



## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

970.453.3402 ph | 970.453.3535 f | 208 East Lincoln Ave. | PO Box 68  
www.SummitCountyCO.gov | Breckenridge, CO 80424

TO: Board of County Commissioners  
Scott Vargo  
Jeff Huntley  
FROM: Sara R. Lopez  
RE: Work Session Meeting of March 16, 2021  
DATE: March 16, 2021

---

### **Attendees:**

Elected Officials: Elisabeth Lawrence, Tamara Pogue and Joshua Blanchard – Commissioners  
Jaime FitzSimons – Sheriff

Staff: Scott Vargo, County Manager; Jeff Huntley, County Attorney and Sara R Lopez, Administrative Assistant.

Staff (via Zoom): Cameron Turpin, Assistant County Attorney; Sarah Vaine, Assistant County Manager; Bentley Henderson, Assistant County Manager; Marty Ferris, Finance Director; Nicole Valentine, Communications Director, April Kroner, Planning Director; Jim Curnutte, Community Development Director; Brian Bovaird and April Paige, Executive Administrative Manager

Guests (via Zoom): Alex Pearlstein, Amy Kemp, Blair McGary, Brian Binge, Bruce Butler, Carrie Benefield, Cheri Ryan, Corry Mihm, Don Reimer, Dylan Graves, Eddie O'Brien, Gary Peterson, Jason Koczak, Jeanne Bistranin, Kathy Christine, Lindsey Cotton, Mark Mathews, Meg Lass, Michael Spry, Neil Groundwater, Nell Wareham, Peter Siegel, Peyton Rogers, Rachel Tuyn, Ryan Hyland, Sawyer DArgonne, Sue Greene, Tim Orwick, Tim West, Tony Pestello, Travis Beck and others who did not sign in.

### **I. Economic Development/Resiliency**

April Kroner, Amy Kemp, Blair McGary, Nell Wareham and Corry Mihm gave an update and overview on the following topics including but not limited to:

#### Background

Because of the effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Summit County's overall economy, it is obvious that there is work to be done about Economic Development/Resiliency within the county, and to make a more formal effort to assist and/or support organizations working on such initiatives.

#### Boom Time in Summit County: 2019

In 2019, the county experienced record-breaking sales tax revenue which gave the impression that the economy was strong. However, it masked the underlining economic issues of being a single-industry economy, with lower wages and no resiliency.

## Goals

1. Build Back: Tourism recovery
2. Build Better: More resilient, sustainable, inclusive economy.

## Summit Prosperity Initiative (SPI)

In three years, the SPI has created the framework, secured some funding, devised plans and launched programs with a dedicated team.

- 2018: Meeting about economic resilience
- 2018: Formed a volunteer group dedicated to economic issues
- 2019: USDA REDI grant with Freeport McMoRan funding
- 2020: Launched programs and developed plan to expand
- 2021: 501c3: Summit Chamber of Commerce development arm

## Scope, Team and Programs

- Data and Planning: Coordination and Expansion
- Talent Advancement: Partnerships and Support
- Business Support: Enhance Programs and Resources
- Community Outreach: Expand Community Involvement

## What's Planned

- Create a coordinate economic development structure
- Countywide economic plan
- Expand DATA and business intelligence
- Expand Business support, resources, education and training
- Workforce development, education and programs (internships and apprenticeships)
- Mentorships and investors
- Hire local, support local
- And more

The team gave an overview of similar initiatives in Mesa County: Grand Junction Economic Partnership, Routt County and the Tahoe Prosperity Initiative and how they have structured them for success.

## Re-Imagine a More Sustainable, Prosperous Future – Next Steps

- Vision and Commitment: The County and community need to commit to focus on economic prosperity and align on a shared vision
- Structure: Create a public-private partnership and structure with funding, resources and staffing
- Community Engagement: Convene key groups, organizations and leaders to align on vision and county-wide plan. Create an advisory board for economic development
- Countywide Plan: Review and align on a countywide plan and coordinated effort with towns, leaders and organizations. Develop key metrics to measure progress.
- Expand Programing: Launch workforce development / talent development projects, expand business support and data projects.

