



**Minutes**  
**October 27, 2017**  
**Silverton, Colorado**

Attending:

|                   |                   |                  |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Todd Barnes       | Mt. Crested Butte | Lisa Branner     | Silverton         |
| Dean Brookie      | Durango           | Frank Lancaster  | Estes Park        |
| Todd Brown        | Telluride         | Ron Leblanc      | Durango           |
| Kevin Burns       | Dillon            | Bob Lenz         | Jackson, WY       |
| Dave Chapin       | Vail              | Leia Morrison    | Gunnison          |
| Greg Clifton      | Vail              | Sean Murphy      | Telluride         |
| Thomas Davidson   | Summit County     | John Overstreet  | Steamboat Springs |
| Tiffany Dekay     | Silverton         | Randy Ready      | Frisco            |
| Dave Everitt      | Moab              | Barbara Renowden | Silverton         |
| Russell Forrest   | Gunnison          | Steve Skadron    | Aspen             |
| Becca Gerber      | Park City, UT     | Christine Tookey | Silverton         |
| Dan Gibbs         | Summit County     | Jim White        | Grand Lake        |
| Michelle Hamilton | Silverton         | Gary Wilkinson   | Frisco            |
| Sarah Smith Hymes | Avon              |                  |                   |

**I. Call to Order and Introductions, Dean Brookie, CAST President**

**II. Approval of August 2017 Meeting Minutes**

There was a motion to approve the August 2017 minutes and the motion passed unanimously.

**III. Welcome to Silverton, Mayor Christine Tookey**

The mayor welcomed CAST to Silverton and shared some history of the local ski area and the community building where the meeting was being held. Younger people are moving to Silverton and they have a vision for the future. She encouraged everyone to enjoy their visit.

#### **IV. Silverton Mountain: A Unique Ski Area Business Model, Jen Brill, Owner**

Jen Brill and her husband started Silverton Mountain at a time when Silverton was looking to grow their local economy. The community was very supportive. Silverton Mountain is unique in that it has only advanced and expert terrain and they operate a lift on private land. Most commonly ski areas are on USFS land, but here the public land is managed by BLM. It took seven years for the environmental study to be completed and to secure the long term permit. They negotiated with BLM to start with guided-only tours for up to 20 skiers per day at a 5:1 client to guide ratio. This EIS was focused on safety which is not the norm. They found their strength was that they were different. A couple years into the business they allowed unguided skiing and they became, in their own words, "Lame, Plain, the Same." The larger numbers also made the business harder to manage. They have cut back unguided ski days so they can focus on what they do best and what made them unique. They built a half pipe essentially in the middle of the backcountry for a Red Bull/Shawn White made-for-TV event. The project was a lot of work and they were disappointed with the lack of recognition they got during media events. They have continued to work with Red Bull on events that attract some of the best skiers in the world. They have a strong, highly skilled and trained staff that are contributing to the town. Internet access has been one of the biggest challenges for them, along with lots of snow, road closures, and rock fall issues. Their wish list at the ski area is working phone lines, running water and internet access. They have focused on some educational things, diversified by starting an operation in Alaska, and recently got a heli permit that will include access to new terrain. Jen states that keeping their identity is key to their success.

#### **V. Superfund Designation: Community Collaboration**

Michelle Hamilton introduced the panel and gave an overview of how the recent Super Fund designation came to be. There has been over 100 years of mining in the area that has led to water quality issues. More recently, the local economy has turned to tourism and outdoor recreation. On August 5, 2015, about 3 million gallons of acid water washed into the Animas River as the EPA was working on remediation. Silverton has considered a large array of options on how to remediate. There is a temporary water treatment plant treating the Gold King waters but there are other portals discharging contaminated water.

Dean Brookie, Durango City Council: Dean was Mayor when the spill happened. It got immediate attention from the head of the EPA, both of Colorado's U.S. Senators, the Governor, the State Attorney General and the media. It took a little over a day for the water to reach Durango. And they shut off any intakes from the river. Fortunately, most of their drinking water comes from different water sources. It was determined that the spill didn't kill the fish. The water reached New Mexico and they are suing the EPA. The number one lesson learned from Dean's perspective is the importance of emergency planning and management. San Juan

County, La Plata County, Silverton, and Durango have all been working on this issue. Silverton was reluctant in the past to talk about a Super Fund designation due to concerns over possible negative impacts to tourism and a black mark on mining in general, but all the local governments and the communities eventually came together to pursue the designation. When you partner with the U.S. government, it is a forever relationship. Dean, San Juan County and others went to Washington DC to meet with the EPA. The EPA gave them their full attention although Scott Pruitt was not in attendance. Dean expects there to be continued funding for the Gold King Superfund site. Hard rock mining is the only unregulated industry in the United States.

