

Summer Conference Attendees Hear From Polis Cabinet Members

Delta County Commissioner & CCI President Mark Roeber presided over the CCI Summer Conference in Keystone on June 3 – 5. The conference was attended by over three hundred county commissioners, managers, human service directors and other staff.

The conference kicked off with a packed room on Tuesday morning as attendees got to hear from six of Governor Polis' cabinet members. The first panel of cabinet officials consisted of Dan Gibbs, Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources (and a former Summit County Commissioner), Kate Greenburg, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, and Jill Ryan, Executive Director of the Department of Public Health and Environment (and a former Eagle County Commissioner).

Director Gibbs led off the first panel by discussing the challenges presented by the passage of SB 181 (concerning additional public welfare protections regarding the conduct of oil and gas operations) which include, the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) engaging in twelve different rulemaking processes within the next year in order to implement the provisions in the bill. Gibbs expects a high degree of county involvement in the rulemakings, and stressed the importance of partnerships with local elected officials across the state. His office is also busy with the implementation of the Colorado Water Plan.

Commissioner Greenburg outlined a number of priorities for the Department of Agriculture in the

coming year. The Department is in the process of creating a surface water program and will be involved in the implementation of the Colorado Water Plan. Greenburg is committed to helping agricultural producers with possible impacts on markets from trade wars. Hemp is becoming an increasingly important crop in Colorado, and to this end the Department of Agriculture has rolled out a new Colorado Hemp Advancement & Management Plan (CHAMP). Greenburg will be seeking county involvement on a number of the working groups this summer that are part of the CHAMP roll-out. Finally, Greenburg is committed to working on rural mental health issues and helping to identify community resources for struggling agricultural producers.



CDPHE Director Jill Ryan, Agriculture Commissioner Kate Greenburg, DNR Director Dan Gibbs & Delta County Commissioner & CCI President Mark Roeber kicked off the summer conference at the opening session.

Executive Director Ryan concluded the first panel by laying out her department's three big issues that intersect with county government: closed landfills, water systems and asbestos abatement. Ryan is holding a series of meetings this summer and touring a number of landfills around the state to identify issues and work directly with local governments on a path forward. She is also committed to improved air quality and climate change policy issues, and seeks to improve the state immunization rate.

Following the first panel of cabinet members, conference attendees heard from Rick Garcia, Executive Director for the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Michelle Barnes, Executive Director for the Department of Human Services (CDHS) and Shoshana Lew, Executive Director for the Department of Transportation (CDOT).

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CDOT Director Shoshana Lew, CDHS Director Michelle Barnes, DOLA Director Rick Garcia & Delta County Commissioner & CCI President Mark Roeber wrapped up the morning opening session.

Director Garcia began by highlighting his strong background in housing and his roots in local government. He then provided a high level overview of the divisions within DOLA. Director Garcia devoted the majority of his time explaining the new financial assistance opportunities available at DOLA. Specifically, \$12 million of the Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance funds have been set aside to help local governments support renewable energy initiatives. And, an additional \$5 million has been committed - from the same source - to support broadband projects. \$60 million will still be available through the energy and mineral impact assistance fund to help address local government infrastructure (road and bridge replacements, courthouse renovations, water and sewer upgrades, etc.) needs related to the extraction of natural resources. He also showcased the new workforce housing bills that passed in the 2019 session. All told, those will result in an additional \$77 million/year that will be

available for housing development grants and loans by July 2021.

Director Barnes spoke of the roughly \$3 billion that passes through CDHS every year. These dollars support a variety of activities and services from behavioral health services to running the state's two mental health hospitals to operating the 11 youth services centers in the state. She described herself as a 'turn around CEO' who has run a domestic violence program, a child care center, a housing organization, and Food Bank of the Rockies. Director Barnes also outlined her department's wildly important goals. They are: 1.) to ensure Colorado kids are ready for preschool; 2.) to reduce recidivism and incarceration of youth and 3.) to fix the state's behavioral health system.

