christmas.

Submitted, Marty Asplin, secretary