Commissioner Pogue recognized the amazing group the team has completed in such a short time and noted that even with the creation of new jobs, there is still the challenge with workforce housing.

Other participants shared their thoughts on the successes the county has seen over the years, including attracting medical centers and the new jobs these created. There are improvements the county still needs to make to transportation to make it easier for workforce to commute to the county. It was also noted that local college options lack the ability to educate locals for the positions the newest health care facilities will require.

Commissioner Blanchard asked the team questions about job growth within existing industries and the changes to the workforce due to the pandemic. Ms. McGary noted that they are still collecting data on the data post-COVID-19.

#### Action Steps

Commissioner Pogue and April Kroner will represent Summit County Government on this entity, and the group agreed to make it a 501c3 option under the Chamber of Commerce's wing. The group discussed next steps and funding options. Scott Vargo suggested a meeting with the group, creating an outline of what the organization will look like, a preliminary budget, and measuring goals. Once ready, they will present to the Chamber of Commerce, the Towns and County.

## **II. Summit Public Radio & TV Presentation**

Tim Orwick, Corry Mihm, Jim Moyer, Neil Groundwater, Sue Greene, Jason Koczac and SPRTV Board Members gave an update on the following topics including but not limited to:

#### Background

As of March 2021, SPRTV is in the middle of the "Power the Towers" project to replace the aging power line to be able to continue our services well into the future. In addition to increased electric power, the installation will include a conduit for future fiber optic cable for future communications.

SPRTV has been working to raise the \$450,000 to complete the power line project- to-date, we have raised \$280,000 (including 2016-2018 Summit County grants of \$100,000) toward that goal. This is a major accomplishment for an all-volunteer organization with an annual operating budget of just over \$50,000. SPRTV completed Phases I and II in 2019, essentially completing the base of operations for the new power line. Since then, we have worked on Phase III to compile reports and realignment documents and have submitted an application for an Amendment to our USFS Special Use Permit.

SPRTV paused its fundraising activities at the onset of the COVID pandemic to allow space for more humanitarian fundraising but must now plan for the construction season in 2021 to complete the project.

The major tasks to complete before construction are:

- Detailed construction estimates and plans
- Execution of updated easements with the property owners along the proposed route
- Financing arrangements (donations, grants and a potential loan)

Mr. Orwick asked the Board for assistance in funding this project. Commissioners discussed the possibility of including Spanish-speaking programming, and other funding options.

Commissioner Lawrence proposed the County gives \$75K now, and the remaining \$50K pledge based upon matching funds from outside grants or individual donations. Commissioner Pogue and Commissioner Blanchard agreed.

### **III. 2021 Fire Restriction Meeting**

Scott Vargo, Jaime FitzSimons, Jeff Huntley, Cameron Turpin and Brian Bovaird gave an update on the following topics including but not limited to:

#### Background

Mr. Vargo gave an overview of the 2019 Inter-Government Agreement (IGA) as well as the 2019 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) between the towns and the county.

The goal of the AOP included the following:

- Simplify language for fire restrictions
- Review and recommend changes for restriction criteria
- Collaborate with the towns for a consensus on fire restriction policies and criteria
- Proposal to amend fire code to have a permitting process for backyard fires
- Work with the U.S. Forest Service to make amendments to their existing policy to make it cohesive with the Summit County policy

Brian Bovaird provided an overview of the process followed with every fire and the response, once it is determined the location of the fire. Jeff Huntley, Scott Vargo and Jaime FitzSimons noted that Summit County is more conservative when it comes to fire restrictions, and the importance of the county maintaining an open communication with USFS

Currently, the fire restrictions are housed within the Fire Code, which is always in effect, and that means that the county is perpetually in Stage 1 Fire Restrictions.

Commissioners recommended an amendment to the Fire Code that will remove Fire Restrictions from the Fire Code and move them into an IGA with the towns. This will allow for the county to move out of a permanent Stage 1 Fire Restriction.

Commissioners expressed the need to understand the guidelines process better and agreed to postpone the discussion to a future meeting.