The panel concluded with a presentation from Director Lew. She hails from Rhode Island and served as the chief financial officer for the US DOT. Director Lew emphasized the Department's focus on safety. Her mantra is 'whole system, whole safety' and to her that means building shoulders, stripping, rumble strips and other measures to enhance driver and road worker safety. Director Lew's second goal is to reduce congestion in the air and on the road. Her final focus is a grassroots listening tour. Over the next several months, CDOT is soliciting the public's feedback through a series of meetings. Director Lew wants to hear about community needs and wants to talk less about how we pay for it. She will place projects of significance on the same level as small projects. Society tends to define important and big as the same thing. Director Lew, however, will value the smaller projects as equally important.

District Meetings

Eastern District

The ten eastern district counties started their meeting with a visit from Colorado Department of Agriculture Commissioner Kate Greenberg. She explained that her goal is to visit all counties. When she visits counties, the top three concerns she hears pertain to the availability of labor and water and the ability for families to stay on the farm from one generation to another. Her personal goals for the Department include keeping agriculture as the #2 economic generator for the state and to see farmers recognized for their stewardship of the land.

Commissioner Greenberg touched on many different issues including Colorado's attempts to meet the state's water plan goals. The practice of 'buy and dry' is not an approach she favors to meet the plan's goals. She also recognized

oil and gas development as often being a farmer's 2nd crop and an important revenue stream to help ensure succession of farm families.

Following her comments, county commissioners shared a variety of issues with her that their counties are facing. Specifically, Logan County expressed concerns with the Department of Corrections use of prisoners to supply labor for the hemp industry. Counties do not know what criteria DOC is using to determine who can and cannot work in the fields and some have questioned how this practice does or does not interact with their community corrections boards. Elbert raised the issue of residential wells being used to support hemp production, a use that is beyond allowable household water uses. Cheyenne County warned of over burdensome rules and regulations and how that is one of the biggest barriers to the next generation of farmers.

Eric Smith, Founder of Keystone Tower Systems, and Greg Brophy appealed to Eastern District commissioners to consider waiving their business personal property taxes on the new era of wind turbines. In the near future, wind turbines will be twice as big as turbines seen today in Colorado. Rather than a 12-14 ft. diameter, the turbines that Mr. Smith's company manufactures are 22 feet in diameter. As such, they cannot be transported on highways because they cannot clear power lines and over passes. So, the production is on site. Rolls of steel are welded into tower pieces and blades are longer than football fields. Mr. Smith explained that it takes about 60 worker crews to build these new towers - half of which are likely local residents and the other half are technical experts. Local lodging options are preferred but if the work site is too remote, housing would be brought to the site. As for the impact on local roads, Mr. Smith explained that there would be more traffic but the loads per truck would be less than the super loads that are used now to transport today's turbines. To date, none of these new tower projects are in Colorado.

Eastern District counties also covered a variety of other topics. They heard the latest on Colorado's new utility locate law and the development of new rules to implement the law. They also received a draft MOU that addresses the ambulance licensing reciprocity needs in the northeastern part of the state. And finally, Lincoln County shared their struggles to deal with

radioactive pipes they are now the custodians of and Morgan surveyed their peers on whether or not they require commercial truck drivers to secure a county overweight permit or just rely on CDOT's overweight permit.

The meeting concluded with the re-election of Logan County Commissioner Byron Pelton and Morgan County Commissioner Mark Arndt as the District's president and vice president, respectively. Congratulations Byron and Mark!

Front Range District

The Front Range district meeting was called to order by Douglas County Commissioner Roger Partridge. With all counties present, Commissioner Partridge conducted the election of the new president and vice president. It was established by the district that El Paso County Commissioner Longinos Gonzales, Jr. would become president and Jefferson County Commissioner Libby Szabo would be vice president.

After the elections Commissioner Partridge introduced Doug Rex with Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and Andy Gunning with Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments. Mr. Rex & Mr. Gunning were invited to discuss the numerous challenges front range counties have regarding transportation and the growing population.

Mr. Rex started off by explaining who and what DRCOG is. He explained that DRCOG was developed to address challenges with economic and population growth along the front range. Very similar challenges are still present today with the unprecedented economic & population growth and how to invest in transportation to meet the front range's complex mobility needs.

Mr. Rex continued to discuss the challenges along the front range and how the counties need to work together to establish a better transportation plan. It is critical to recognize mutual needs and goals of the entire front range to improve transportation. Population growth along the front range is expected to grow by more than 2 million people in the next 20 years. Mr. Rex suggested a way to bring DRCOG, PPCOG & CCI together by establishing a working group to coordinate infrastructure investment, share best practice and promote data collection.

