

Happy Holidays from CCI

It was great to see everyone in Colorado Springs! Even though the weather was not entirely cooperative, dealing out cold and snow midway through our conference program, we still had terrific turnout to hear the Governor and enthusiastic discussions all the way through the final session on elections Wednesday morning. Thanks to all the county and state staff, corporate associate members, and others who came together to promote better county government!

Although nearly all of the conference events and activities ran smoothly, we are always interested in how we might improve and what sessions you would like to see included in the future. One suggestion that has already come in is to include some advanced-level sessions as a counterpoint to the general overviews of county subject areas. This year, we also started the conference program earlier on Monday and concluded earlier on Wednesday in an effort to help folks with a long drive home to get on the road earlier. A few counties commented that this worked better for them. Several of our exhibitors observed that this year was better than most for interacting with county officials. Thanks for visiting with them! Do you have other comments or observations about the conference? Please do not hesitate to let us know by calling me at CCI or by email at jtaylor@ccionline.org.

Remember that steering committee officers and CCI Public Lands travelling team members will be elected next month! These elections will all take place during the steering committee meetings on Thursday, January 23 and 24. The steering committees will be electing officers for two-year terms (following this year's one-year terms). Three seats on the Public Lands travelling team will be up for election. These are also two-year terms and you should ensure that you can commit to making the trips to NACo if you would like to serve in this capacity. If you are interested in serving in either one of these roles, please complete the nomination/statement of interest form available online at www.ccionline.org and submit it to CCI no later than Friday, January 3. We will include all the candidate information we receive in *eCounty Lines* so you can learn a little about them and their interest in advance of the meeting.

Finally, CCI will host a Legislative Day at the Capitol for commissioners and county staff on Thursday, January 16. We anticipate starting early that morning at the Capitol and concluding back at CCI early in the afternoon. More details will be provided in the next few weeks. We hope you can make plans to join us!

From all of the CCI staff, we hope you have a wonderful holiday and new year! **Chip**

Governor Hickenlooper Opens CCI Winter Conference

This year's Opening Session featured a keynote address from Governor John Hickenlooper. Speaking to commissioners about the importance of being the best possible public servant one can be, Governor Hickenlooper recognized that while commissioners in the Secession Movement may see issues differently, mutual respect between both sides still remains. Counties and ultimately the State have become stronger from the discussion. Hickenlooper then reiterated his promise to ensure that everyone gets a voice, regardless of proximity to Denver.

Governor Hickenlooper praised the heroics and hard work of commissioners and counties

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Tax Increment Financing 101

Pueblo County Commissioner Terry A. Hart, Larimer County Commissioner Steve Johnson and Boulder County Attorney Ben Pearlman helped conference attendees understand the workings of Urban Renewal Authorities (URA) and CCI's activities to date to address county concerns.

Commissioner Johnson began by explaining that URAs use tax increment financing (TIF) to finance the redevelopment of blighted property. It all begins with a city identifying a geographical area in need of redevelopment or development based on a finding of various blight factors. The city then “freezes” the tax base within the blighted area. Improvements are then made to properties which increases their taxable value. The original underlying tax revenue remains “frozen” at the time of blight for up to 25 years while the increased tax above the base (the increment) accrues to the URA.

Commissioner Johnson explained that before TABOR and Gallagher, TIFs worked well because local governments could simply adjust their tax rate to address the service impacts that resulted from the occasional URA. Now, URAs are the standard way of developing. This is concerning for a number of reasons. First of all, because of the Gallagher Amendment, commercial properties pay the bulk of property taxes in Colorado. For counties, property tax is the primary revenue source. So, as more and more commercial properties are included in URAs, more and more of the primary county

tax base is lost. Secondly, the retail cycle is usually between 15-20 years long. So, once an area has been redeveloped and the 25 year clock expires, it is likely ripe for a new finding of ‘blight’. Finally, Commissioner Johnson explained that in his community, voters have approved a 0.75 mill levy increase to support the needs of developmentally disabled individuals. The URAs in Larimer County have diverted roughly \$1 million from this voter-approved increase and away from developmentally disabled services.