Scott Fetchenhier, San Juan County Commissioner: For years, the EPA tried to make the Super Fund designation and both San Juan County and Silverton resisted it. Instead, for the last 30-35 years they have worked on clean up through a stakeholder approach. Stakeholders toured other mining communities and they learned that you really need a community-based stakeholder process rather than heavy handed EPA action. These stakeholders have cleaned up many land-based contamination sites, but couldn't do anything about water impacts from the mining sites. The 2015 Gold King spill turned the Animas River orange. Silverton had seen this color before so the town wasn't overly alarmed. Calling the spill "toxic" is not exactly accurate as it was mostly iron that caused the discoloration. San Juan County locals wanted to do the Super Fund on their own terms so they made a list of 14 demands to the Governor. One of these was that they wanted local involvement and that they wanted the town name to be left out of the Super Fund site name. The EPA listened, the County does have a seat at the table and they are working well together.

DeAnne Gallegos, Director, Silverton Area Chamber of Commerce: She partners with the town and county on tourism and business development. Oddly enough, Silverton was not immediately informed of the spill. Even 24 hours after the spill, she didn't have the history and knowledge to communicate what had happened. They weren't prepared for media outreach but got a plan together, including accessing the PIOs from Colorado Tourism Office out of Durango. They got a crash course in media and PR. They now have a communication plan which is a positive outcome. They shared key talking points with the towns' service staff so they could respond to visitor concerns. She learned that media is both a friend and a foe. Her experience is that the average visitor doesn't even know what Superfund means. The town is self-reliant and strong and is actively working with EPA and other stakeholders to be a part of the process.

Rory Cowie, Program Director of Water Resources/Mountain Hydrologist & Marcie Bidwell, Mountain Studies Institute: MSI learned very quickly that the public wanted immediate information on the spill, even if it was basic. Having a communication plan that can be

executed very quickly is critical. Establishing trust among the multiple stakeholders and having a good partnership is also key. There are both real and perceived risks and different folks have different values. Health risks are hard to measure. In Silverton the risks are in the soil, but downstream the Durango economy is impacted by water for recreation and further downstream impacts are drinking water and agricultural water use. So impacts vary by community. A baseline understanding of your resource and having stakeholder groups and partnerships that can help cover all the bases and offer good communication is important. The MSI staff got involved immediately and being on-scene together with other stakeholders was important. They helped the visiting dignitaries and others that aren't familiar with the issues understand the challenge.

Mark Rudolph, Environmental Scientist, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment:

He has worked on several Super Fund sites in Colorado and has learned from each of those sites. The State takes over these sites after about ten years. Colorado provides assistance on brownfields which are underused, languishing sites that are a detractor to a community. The State helps clean up, re-characterize, and to bring the property back into the local economy. For example, the State cleaned up a Roseville smelter site that had high lead. He is happy to talk to CAST members about this program as most mountain towns have brownfields.

Discussion: Most of us are sitting on top of a potential "Gold King" and all the panelists talked about the importance of being ready. The Durango Council each got a notecard about emergency preparedness. It was critical to bring MSI in to answer the technical questions because that is what people wanted to know. The EPA was nervous about lawsuits so Durango was restricted on what they could say. The La Plata County Office of Emergency Management was in place and has since done a refresher on emergency response. They got trained on how to deal with the media and now know to send questions to a single media source. The Silverton team met daily to keep up to date on what was happening. La Plata County and Durango had incident management plans in place and that was helpful.

**VI. Lyft's Expansion to Mountain Towns, Brittany Cameron, Lyft Operations Manager**

Started in 2012, Lyft is a peer to peer ride share that connects folks with vehicles with those that need rides. They connect people and communities, increase quality of life, reduce inequality, and replace traffic with green space to eliminate emissions. They came to Denver in 2013 and Colorado was the first state to launch ride share legislation. They describe themselves as hyper local and partner with many Colorado businesses, nonprofits and the government. This year they started a partnership with CDOT on a campaign regarding the dangers of driving high. Their service is not an urban only solution and they have recently expended to mountain areas. Each driver has to be screened by a nurse practitioner. Their current challenge is recruiting enough drivers. They could use assistance in finding nurse

practitioners and mechanics to help onboard drivers, per state regulations. They would like to work with CAST member towns to identify key venues and areas where they can support operational improvements and support local nonprofits. Drivers go through a background check, vehicle inspection and medical requirement. Lyft is serving: Telluride, Vail, Beaver Creek, the I-70 mountain corridor, Winter Park, and Steamboat.

