

Governor Polis Opens Annual CCI Foundation Winter Conference

In keeping with tradition, Governor Polis headlined CCI's annual winter conference in Colorado Springs. This year's content-rich conference was attended by over 400 county officials. Delta County Commissioner Mark Roeber, CCI's 2019 President, welcomed Governor Polis by thanking him for his outreach and engagement with county leaders over the past year. The Governor has personally visited with commissioners around the state to hear their pressure points and he was the first governor to reach out and request a meeting with CCI's board of directors at the CCI office headquarters.

Governor Polis began by recognizing county officials as the problem solvers on the ground. He highlighted his work on early childhood education and reducing health care costs for Coloradans living east and west of the front range. The Governor also spoke of the newest state park, Trinidad Ranch in Las Animas County. The park includes Fishers Peak, a well-known landmark and the highest point in Colorado east of I-25. Support for this park and other state parks is a priority for Governor Polis and his state fiscal year 2020-2021 budget includes an investment of state general funds in one-time upgrades to parking facilities and bathrooms.



Governor Jared Polis gave the opening session speech at the CCI Foundation Winter Conference in El Paso County on December 3rd.

reform. Doing so will save tax payers money and help address the unnecessary incarceration of low level offenders. He has heard county concerns around the proposal to have hearings within 48 hours of an arrest which will create financial and workload strains on counties. He is seeking commissioner input on this proposal and wants to be sure it is not an unfunded mandate. Currently, \$5 million has been set aside in the Governor's budget to support this proposal. Counties are determining if this is sufficient to cover the first year cost of implementation and what can be done to ensure the state's ongoing financial support for this requirement in future years.

On behavioral health, Governor Polis said the system is not working. The system that can deny services to those in need and this results in higher costs to our prisons and jails, stresses county human services and local public health services and impacts our schools. Across six different state departments collectively spends \$1.4 billion on behavioral health and is not getting the outcomes we should expect.

The Governor concluded with remarks on transportation funding. His budget proposal includes some general fund for roads but long term funding solutions are still evasive. Given the results of the last two elections, we know the voters don't want tax increases and/or bonding. The challenge is to figure out how voters wish to pay for the great roads and no traffic they desire. He ended by saying that he views Colorado's transportation system as a cohesive network of state and local roads. He is concerned about proposals that allow parts of the state 'to go their own way'. The state could lose the cohesiveness of the system if we take that approach and he believes there is a better way to address statewide transportation needs.



Over 400 people attended the CCI Foundation Winter Conference.

The Governor said he was committed to working in a bipartisan fashion on criminal justice

District Meetings

Eastern District

CCI's Eastern District re-elected Morgan County Commissioner Jim Zwetzig to serve as their representative. Jim has been a long-standing CCI board member committed to collaboration and unity and is a strong advocate for counties at both the state and national level. Later in the conference, he was recognized as CCI's President for the 2020 calendar year. Congratulations Jim!



Elbert County Commissioner Chris Richardson, Cheyenne County Commissioner Patrick Ward and Darin Dickey attend the Eastern District Meeting.

After a brief update from our lunch sponsor, Colorado Retirement Association, and Sallie Clark, Colorado's Director for USDA, eastern district county commissioners heard from the newly created 'Small Operator Society' (SOS). SOS represents nearly 50 oil and gas companies that own and primarily operate vertical wells in Colorado. Eighty percent of small operators are in eastern Colorado and 20% are in western Colorado. In 2018, small operators contributed \$11m in property taxes rural Colorado and they directly support over 150 locally owned small businesses.

The SOS formed to help small operators participate and navigate the COGCC rule makings. Small operators view things differently than large operators, which makes the American Petroleum Institute and COGA not a good fit for them. Small operators are concerned about the commission's rule making and its potential to result in orphaned wells. This result would reduce critical property tax support for rural counties and the onus for cleaning up such wells would fall on state taxpayers. SOS is most concerned about the COGCC's rule making hearing in early 2020 around the commission's mission. While state statute now charges the commission with 'regulating' oil and gas development rather than to 'foster' it, statute also states that regulation must be reasonable and necessary. SOS emphasized that they are not a party of 'no' but they wish to be heard by the COGCC and plan to emphasize the difference in the way they operate vs. the large operators.