### **IV. Managers' & Commissioners' Issues**

Senior Management and Commissioners discussed several topics including but not limited to:

Bentley Henderson gave an update the Lake Dillon Preschool project. Changes have been made and the consulting firm will have an updated bid in a couple of weeks.

April Paige received a request from the Town of Dillon (ToD) Council Members asking Commissioners to participate in a joint meeting during their scheduled ToD Board Meeting on April 6, 2021. Commissioners agreed to participate.

Commissioner Blanchard asked for an update on the CDOT plans for Exit 203 in Silverthorne, and Exit 205 in Frisco. Mr. Henderson said that these projects have been identified as high-priority.

Commissioners also reviewed schedules and upcoming calendar events.

#### **V. State of Open Space, Trails Programs and Quandary Project**

Brian Lorch, Jim Curnutte, Christine Zenel and Jordan Mead gave an update on the following topics including but not limited to:

##### State of the Open Space Report

Brian Lorch gave an overview of past program activities and accomplishments for 2019 and 2020 and noted that his department has seen an 8% annual increase in visitors. However, in 2020, the numbers of visitors to the county increased dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic and people wishing to be outside. Since 1995, the Open Space and Trails Program has made 347 property acquisitions and worked with over 200 landowners to preserve their properties as a legacy for future generations.

##### The Open Space Protection Program

This program has been funded through property taxes approved by Summit County voters in 1993, 1999, 2003, 2008, and 2019. The annual acquisition budget is approximately \$1.25 million. The program has leveraged its acquisition funds at nearly a 3:1 ratio with contributions from Great Outdoors Colorado, partnerships with towns, and donations from private landowners.

##### Trailhead and Parking Management Actions

Jordan Mead gave an overview of management actions that were implemented in 2020 and early 2021, as well as additional near-term strategies recommended for the spring and summer of 2021. He also provided an overview of management strategies being employed in the Front Range and other resort communities, to assist in developing long-term solutions for trailhead and recreation capacity issues in Summit County.

- **Summit County Recreational Pathways**
  - Summit County maintains 38 miles of Recpath outside of town jurisdictions and this is one of the Open Space Program's most visible and cherished resources
  - \$9.2M historic construction cost - primarily grant-funded
  - Over 200,000 user visits per year
  - \$200K per year allocated to maintenance
  - Volunteers maintain 35 unique sections throughout the system through the "Adopt-a-Recpath" Program
- **Natural Surface Trails and Trailheads**

Together with its partners, Summit County manages over 100 trailheads and local trail access points, as well as over 100 miles of single-track and 50 miles of dirt roads

  - **Ongoing Goals & Challenges**
    - Maintaining access to public lands
    - Securing easements
    - Public information and signage
    - Consistency with USFS and town management goals
    - Balancing enhanced recreational amenities and diverse uses with preserving ecological values

### Quandary Trailhead Interagency Planning Process

Christine Zenel provided an overview of the interagency effort to generate strategies to manage public use at the Quandary Peak, Blue Lakes, and McCullough Gulch trailheads and trails. Summit County, the U.S. Forest Service, Towns of Blue River and Breckenridge, and Colorado Springs Utilities have all provided funding to engage a consultant to complete surveys, identify issues, and engage public and agency input to identify strategies to address increasing usage at these popular trailheads.

Ms. Zenel noted that visitor numbers in the summer peak on the weekends but they are starting to see increased numbers on weekdays, which is causing for the line to flatten but this is due to an increase in visitors to county trails. One of the main challenges is not enough parking, and many people parking along the roads, which is not safe.

Commissioner Lawrence commented on her experience dealing with parking issues last summer when visiting Quandary. She noted the effect of so many visitors on the roads. Nicole Valentine suggested improving communication on the trailheads.

### OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

Ms. Zenel gave an overview of the master plan and asked for Commissioners input. The Open Space Protection Plan was created in 1996 and has served as the Open Space & Trails Department's (OST) founding document for over 20 years, in particular defining the Open Space Program's land acquisition criteria.

Due to the department's resounding success protecting over 17,000 acres of private properties, the department now faces many challenges including increased use of recreational amenities and demand to access public lands. In 2021, the department is embarking on creating a new, Open Space & Trails Master Plan. OST looks forward to engaging the community and decision makers to help envision how to address changing demands while better and more sustainably managing County assets and prioritizing opportunities in land acquisition.