Mr. Gunning also recognized that the Pikes Peak region is seeing large growth that is bringing forth a number of challenges including safety, air quality, workforce & affordable housing and investment in the system. He stated that many in the Pikes Peak region are commuting to El Paso & Douglas counties which is making heavy use of I-25.

With the aging population statewide of age 65+, it is becoming an increasing need to provide affordable housing and transportation for these seniors. He also stated that coordination among counties, CDOT, MPOs, cities & COGs is extremely important as these organizations can work together to make transportation a collaborative effort.

The meeting concluded with each county sharing what is going on in their county. The next meeting of the Front Range District, will be on Friday, August 16, location to be determined.

Mountain District

Representatives from twelve of the thirteen counties in the CCI Mountain District were present during the district meeting at the annual summer conference in Keystone. District President Merrit Linke (Grand County) was unanimously reelected by the member counties to another term. Commissioner Dwayne McFall (Fremont County) was elected as new vice president of the Mountain District, replacing Commissioner Debbie Bell (Fremont County) who vacated that seat when she was selected earlier this year to sit on the CCI Board of Directors.

County updates provided by the district members took up the lion's share of the meeting. A wide number of issues were discussed, including local funding of US Forest Service employees by counties, master/strategic plan updates, airport issues, wildfire mitigation, economic development efforts, regional bus service, broadband enhancements, proposed ballot issues. The district members also heard updates on a number of federal legislative issues from John Whitney and Betsy Bair, state representatives from the offices of U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and Cory Gardner,

respectively. Issues discussed included PILT and Secure Rural Schools funding, wilderness issues and the senators' joint sponsorship of the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation (SOAR) Act and the Ski Free Retention Act, both aimed at strengthening economies in the region.

Finally, the group received updates from two former county commissioners, Clarke Becker (former Teller County Commissioner who now heads up workforce efforts for the state Department of Labor & Employment) and Sallie Clark (former El Paso County Commissioner who now heads up the state USDA Rural Development office).

The next meeting of the Mountain District will be in Park County on August 22.

Southern District

Commissioners from the Southern District began their meeting with a "what's good and what's happening in your county" update from each of the counties. Commissioners reported some remaining drought, some thankfulness for the large amount of snow and some watchfulness for potential floods.

Commissioners also reported new administrators, new or remodeled jails and outdoor facilities, a passage of a sales tax and expansion of industries and new facilities.

The Southern District was introduced to and welcomed their new Division of Local Government representative Tara Marshall. She can be reached at 719.544.6577 or tara.marshall@state.co.us.

Sallie Clark, USDA Rural Development State Director, made a brief presentation to the group, offering the support of her office to counties. Rural Development can provide assistance with affordable housing, business development, community infrastructure and technical aid in community empowerment programs. Commissioners were encouraged to reach out to Sallie and her office to see how they can provide help in their individual county and community.



Mineral County Commissioner Ramona Weber & Prowers County Commissioner Ron Cook were elected vice president and president of the southern district.

Commissioners voted unanimously to elect Prowers County Commissioner Ron Cook to serve as 2019-2020 President and Mineral County Commissioner Ramona Weber to serve as Vice President.

José Esquibel, Associate Director of the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention presented resources and provided answers to the many questions commissioners have regarding the current opioid crisis. The Consortium is a resource for education, public outreach, research, prevention and treatment for prescription abuse issues and Mr. Esquibel encouraged commissioners and their staff to reach out for assistance in addressing this issue in their individual communities. A list of bills concerning prescription abuse is available as well as contact and general information by contacting Kristin Dunn at kdunn@ccionline.org.

Karen Harkin, Community Relationship Manager of the Western Slope for Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), spoke briefly to the district regarding all the services available and provided by the CHFA including education and information about home ownership, rental housing and business lending. More information is available at <https://www.chfainfo.com/Pages/default.aspx>

Commissioners heard from Bailey Smith of the Community Resource Center which provides assistance, tools and success strategies for nonprofits and community groups within Colorado including a Colorado Grants Guide which provides a comprehensive, online, searchable database of funding sources for Colorado nonprofits. For information on how to access the database as well as the other programs and services offered by the Community Resource Center, please visit <https://crcamerica.org/>.