Ben Pearlman, Boulder County Attorney, highlighted case law that has interpreted the URA statutes over the years. In Tracy v. City of Boulder, 635 P.2d 907 (Colo. App. 1981), the courts found that ‘blight’ is defined by the legislature and that as long as a city makes findings of blight, the TIF tool can be employed. In BOCC v. City of Broomfield, 7 P.3d 1033 (Colo. App. 1999), the court ruled that counties do not have standing to bring a law suit. In essence, the courts have concluded that the TIF increment belongs to the URA regardless of the impacts to the local government (or local vote) that imposed the underlying mill levy.

Following their comments, there was a lively exchange of ideas on how to move forward. CCI's members have authorized staff to proceed with legislation in 2014 that will give counties and other impacted entities a say over how much of their property tax revenue can be used for prospective urban renewal projects.

Governor Cont. from page 1



affected by the recent floods. Observing that while bridges and roads may have been damaged or washed away, it is the heroics, kindness, compassion, love and community that are the real bridges in these communities, in addition to the hard work and collaborative nature of the commissioners that has led to recovery. In an effort to aid with recovery, Hickenlooper also noted that for the first time in state history, the state will pay half of local match to counties affected by floods. Governor Hickenlooper also noted that despite floods, fires and government shutdowns, Colorado did not close its doors and instead “stayed open for business”, helping to push the economy forward equally across the state.

Governor Hickenlooper also outlined goals for 2014, including economic development, higher education funding, as well as K-12 funding, and broadband reform—stating that every part of Colorado must be connected by broadband. Governor Hickenlooper concluded his address to the membership with an exhortation to each commissioner to “avoid politics and move forward and remain a public servant”.

District Meetings

Eastern District

County Commissioners from nine of the ten eastern district counties were present for CCI's Winter Conference Eastern District Meeting. Logan County Commissioner Dave Donaldson presided over the meeting with the help of Washington County Commissioner Terry G. Hart. Commissioners unanimously re-elected Yuma County Commissioner Trent Bushner to serve as their representative on CCI's Board of Directors. Congratulations Trent!

Eastern District was joined by Clear Creek County Commissioner Tim Mauck to discuss this year's potential salary bill. Commissioner Mauck serves on the Local Elected Officials Salary Commission on CCI's behalf. The Commission's proposal provides for a 15% increase for the elected county officials (except the sheriff) in Categories IV-VI, and a 20% increase for all sheriffs (regardless of category) and elected county officials in Categories I-III. Eastern District County Commissioners expressed concern about the disparity in salary increases. They uniformly agreed that all elected officials should get the same increase regardless of a county's category or the office in which they are serving.

Following a lively discussion regarding elected official's salaries, each county was asked to give an update on news-worthy happenings in their county. Cheyenne County Commissioners shared that there are three test wells being drilled in their county and if those are successful, they could see a boost of up to 80 new wells. Kit Carson's main street is busy these days because of the crude oil pipeline that is currently under construction. Lincoln County spoke of the boom occurring in their county thanks to the wind farms. Energy development has replaced agriculture as the county's top revenue generator. In Logan County, the oil industry is moving into the western parts of the county and are renting office space in Sterling. Morgan County highlighted an exciting waste-to-energy project that is diverting trash from the local landfill. Thanks to a GOCO grant, Phillips County has just built a walking path around their fairgrounds and a water park at their event center. Sedgwick County is undergoing a major courthouse remodeling effort. Washington County reported that their assessed valuation is up for the year while Yuma is facing a decline of roughly \$40 million in their assessed valuation.

Front Range District

District President, Donald Rosier, Jefferson County, called the meeting to order. He called the roll noting that all member counties were present.

The members proceeded to the election of a board member to the CCI Board. Larimer County Commissioner Lew Gaiter III was nominated and elected by acclamation.

