

13 Oct 09
Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council
Regular Members Meeting
Boogie's Restaurant, Del Norte, CO

The meeting was called to order by President TJ Brown.

There were no changes to the printed agenda. This was approved on a motion by Suzanne Benton and a second by Shon Davis.

The minutes were approved as printed on a motion by Don Van Wormer and a second by Bonnie Asplin.

The Treasurer's report was approved on a motion by Marty Asplin and a second by Shon Davis.

Suzanne explained that the seat on the Lodging Tax Board from Del Norte doesn't require a resident of Del Norte but just be involved in the Tourism Industry. The County is considering a Commissioner at large seat on the Lodging Tax Board.

Debra Goodman reminded everyone about and invited everyone to, The SLV Tourism Conference this Thursday in Alamosa.

The meeting was then handed to Dusty Hicks. He pointed out that both maps and information are available at the website www.thevillageatwolfcreek.com. Dusty explained that all the access issues attached to the original site will be easily addressed with the exchange of land. He explained that Clint Jones had replaced Bob Honts as the lead on the project at the request of Red McCombs. They have hired personnel with experience in Forest Service land trades. They are already bringing in 17 experts to address the environmental aspects of the new area.

They are seeking a Legislative process for the land exchange since an Administrative process can take up to eight years and the NEPA aspect opens the door to unending law suits to obstruct the project. They have also hired a Federal Law specialist to advise them on how they go forward. He said they still intend to do an EIS even if they accomplish the Legislative land exchange. The legislative process involves the land exchange being included in a piece of legislation that goes through the congress and that becomes law.

After they stopped the previous process they analyzed the problems with their project. One was the need for a new lead on the presentation which brought Hal Jones, Inc to the front. They realized that a major problem was the fact that the land received in the original land swap had no access to the highway. The land they are offering to swap now also had a large amount of wet lands on it which was not an issue back in the eighties when that exchange took place. Davey Pitcher's issue was that the existing land would involve building on the ski mountain.

From talks with Davey the team learned that the mountain can only handle an increase of 2,000 skiers per day comfortably unless they do expansion and changes. The current proposed phase 1 build out is based on 492 housing units that at 85% occupancy would be within the 2,000 SPD range. They will not expand to the additional phases unless the ski area expands to

accommodate the additional people. The ski area as approved by the Fed could be expanded to accommodate up to 12,000 skiers per day.

They have hired an appraiser to value the two parcels for comparison. The largest value in the exchange is the protection of the wet lands for the highway access. The exchange improves the view corridor from the ski mountain, and the partial hiding of the buildings in the woods on the new land. The new land will have a few small wetlands that are already identified and factored in to the design. Importantly, the new land is outside the boundaries of the skiable terrain. They intend to do a grade separation to satisfy the requests from CDOT. This will be separate from Davey's access point. They lessened the size of the hotel in favor of more condo units. The buildings would have commercial space on the ground floor with condos above. The property they are proposing runs from the snow shed to the ski area. This piece of plateau land is visible as you drive up the mountain just before you reach the snow shed. Their intent is to try to use removal of beetle kill and beetle breeding trees in their land preparation.

They probably will not do the exchange if it has to go Administrative process only due to the promise of lawsuits from the groups that want to block any kind of development at Wolf Creek. They have offered to put the provision for a NEPA in the legislation if it is carried by our local Congressman and Senators. Pagosa has scheduled a meeting and Archuleta County has requested a public meeting. Their intention is to build either the new land exchange plan or to go back to the approved previous plan.

A Letter of Support was approved on a motion from Bonnie Asplin and a second from Jon Boyd.

In community reports Monte Vista chose to have no report in the interest of moving the meeting along. Del Norte reported it is moving forward on the Potato Sheds. South Fork reported that the Vision Council is working with Dusty on the Legislative process and that they are working on a new park at the intersection of High 149 and County Rd 15. Rio Grande County is continuing to work on their budget.

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Don Van Wormer and a second by Jon Boyd.

The next meeting is in Monte Vista on Tuesday the 10th of November.

Submitted,
Marty Asplin