The eastern district counties agreed to join the SOS in 'party status' and to submit public comments to the COGCC. Commissioners also counseled one another to seek legal advice around adopting 1041 powers. Adopting 1041 powers will be costly for counties because there is no 'one size fits all approach'. The benefit, however, is that it creates a 60 day shot clock for the COGCC to act on a well permit and either approve or deny it. Counties should also consider establishing a local permit requirement. Doing so allows a board of county commissioners to regulate noise, hours of operation, set-back requirements, etc. The state will continue to review the below ground activities of an oil and gas operation.

The eastern district concluded their meeting with a round of county updates and a discussion about Elbert County's hemp regulations.

Front Range District

The Front Range District meeting was called to order by El Paso County Commissioner & District Chair Longinos Gonzales, Jr.

The first order of business was to elect a board member to the CCI board of directors. Douglas County Commissioner Roger Partridge was re-elected to the board for another year by acclamation.

Following the election, Jefferson County Commissioner Libby Szabo and Jefferson County Deputy County Manager Kourtney Hartmann presented information on some upcoming legislation on disconnection. Disconnection is when a land owner "disconnects" from a city and their property becomes county land again - but the established zoning stays in place and the county cannot stop development that was already approved by the city. Jefferson County ran a bill in 2016 to give the county a voice in the disconnection process. The outcome of this bill was that the municipality must notify the county and the county can elect to have a meeting with the municipality to discuss concerns about the



Douglas County Commissioner Lora Thomas, CCI Executive Director John Swartout and Weld County Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer, catch up following the Front Range District meeting.

disconnection. Even with this new law, the county still has no power to influence the disconnection process.

Jefferson County will be running legislation in 2020 with the hopeful outcome of

allowing counties more say in the disconnection process, establishing clearer rules and avoiding developers taking advantage of the vested rights statute.

Following the disconnection presentation, Mara Brosy-Wiwchar with CDPHE provided a closed landfill update. An advisory board with counties has been established to decide which landfills will receive clean up funds. The board is also working with the attorney general's office to establish guidelines.

Commissioners received a quick update from Commissioner Wendy Buxton-Andrade (Prowers County) on the CCI Legislative Priority to establish more transparency in the behavioral health system. Some counties are being contacted by their behavioral health providers with concerns about the pending legislation. Commissioner Buxton-Andrade said that many of these concerns are unfounded and the transparency provisions that counties are seeking are already currently in many of the provider contracts. Counties are supporting these provisions because the behavioral health system receives taxpayer dollars and yet can deny services to those in need.

Sallie Clark, USDA Rural Development CO State Director, also gave an update on loan programs for homes, business development, and community involvement. Front Range counties and citizens can easily apply for these programs.

At the end of the meeting, each county gave an update. Reports included information on growth, losing ballot

measures and how it will effect jails, discussion of school security and funding, jail capacity issues, wildfire risk reduction, oil/gas regulations and transportation projects.

The next Front Range District meeting will take place at the CCI Summer Conference in Summit County.

Mountain District

Mountain District President Merrit Linke (Grand County) presided over the CCI Mountain District Meeting and lunch on December 3 at the CCI Winter Conference in Colorado Springs. Lunch was sponsored by the Colorado Retirement Association and CCI thanks them for their continued support.

The first order of business was the election of the Mountain District representative to the CCI Board of Directors. Commissioner Debbie Bell (Fremont County) was re-elected by a unanimous vote to continue representing the district on the CCI Board. Congratulations to Commissioner Bell on her re-election!

Commissioners received a quick update from Commissioner Wendy Buxton-Andrade (Prowers County) on the CCI Legislative Priority to establish more transparency in the behavioral health system. Some counties are being contacted by their behavioral health providers with concerns about the pending legislation. Commissioner Buxton-Andrade said that many of these concerns are unfounded and the transparency provisions that counties are seeking are already currently in many of the provider contracts. Counties are supporting these provisions because the behavioral health system receives taxpayer dollars and yet can deny services to those in need.

The commissioners then heard a short presentation from Tamara Drangstveit of Peak Health Alliance and



Fremont County Commissioner Debbie Bell & Clarke Becker with the Department of Labor catch up after the Mountain District Meeting.