Douglas County provided a presentation on Stormwater Regulations and the experiences they have had with CDPHE and EPA. Their Stormwater and Special Projects Manager, Erik Nelson, gave a very detailed and informative presentation on the latest activities by EPA concerning a definition of Waters of the U.S. This has significant importance as anything defined as Waters of the U.S. automatically falls under restrictions and regulations for treatment and protections. Unfortunately, EPA has developed regulations that work well on the east coast where water law is based upon access to waters on a riparian basis. For Colorado and other western states, whose water law is based on beneficial use and time of appropriation of a water right, these regulations are completely unworkable and potentially in violation of Colorado water law.

Erik and the members of the Colorado Clean Water Coalition have been working to push back on the regulations, which were adopted somewhat outside the traditional rule-making process.

As a result of this pressure, EPA and CDPHE are conducting a proper rule-making on the acceptable and legally defensible definition of Waters of the U.S. All comments from Colorado parties are due by January 10, 2014, and counties may make comments before this deadline.

CCI is asking Douglas County to provide all necessary information and documents so that they can be posted on our web site for member access. Members may consider this information in deciding whether they wish to comment on the current rulemaking.

El Paso County Commissioner Sallie Clark advised the members that there are discussions at the national level on flood plain definitions, as well. This is also likely to

result in new flood insurance rates. Much of this activity is as a result of the recent flooding in Colorado and other states. Commissioner Clark offered to put counties in touch with those involved these issues.

President Rosier then opened the discussion for county updates.

While the counties had updates on many projects, the main theme of the updates was the damage from fires and flooding. Those counties damaged by the September floods each took time to thank the other counties who provided assistance, staff, equipment and vehicles to help with the flooding recovery. There was a universal sense that the Front Range counties have worked together in a non-partisan and highly community-oriented manner to assist one another.

Commissioner Clark made a specific request that CCI act as a sponsor for a recovery roundtable on all the activities that worked and those that failed, in order to better understand how to deal with such emergencies in the future. She is looking specifically for a facilitated discussion of a broad group of counties and other parties involved in this recovery effort.

Mountain District Meeting

Mountain District President Dan Gibbs (Summit County) presided over the CCI Mountain District Meeting on December 3. The first order of business was the election of a new Mountain District commissioner to serve as representative on the CCI Board of Directors. Congratulations to Commissioner Dave Paul (Teller County) on his election to the CCI Board! Mountain District will actually have two representatives on the board for this next year, as current CCI President Thomas Davidson (Summit County) will remain on the board for one more year, serving as past-president.

The commissioners received a report on potential revisions to the EPA's Clean Water Act from Erik Nelson, Douglas County Stormwater Project Manager. Douglas County has been working with the Colorado Clean Water Coalition to push back on regulations that are not compatible with Western water law principals like beneficial use and prior appropriation. Nelson encouraged counties to make comment on a rulemaking that is being conducted by the EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Comments are due by Friday, January 10, 2014.

Commissioner Tim Mauck (Clear Creek County) provided an update on proposed legislation being pushed by the County Elected Officials Salary Commission. The Commission has secured a sponsor and is hoping to introduce legislation that would raise the salaries of all county elected officials for the first time since 2007. If enacted, the increases would take effect in either 2015 or 2017, depending on when the county official in question is elected or re-elected.

Representatives from each county in the Mountain District gave brief updates on items of interest in their communities. There were several common themes that emerged, including acquisition/construction of shooting ranges, issues related to landfill management, rural broadband needs and the continuing challenge of recreational marijuana. CCI is exploring having sessions on some of these common themes at future conferences.

The next CCI Mountain District Meeting will be at the CCI Summer Conference in Keystone next June.

Southern District

District President, Art Bobian, Huerfano County Commissioner, called the meeting to order. He called the roll and observed that all member counties were present.

The members proceeded to the election of a board member to the CCI Board. Otero County Commissioner Keith Goodwin was nominated and elected by acclamation.