Western District

The Western District began their meeting with the election of Jeff Rector (Rio Blanco) as President and Don Cook (Moffat) as Vice President of the Western District. Congratulations Jeff and Don, and thank you for your willingness to serve!

After the election, the Western District heard a presentation about forest fires and coordination with state and local officials. Greg Larson, Uncompahgre

Field Manager for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) discussed the importance of planning ahead, coordinating with partners, and knowing what resources (training and equipment) are available before a fire begins. Starting relationships with partners, knowing how to get ahold of the right people, and understanding how you fit in to the management framework is essential to coordination efforts around fire emergencies.

Fires start and end locally. During the mutual aid period, locals are the ones who are closest and most readily available to help. The local sheriff can organize evacuations and begin public outreach and information sharing. Most mitigation and preparedness efforts also happen at the county level. However, there are state and federal agencies that can provide assistance and partnership when requested.

The Division of Fire Prevention and Control presented about the importance of knowing your local battalion chief so that you can contact them for assistance when the fire goes beyond the resources of the county and fire protection district. The battalion chief can also be an essential partner to help navigate conversations and cost share negotiations with the state and federal partners.

Post-incident, fires return to full local control. There are not many sources of state and federal dollars for rehabilitation (e.g. seeding burn scars, erosion control), so working with local emergency managers is key. Some counties have defined emergency operations budgets which they find easier during an emergency because they can spend time planning and strategizing rather than budgeting. However, other counties prefer to budget as incidents are occurring.

The Western District meeting closed with a Round Robin discussion amongst counties. Common themes included funding for jails and courthouses, historic snow levels/avalanches and its impact on tourism, broadband expansion, and hemp regulation.



Summer Conference Photo Highlights



Montezuma County Commissioner Larry Don Suckla, Allison Daley, CCI & Fremont County Commissioner Tim Payne, catch up during the welcome reception.



Adams County Manager Raymond Gonzales, Adams County Commissioner Mary Hodge and Director of Colorado Air & Space Port Dave Ruppel presented on the new Air & Space Port located in Adams County.



Ouray County Commissioner Ben Tisdell, Pueblo County Commissioner Terry Hart & Grand County Commissioner Rich Cimino are pictured above.



CCI Staff Allison Daley & Eric Bergman meet up with Fremont County Commissioners Tim Payne & Dwayne McFall during a break at the conference.



Adams County Commissioner Steve O'Dorizio, Fremont County Commissioner Debbie Bell & Routt County Manager Tom Sullivan were part of the new commissioner panel.



Rio Blanco County Commissioners Gary Moyer & Jeff Rector join Mineral County Commissioner Ramona Weber during a coffee break.



We need more cowbell!!! Weld County Commissioner Sean Conway helped get attendees into each session.



Pitkin County Commissioner Kelly McNicholas Kury & Delta County Commissioner Don Suppes chat after a session.



Jefferson County Human Services Deputy Director Lynnae Flora, Grand County Commissioner Rich Cimino & Larimer County Commissioner John Kefalas enjoy a beautiful Colorado day outside.



Rio Blanco County Commissioner Jeff Rector, CCI Staff Allison Daley, Moffat County Commissioner Don Cook and Delta County Commissioner Don Suppes pose for a picture after the Western District Meeting.



Eagle County Commissioner Matt Scherr and Summit County Commissioners Thomas Davidson & Elizabeth Lawrence get ready for a CCI Issue Session.



Morgan County Commissioner Jon Becker moderated the ambulance licensing session.



Douglas County Commissioner Roger Partridge served up the bacon to Pueblo County Commissioner Terry Hart during the board meeting.



Eagle County Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry gets ready to moderate the session where Mike Willis from Office of Emergency Management & Anne Miller from the Colorado Resiliency Office presented on emergency preparedness.



CCI staff Eric Bergman & Ouray County Commissioner Ben Tisdell brought some "Weed on Wheels" to the marijuana & hemp regulation session.



The CCI team was pleased to see so many members at conference. We look forward to seeing you all at the summer district meetings.



Several current and former women commissioners gathered for breakfast at the summer conference.



Jefferson County Commissioner Casey Tighe poses a questions during a session.



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