Commissioner Richard Cimino (Grand County) on health care challenges in the mountain region and some recent successes. Currently in Summit County, outpatient services are averaging over 500% of Medicare reimbursement rates. Through intense research and negotiation with healthcare providers, Peak Health Alliance has now arrived at set prices for all medical procedures in the region and Centura has offered Peak the lowest rates of any carrier in Colorado.

Sallie Clark, state director for the USDA Rural Development Office, briefed the commissioners on the various financial products offered by USDA. The Rural Development Office offers loans and grants to communities to help with issues like affordable housing, economic and small business development and infrastructure needs.

The meeting concluded with a county roundtable discussion, with commissioners giving short updates on current issues in their counties. Issues discussed included: training of sheriff's deputies to serve as ICE agents in Teller County, broadband infrastructure improvements, hiring of a new county attorney in Gilpin County, strategic planning efforts, possible airport expansion projects in Pitkin County, marijuana and hemp issues, short term rentals and updates on successful county ballot questions concerning increases in local tobacco tax rates.

The next CCI Mountain District Meeting will be held at the 2020 CCI Summer Conference in Keystone.

Southern District

CCI's Southern District elected Commissioner Felix Lopez of Las Animas County to serve as their board representative. Commissioner Lopez is one of our newest commissioners who is highly motivated and incredibly qualified. Congratulations Felix!

Over lunch the district heard a quick update from our lunch sponsor, Colorado Retirement Association, which is a proud provider of retirement plans for more than 20,000 employees that represent Colorado counties, municipalities, and special districts.

Sallie Clark, Colorado's Director for USDA gave an overview of the many programs USDA has that can assist counties. USDA has a rural development

program where they focus on the ABC's of rural development. A- affordable housing, B- business and economic development, and C- community infrastructure. With this model the USDA has invested and developed in Counties in the Southern District at the tune of \$62 million.



CCI Staff Kyle Burrell with Alamosa County Commissioner Darius Allen following the Southern District Meeting.

The district also heard from Mara Brosy-Wiwchar from CDPHE on an update about landfills. Following Mara, the district heard from Bent and Crowley county about the Governor's budget proposal to close private prisons in the state of Colorado. The argument around this isn't about public vs private prisons but rather an economical stand point where the closure of these private prisons would be incredibly devastating to our Southern Districts. The conversation has shifted from complete closure to the state buying back these facilities, this might work, but the counties with private facilities would lose a lot of their financial standing that is generated by property taxes on these facilities. This will be a hot button topic this upcoming session and it is something that will need to be closely watched.

Next on the agenda, the district heard from Tracy Philips, the Director of C-PACE (Colorado Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy). C-PACE is a program that assists counties and municipalities with tapping in to energy efficient alternatives. To wrap up our meeting we heard from Commissioners Wendy Buxton-Andrade and Byron Peloton alongside Logan county human services Director, Dave Long about the Behavioral Health Transparency Bill.

Western District

Representatives from fifteen of the sixteen counties that make up CCI's Western District attended the district meeting in Colorado Springs. The meeting was called to order by Rio Blanco Commissioner and District President, Jeff Rector. Commissioner Rector ran the election for the new Western District Representative to serve on CCI's Board of Directors. It was established through a district vote that Ouray County Commissioner Ben Tisdell would take this seat

upon the conclusion of Commissioner Roeber’s term. Congratulations Ben!

After the election and a board update from Commissioner Roeber, Commissioner Rector introduced Doug Vilsack, Assistant Director (AD) for the Department of Natural Resources’ Parks, Wildlife & Lands Division. AD Vilsack provided a current overview of the Department’s major goals and initiatives, and shared resources available to the public to track progress on their Wildly Important Goals (WIG). One project in development that DNR is undertaking in collaboration with the Department of Transportation (CDOT) is in response to the Wildlife Corridor Executive Order issued by the Department of the Interior. With 4,000 vehicle crashes involving big game each year, these kinds of collisions account for an estimated \$66 million in annual costs to the state. Governor Polis issued the Executive Order in August to complement Secretary Order 3362, and this has bolstered new funding opportunities from the federal government for big game corridors. The Polis administration has also devised an Action Plan identifying Priority Areas in accordance with Sec. Order 3362.