Commissioner Bobian then began discussion on the most recent updates on the elected officials salary increase stating that he does not want the increase to be a statutory change but rather permissive because currently his county cannot afford to give their employees an increase as well. Other counties acknowledged that the increase needs to occur but it cannot come in a lump sum, it needs to be distributed incrementally and also include a cost of living adjustment each year, as to avoid a similar situation as now. Commissioner Pam Bricker from Rio Grande noted that her county does not support the increase and will not for the foreseeable future. Commissioner Sal Pace (Pueblo) suggested that until there is an alternative proposal for an increase, few would support any legislation.

A brief update was given on OHV's and the results of the most recent survey sent out to counties.

Commissioner Bobian asked counties to give brief updates on what each is doing with taxation on retail marijuana. Pueblo County is currently the only county moving forward with a tax for retail marijuana—other member counties noted that they would like to see how successful Pueblo is before moving forward themselves. Alamosa County indicated that they are not sure if they would want to move forward with a tax because they “would have to share revenues with the city, and the city does not have any retail shops”. Baca County also gave a brief update on industrial hemp. An unknown person illegally harvested the industrial hemp the county had been monitoring. At this point they don’t know who or why the crop was harvested, or where it may have gone. Another crop may be planted later on.

Erik Nelson, briefed the district on the latest activities by EPA concerning a definition of Waters of U.S. as he did in the Front Range & Mountain Districts.

Erik and the members of the Colorado Clean Water Coalition have been working to push back on the regulations, which were adopted somewhat outside the traditional rule-making process.

As a result of this pressure, EPA and CDPHE are conducting a proper rulemaking on the acceptable and legally defensible definition of Waters of the US. All comments from Colorado parties are due by January 10, 2014, and counties may make comments for this deadline.

Commissioner Pace asked that the Southern District support his resolution to protect the Southwest Chief Train Line. The following amendments were made to the resolution which was then adopted by the district: Colorado Counties, Inc. only supports a plan that keeps all existing stops, La Junta, Trinidad and Lamar, in place.

Other business included a handout from Commissioner Hill concerning the protection of wolves as well as a suggestion of a semi-annual meeting for the Southern District prior to the August district meeting in Walsenburg.

Newly appointed in mid-August to the Transportation Commission, Bill Thiebaut spoke to the Southern District about trying to expand transportation funding past only a few select projects, including RAMP. He also stated that money for new regional priorities will start to

come. Thiebaut also reminded the Southern District that he is available to field any questions or concerns that the commissioners may have.

Western District

The sixteen counties of the Western District met on the second day of the conference. The first order of business was to reelect unanimously Shawn Bolton, Rio Blanco county commissioner, as their CCI Board representative. Commissioner Bolton will also serve as President of the CCI Board this year.

Commissioners then heard from Pamela Monsees, Program Manager for the Public Safety Communication Network in the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT). Ms. Monsees spoke about the latest upgrades and policy discussions surrounding the digital trunked radio system (DTR) around the state. This system was established to provide a single statewide structure for emergency communications. Over the years there have been software and hardware upgrades and currently OIT is working through three phases of additional upgrades. Phase I is complete, phase II is scheduled for completion early 2014 and phase III a little later.

Commissioners expressed ongoing concerns related to the effectiveness of the DTR system in mountainous, rural areas of the state. Most emergency providers carry two radios, one using the DTR and another using VHF. Unfortunately, due to federal guidelines, the VHF bandwidth, which is most effective in these rural areas, is being significantly narrowed and commissioners are worried that this will result in a decreased lack of ability to communicate during emergency situations.

During the county roundtable discussions, Garfield County spoke about a study that shows rural health care insurance premiums are higher than those in metro areas. The Division of Insurance scheduled meetings with counties to discuss the reasons for this issue and Garfield County encouraged as many commissioners as possible to attend to learn about the issue. Archuleta County spoke to the need to continue pressing for funding for the Secure Rural Schools money, which Congress authorized for only another year. Finally, commissioners all agreed to continue to explore ways that counties can be better informed earlier about federal issues affecting their counties.