Some of the initial questions OST aims to answer through this strategic planning process are:

1. What has the organization accomplished and what are our priorities for the future?
2. Who do we serve now and who will we serve into the future?
3. How do we sustainably balance changing public desires with resource protection?
4. How will we achieve our goals and know that we have been successful?

### Master Plan Topics to Explore

The following are topics that have regularly been brought up by staff, the Open Space Advisory Council, the Board of County Commissioners, and the public. These topics may serve as means or strategies to achieve goals such as managing use to a defined capacity limit, reaching specific sustainability goals, and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusivity on open spaces and trails. Any strategy set out in the plan should tie to a specific goal, which in turn helps fulfill the department's vision. OST will also need to determine metrics for monitoring the success of reaching goals over the course of a specified time.

This is a running list that will change over time:

- Regulation/policy updates including exploring recreation/use fees and commercial uses on open space and trails
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (exploring barriers to accessing open spaces and trails, inclusive communications and interpretation, aligning strategies with the BOCC's goals, etc.)
- Managing trailheads (parking capacity, facilities maintenance, fees, etc.)

- The use of technology to manage capacity and help visitors make informed decisions about where and when they recreate
- Managing and preserving backcountry cabins and historic sites
- Trails planning and standards for motorized and non-motorized trails, and how/when trails can be used (e.g., designated use, directional trails, etc.)
- Stewardship education and interpretive opportunities
- Restoration of degraded habitats and landscapes (e.g. wetland and river restoration, abandoned mine reclamation, etc.)
- Opportunities to foster County sustainability and climate action goals, such as carbon sequestration
- Alignment of OST acquisitions and management with the County's sustainability policies and efforts
- Alignment of OST goals/strategies with Breckenridge and Silverthorne's goals/strategies as they simultaneously update their strategic plans
- Enhancing community outreach and communications
- Identifying strategies to manage increasing winter recreation
- Bolstering healthy continuing relationships with numerous partners.

### Community Engagement

OST will hire a consultant to coordinate community engagement and completion of the Open Space & Trails Master Plan. The department will identify key stakeholders early in this process to ensure a diversity of perspectives are integrated into the new Master Plan. Community engagement will seek to identify community values and priorities and gain feedback to define and identify potential strategies to achieve the County's goals and vision. OST will also conduct similar engagement with local land managers and towns to ensure alignment with neighboring jurisdictions.

### Potential Costs

The 2021 Open Space Fund budget includes \$50,000 for the completion of this plan. The Open Space & Trails Master Plan will take place both in-house and with the assistance of a consultant. Staff is investigating opportunities for grant funding, however opportunities for planning grants are limited due to COVID-19.

### Conclusion

This initial draft scope of work is based on initial conversations taking place with OST staff and the Open Space Advisory Council in Summer/Early Fall 2020. It is meant to be a starting point and will be modified based upon BOCC, Manager's Office, OSAC and other input.

Commissioner Lawrence noted the timeliness of this presentation and said that the idea of loving our trailheads to death has been a regular topic brought up by other counties and the state. Commissioner Blanchard seconded this thought, and suggested including under Community Engagement more communication with locals, who have expressed frustration at not being able to access the trails they help maintain.

Commissioner Lawrence also asked for the Board to be included when discussing new affordable housing plans and making sure that access to the outdoors is available.

Commissioners thanked the group for their work and the great presentation.

**VI. Negotiations, Litigations and the Legal Advice related thereto. (Attorney) (Executive Session Recommended)**

Jeff Huntley and Bentley Henderson requested an Executive Session to discuss real property negotiations, litigation and the legal advice pertaining thereto.

A motion was made by Commissioner Blanchard and seconded by Commissioner Pogue to go into Executive Session to discuss Negotiations, Litigations and the Legal Advice related thereto. BOCC voted 3 to 0 to go into Executive Session per CRS 24-6-402 (4) (a)(b)(e). The motion was approved.

Respectfully submitted:



Sara R Lopez, Deputy Clerk



Approved by:



Elisabeth Lawrence, Chair