The security of the Colorado River and implementation of the Colorado Water Plan was another prominent topic in the discussion with DNR. The Water Plan Technical Update was recently approved by the state’s Water Conservation Board - it is different from previous versions in that it now embeds scenario planning and climate change into analyses. Commissioners also learned about some of the outcomes of drought contingency plans for the Upper and Lower Colorado River basins completed in May. Demand management is being considered as a potential second line of defense, and stakeholder meetings are underway to determine whether and how to develop an Upper Basin Demand Management



CCI Staff Daphne Gervais with Rio Blanco County Commissioner Jeff Rector, the chair of the Western District.

Program that would mitigate risk of involuntary compact curtailment.

Other topics of discussion with DNR included the status of the new state park near Fishers Peak, and COGCC’s work on SB19-181. Moving forward, AD Vilsack will be the primary contact for CCI on the aforementioned issues.

Following AD Vilsack’s discussion with commissioners, the Western District heard from Julie Murphy, Assistant Director for DNR’s Energy & Minerals Division. AD Murphy reiterated wanting to work with the Western Slope, and she recognized the need to acknowledge at the state level that county governments do not follow a “one size fits all” model. Commissioners discussed how uncertainty is impacting oil & gas production, the rulemakings in development by the Air Quality Control Commission, and they shared local perceptions concerning the urban-rural divide.

Finally, Western District commissioners listened to a presentation from the CEO of Peak Health Alliance, Tamara Dranstveit. Tamara discussed the beneficial outcomes of collaboration between Peak and local governments, with Summit county as one prime example. Through this partnership, Peak has helped counties like Summit gain better healthcare access, more coverage, and better rates.

The Western District concluded its meeting with a presentation from one of our sponsors, the Colorado Retirement Association, and a round of county updates. The next meeting of the Western District will be at CCI’s Summer Conference in June at the Keystone Resort.

Save the Dates!

CCI Summer Conference
June 1-3, 2020

Keystone Resort – Summit County, Colorado



Winter Conference Photo Highlights



CDPHE Director Kim Bimestefer, Delta County Commissioner & CCI President Mark Roeber, DOLA Director Rick Garcia and Revenue Director Lu Cordova following the cabinet update panel at conference.



Members of the DOLA field staff celebrated Don Sandoval (bottom right) after he received an award of recognition from CCI, SDA & CML.



Jefferson County Commissioner Casey Tighe, Summit County Commissioner Elisabeth Lawrence and San Miguel County Commissioner Hilary Cooper catch up in between conference sessions.



Logan County Commissioner Byron Pelton and Delta County Commissioner Don Suppes made a friendly bet around the high school football championship their local schools competed in. The losing commissioner had to wear the opposing team's t-shirt to the Tuesday evening dinner.



The Teller County Crew! Pictured are Commissioner Norm Steen, Administrator Sheryl Decker, Commissioner Bob Campbell & Commissioner Marc Dettenrieder.



Pueblo County Commissioner Chris Wiseman, Rio Grande County Commissioner Suzanne Bothell and Sedgwick County Commissioner Don Schneider all took part in the HEMP in session.



Pueblo County Commissioner Terry Hart received CCI's Distinguished Service Award at the Winter Conference.



Montrose County Commissioner Sue Hansen received the CCI Freshman Commissioner of the Year award, Ouray County Administrator Connie Hunt received the Administrator of the year award and Summit County Commissioner received the CCI Commissioner of the Year award.



Delta County Commissioner & CCI President Mark Roeber, presents Weld County Commissioner the CCI Commissioner of the Year award.



Morgan County Commissioner Jim Zwetzig, CCI Staff Kyley Burress & Grand County Commissioner Merrit Linke celebrate a great winter conference.



Alamosa County Commissioner Helen Sigmond & Prowers County Commissioner Ron Cook chat at conference.



CCI staff Eric Bergman & Fremont County Commissioner Tim Payne share a laugh.



Pictured above are members of the wildfire mitigation panel. From left to right are Scott Sugg, Assistant Fire Director for Cooperative Fire, Mike Lester, State Forester & Director, Jefferson County Commissioner Lesley Dahlkemper, Mike Morgan, Director of the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention & Control and Ouray County Commissioner Ben Tisdell.



Adams County Commissioner Mary Hodge & Kathy Rennels with the Colorado State University System catch up at conference.



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