Winter Conference Photo Highlights



Washington County Commissioners Terry G. Hart and David Foy chat during the opening reception.



Archuleta County Commissioner Steve Wadley, Mineral County Commissioner Ramona Weber and Archuleta Finance Director Larry Augsbury discuss ideas during the opening reception.



Weld County Commissioner Sean Conway and Summit County Commissioner Karn Stiegelmeier took a moment to smile for the camera at the opening reception.



Weld County Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer, Pueblo County Commissioner Terry A. Hart, Mike Milyard with Wagner Equipment and Teller County Commissioner Dave Paul celebrate Wagner Equipment's continued sponsorship of the opening reception.



Sedgwick County Commissioner Glen Sandquist, Washington County Commissioner Lea Ann Laybourn and Yuma County Commissioner Dean Wingfield enjoy the opening reception.



El Paso County Commissioner Sallie Clark (center) welcomes Larimer County Commissioner Lew Gaiter III (left) and Summit County Commissioner Thomas Davidson (right) to El Paso County.



Clear Creek County Commissioner Phil Buckland, Gilpin County Commissioners Buddy Schmalz, Connie McLain and Gail Watson discuss the events of the day at dinner.



Outgoing CCI President and Summit County Commissioner Thomas Davidson accepts a token of appreciation for his year of service.



Montezuma County Commissioners Larry Don Suckla, Keenan Ertel and road supervisor Dean Roundtree enjoy the Tuesday awards banquet.



Gunnison County Commissioner Paula Swenson and San Miguel County Commissioner Art Goodtimes catch up during dinner.



Douglas County Commissioners Jill Repella, Jack Hilbert and Roger Partridge celebrated Commissioner Hilbert's Distinguished Service award.



Kit Carson County Commissioners Dave Hornung, Dave Gwyn and Gary Koop enjoy dinner Tuesday night.

Finding the Value in Agricultural Water

Water continues to be an important county issue. Availability, quality and conservation are just a few of the factors commissioners deal with when wrestling with water decisions. At the winter conference, commissioners were able to hear the latest on the important topic of protecting against the dry up of agricultural water.

It is difficult to discuss agricultural land dry up without defining the value of agricultural water. Gary Barber, Chair of the Arkansas Basin Roundtable, Dr. Perry Cabot, Water Resource Specialist from the Colorado Water Institute and Dick Brown, from Sand Dollar Research, presented a summary of the conference held by the Colorado Agricultural Water Alliance earlier in the year. The purpose of the conference was to find a way to value agricultural water so that when the inevitable conversation arises about finding the balance between water conservation, growth and agriculture in Colorado, policy makers will have the best information.

The focus of the valuation conversation centered on the Arkansas River Basin. The importance of water to the Arkansas Basin is obvious; however, quantifying the value is another matter. Presenters showed that the value of irrigated agricultural land to this river basin alone is over \$695 million. An 8% flow reduction, whether due to dry years or through agricultural land dry up, would reduce that value by \$82 million and cost 950 jobs. A 17% reduced flow brings that number to \$174 million. Impacts are felt not only on the agricultural industry, with a loss of thousands of jobs, but also on the recreational industry and the associated impacts for communities. Overall, the entire economic value, including all spillover benefits, of agricultural and recreational water to just the Arkansas Basin amounts to \$1.36 billion dollars.

Numbers like these show the importance for Colorado as future negotiators sit to discuss water. As the headwaters state, having data like this is essential to protect the interests of Colorado citizens throughout the state. If Colorado is able to find the balance between urban growth and agricultural protection, then the state's position will be much stronger when future dry years force the difficult conversations to occur.

CCI Business Meeting



Incoming President Rio Blanco Commissioner Shawn Bolton discusses goals for 2014.

On Tuesday, December 3 CCI President Thomas Davidson called the 2013 Winter Conference business meeting to order.

CCI Treasurer Barbara Kirkmeyer provided a brief summary of the process the Dues Subcommittee followed to develop and allow counties to participate in a reformulated dues structure. Members unanimously voted to accept the proposed dues structure.

Commissioner Kirkmeyer presented the proposed 2014 CCI budget which the CCI Board of Directors developed based on the most well received scenario 2 dues schedule. The proposed budget passed unanimously.

Commissioner Davidson announced the 2014 CCI Board of Directors: Shawn Bolton, Rio Blanco, President; Barbara Kirkmeyer, Weld, Treasurer; Dennis Hisey, El Paso, Secretary; Trent Bushner, Yuma; Keith Goodwin, Otero; Lew Gaiter III, Larimer; Thomas Davidson, Summit and new CCI Board member Dave Paul, Teller.

Commissioner Shawn Bolton, the incoming CCI President indicated to the membership that he will continue to work on efficiencies for CCI through publications and communication with members.

Commissioner Kirkmeyer expressed her thanks from Weld County to the many counties who provided assistance and "donated" staff during the recent floods.

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned.



The 2014 board is sworn in by Douglas County Commissioner Jack Hilbert (far left).

Fiscal Impact of Noxious Weeds

At the Monday afternoon early session of the conference, commissioners gathered to hear Dr. George Beck, CSU Professor, discuss an ongoing groundbreaking study dedicated to quantifying the economic impact of noxious weeds in Colorado. The study begins to define the problem noxious weeds create for three industries: agriculture, wildlife, and recreation. Fred Raish, President of the Colorado Weed Managers Association, also presented on the study and spoke to the need for additional data from the counties to help policy makers better understand noxious weed impacts.

Preliminary results of the study show noxious weeds cost Colorado's economy around \$10 million annually. This number only includes ten of the most common and difficult weeds to manage. Additionally, the data collected for the recreational industry needs reevaluated to ensure validity. Finally, a large part of the fiscal impact is based off of county weed managers' reporting of noxious weeds in their jurisdiction. In many places around the state, counties underreport or do not report noxious weed sightings and eradication efforts. Taking into consideration these factors, the true fiscal impact of noxious weeds in Colorado would be much greater than the conservative annual amount of \$10 million a year.

Within these limitations, the research found that the agricultural industry faces \$4.5 million annually in lost production due to noxious weeds. The loss in value for open space and wildlife corridors amounts to \$5.1 million annually. The preliminary impact on the recreational industry shows impacts around \$4 million annually. Nationally, invasive species cost the United States \$120 billion a year and invasive noxious weeds contribute a \$35 billion price tag to that amount for eradication and identification measures.

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Election Recap

The recent statewide elections were the first following the passage of HB13-1303 (“The Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act”). The Act substantially changed the way elections are conducted in the state. This session provided an overview of the Act itself and how traditional election practices have had to be changed, as well as reports from three different counties to gauge how the elections themselves went and what changes to the Act might be necessary.

Pam Anderson, Jefferson County Clerk and Recorder, provided an overview of the key provisions of The Voter Access and Modernized Elections Act. The Act itself had four key elements:

- ◆ Ballot Delivery. Every registered voter in Colorado now receives a ballot in the mail. Voters are **not** required to vote by mail, however. They can drop their ballots off at a voting center or remit their ballot and vote in person on a machine.
- ◆ Establishment of Voter Service Centers. Voter Service Centers have replaced traditional polling places. The number of centers a county must establish is determined through a formula in the legislation.
- ◆ Voter List Maintenance. Computers will link all counties and provide more accurate status of voter activity and hopefully prevent voter fraud.
- ◆ Same Day Registration. The Act allows anyone who has been living in the state for 22 days to register on election day and cast a ballot.

Anderson noted that “elections are a lot about human behavior” and said there was a great deal of uncertainty amongst the county clerks as to how and when citizens would vote, given these expanded opportunities. In Jefferson County, there were more ballots cast than any previous election. However, 38% of the voters actually voted on election day, which was a much higher number than expected. This caused a lot of last minute ballot signature verification and counting and delayed some of the results.

Anderson also noted that there will be a clean-up bill introduced next session to address some problems with HB 1303. One of the issues requiring clarification involves a discrepancy in statutory residency requirements for school district elections versus general elections. Statutory residency requirements for school districts are 30 days prior to the election; HB 1303 set the residency requirement at 22 days. This caused some problems in same day registration in several counties.

Finally, Anderson noted that HB 1303 had a lot of bearing on election costs going forward. Like many counties, Jefferson was looking at replacing a lot of voting machines that had reached the end of their useful life. By going to fewer vote centers (as opposed to the previous district polling place model) the county is going to save \$2 million on machine replacement.

Tiffany Parker, Clerk and Recorder for La Plata County, began by saying that “we had the best election, from the voter’s perspective.” Parker asserted that Colorado has become a national leader in increasing voter turnout and conducting elections. Parker said her county had a steeper learning curve than the more urbanized counties under the new Act. Unlike Jefferson County, which previous to the passage of HB 1303 had an almost 80% permanent mail-in voter status, La Plata County only had 58% of its voters signed up as permanent mail-in voters in previous elections. Parker’s office had to do a lot more hand-holding and explaining to citizens what their options were. La Plata County added three additional drop locations where voters could drop their ballots off in secured facilities instead of mailing them back to the county.

Wayne Williams, El Paso County Clerk and Recorder, reminded the audience that voter fraud is still a concern in some counties. In El Paso County, 2% of the ballots that were mailed out were returned with incorrect addresses. Williams is concerned that misaddressed ballots create the opportunity for citizens to vote multiple times. El Paso County is also looking at the number of early voting sites for future decisions on deployments of these voting centers. Many of the centers established for this recent election were seldom visited, and Williams is hopeful that by studying these trends the county can more accurately predict where the need will be and plan accordingly.

Child Welfare Initiatives Updates

Boulder County Commissioner and CCP's HHS Steering Committee Chair, Cindy Domenico, led a panel of county commissioners and state staff in updating members on the status of the Governor's Child Welfare 2.0 plan. Commissioner presenters included Douglas County Commissioner Jack Hilbert, Summit County Commissioner Thomas Davidson, Otero County Commissioner Keith Goodwin, Weld County Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer, Arapahoe County Commissioner Nancy Sharpe, Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Director of Child Welfare Julie Krow, and the State's Child Protection Ombudsman Dennis Goodwin.

Commissioner Hilbert updated members on the Child Abuse Hotline Committee. Following months of meetings, the Hotline Committee has identified the best way to implement a single, statewide number where the public and mandatory reporters can report suspected abuse and neglect. While reports will come in through one number, callers will be immediately patched to the county where the child resides so that county workers can take the report. It is anticipated that this new system, coupled with a public awareness campaign, could lead to a 20% increase in reports. Additional state general fund dollars will be needed in child welfare to address this anticipated increase in call volume.

Commissioner Davidson spoke of the three prevention initiatives that CDHS is rolling out around the state. The three programs are: 1.) nurse family partnership; 2.) safecare and 3.) community response. All three programs target slightly different segments of the population. For example, nurse family partnership focuses on first time moms while safecare will be available to families that have been reported to human services but are considered low risk. Additionally, each initiative offers different preventive services to help families in need.

Commissioner Goodwin touted the work of the child welfare training academy and the progress it has made over the last year. A committee of county, state, community partners, family members and youth help shape the training academy. In general, the new training emphasizes competency based on outcomes and is web-based to help accommodate all corners of the state.

Commissioner Kirkmeyer explained that \$6.7 million has been distributed to 31 counties to help them secure

permanency for kids in the child welfare system. These dollars (known as IV-E dollars) are like a grant and are intended to help communities rely less on out-of-home placements like residential treatment centers and/or foster families and identify more permanent homes. Commissioner Kirkmeyer explained the linkage between IV-E waiver dollars and the Child Welfare Allocation. She also listed a handful of data points all commissioners should know including: what are your county's child welfare scores, your county's child welfare expenditures, what percentage of your child welfare caseload are placed out of home, and what your county's allocation is for Child Welfare, Child Care and Colorado Works (TANF).

Commissioner Sharpe spoke of her service on the Child Welfare Executive Leadership Council. She explained that this group, which consists of six county commissioners, state staff, judicial members and community partners, meets four times a year. Together, the group hears updates on various child welfare initiatives and has collaborative discussions about how to move forward on child welfare practice and policy issues.

Julie Krow, with the Colorado Department of Human Services, encouraged attendees to sign up for the Department's weekly child welfare updates. (If you need more information on how to sign up, please contact Gini Pingnot – gpingenot@ccionline.org). She provided an update on the Department's mobile technology pilot. Caseworkers in 27 counties are piloting iPads and iPhones to see whether or not mobile technology helps them from an efficiency standpoint and thus allows them to spend more time with families in need. Additionally, the Department is working on a website that will allow interested individuals to click on a county and see its performance on various indicators.

Dennis Goodwin, Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman, explained the role of the ombudsman. In a nutshell, the ombudsman is an independent, neutral party who investigates complaints and grievances about child protection services. He acknowledged the collaboration he has witnessed to date and emphasized being a resource for counties. While his office is required to issue investigative reports when warranted, he said they would be fact based and counties would see them before they become public.

Planning and Funding for Transportation Infrastructure

The planning and funding process for transportation projects at the state level is complex and oftentimes mystifying to counties. During the recent winter conference, CCI convened a panel of transportation experts to provide insight into the planning and funding process at the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and some tips for getting projects funded.

Deb Perkins-Smith, Director of the Division of Transportation Development for CDOT, began the presentation by talking about MAP-21, the federal transportation reauthorization act, and the changes it has necessitated at CDOT. MAP-21 resulted in the consolidation of some programs at CDOT and the elimination of several others (including Scenic Byways and Safe Routes to Schools). Alongside these programmatic changes, MAP-21 has also put in place new approaches to asset management and state performance goals that must be met.

Commissioner Trent Bushner (Yuma County) then provided some perspective as a rural member of the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC). He outlined the transportation plan progression and explained the transportation planning region (TPR) approach and how these locally driven plans are then folded into the Statewide Transportation Plan. Bushner also provided some suggested tips for county commissioners as they seek to get their projects funded:

- Network with other counties in your TPR to establish priorities and needs,
- Get involved in all aspects of the planning process,
- Be a coordinator for citizen input on projects,
- Work closely with your regional staff,
- Get to know your State Transportation Commissioner,

- Be flexible with project timing,
- Be patient,
- Utilize TAP and Off-system Bridge Funds,
- Utilize Energy Impact Funds,
- Find your match cash (county, municipality, local business, etc.).

George Gerstle, Transportation Director for Boulder County (and a former CDOT employee), reminded attendees that they need to have a lot of patience to work through the process. He also encouraged commissioners to participate and to stay involved in local transportation planning efforts (through planning regions, metropolitan planning organizations like DRC-OG, etc.). He also strongly recommended getting to know your CDOT representatives **before** you need something. Those relationships can pay dividends down the road. Lastly, he noted that working with the private sector (public private partnerships) is critically important and has greatly expanded the opportunities for moving transportation projects forward.

Jeff Kullman, Board President for MOVE Colorado, wrapped up the panel presentations by talking about strategies for getting projects funded. He stressed getting to know the transportation commissioner from your region and your regional director. He reminded the commissioners that no one can present their county better than they can and the importance of staying on message. He also underscored the importance of partnership building. Kullman summed up his approach with what he calls the “Five Killer B’s”:

- Be Knowledgeable
- Be Prepared
- Be Consistent
- Be Patient
- Be Relentless.

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