## **VII. Town-Owned Outdoor Recreation Amenities**

Michelle Hamilton introduced Lisa Branner, Silverton Public Relations Specialist and small business owner. Lisa has been with the town for a just over month and is charged with looking at a Kendall Mountain master plan. Kendall Mountain consists of the ski hill behind the community center, ice rink, Nordic trails, sledding hill, terrain park, and other trails. She is guiding the discussion on what Silverton wants to do with Kendall Mountain in the future.

History: This ski area opened in the 1960s and closed in the 1980s because it was operating without permit. It reopened in 1990s with a lot of community input. This building was built by community members in 2000 with great love and community spirit. A double chair lift was installed with 240' vertical gain. It serves 2800 skiers per year and operates at a loss. How do they make it financially viable and how do they capitalize on the outdoor recreation boom?

Their first steps were community surveys and visioning sessions with the goal of getting community buy-in. Local school kids are the largest user group with winter PE classes and winter sports clubs. Lisa has spent time talking to students and brainstorming. Kids want zip lines and adults want mountain biking. Other wants are more lifts and terrain, tubing, Nordic tracks, ice rink, fat bikes and in the summer mountain biking, music, a white water park, and hiking trails. They are now identifying the low hanging fruit that the town can do on their own, and planning for the larger things that they need to develop partnerships to accomplish. Longer term they will do a terrain feasibility study to see what the terrain is suitable for. They will do a Master Plan and possibly land acquisitions. Lisa asked what has worked for other CAST communities, what are the pitfalls, funding opportunities and potential partnerships?

### Open Discussion:

Steamboat Springs-The winter sports club has an agreement that gives them exclusive use of the city-owned Howelson Hill. That one sided agreement hasn't worked well for the City of Steamboat Springs and the town is working to change that agreement. Pitfalls: Howelson Hill is seen as "rich kids" hill for the exclusive use of high cost team clubs. Deferred maintenance is a huge issue. The town pays for maintenance and loses \$600K per year. They compete against the ski resort and they have limited marketing. Soils test shows the lift is sliding so they are looking at a new lift that will be \$2-\$4 M. Funding outlets are limited because they have to go through the sports club. The community sees it as history and a great asset. Town has considered shutting it down, but it is part of the downtown core and part of the community's

identify. They worked with a consulting company who gave lots of summer recommendations but the City Council didn't support the proposal. Steamboat did an RFP looking for private operators and only got one response.

Gunnison also has a local ski hill. They are just beginning to think about how else they can use this space. Gunnison is seeing that Fat Biking is extending the number days visitors spend in town.

Vail has nothing to do with the Vail Resorts ski mountain but guests see it as one entity. Their Recreation District was created in 1993, has a \$7M budget and a mill levy increase is on the ballot. Moving revenue and budget implications to a Recreation District has worked well in Vail.

Durango has Chapmen Hill ski hill which is run by the City and funded by sales tax. Durango's ice rink makes money because hockey is very popular, but the ski hill does not. Last year they started a new marketing effort targeted at folks who can't afford to go ski at larger areas but want to teach their kids to ski. They looked at developing summer use with biking, but they won't pursue that.

Estes Park had Hidden Valley ski area that was in Rocky Mountain National Park. It was run by a Recreation District and it was a good model. The area had summer golf and a ski area. The Rec District Board closed it down which some felt was a mistake, and the National Park immediately deconstructed it. Ghost town skiing is of interest to some, and people still come to ski Hidden Valley. Hidden Valley used to do half priced lift tickets the week of Xmas if you dressed up like Santa Claus. Creative ideas like that set you apart from others.

Jackson: The in-town ski area, Storm Mountain was losing money. They now offer skiing, tubing, and an alpine slide. A year round mountain coaster is a money maker.

Crested Butte Resort: Operates a zip line year round.

Park City: They put in a festival area at the base of the ski mountain which the locals don't identify with. It doesn't fit with the local community.

Frisco: The town is developing Nordic skiing and their tubing hill. People might come to ski at one of the large resorts, but they stay for another day of these other activities. They have partnered with Copper Mountain Resort instructors to do a Learn to Ski program adjacent to the tubing area. These amenities are a challenge to staff at full capacity. They have been approached by extreme snow board terrain park developers. Because the area is lit, there are after school activity options.

## VIII. Updates/Other Business

### Flexible Partnerships Act: Lease of Under-Utilized USFS Facilities

Jon Whitney, Sen. Bennet's Western Slope Regional Director was invited to discuss The Flexible Partnerships Act sponsored by Sen. Bennett and he passed out a Fact Sheet.

Revenue is a challenge for the USFS, and much of their budget is going to fire fighting. Maintaining administrative sites cost money they don't have so this lease arrangements allows the site to stay in the public domain and create benefit for local communities. The alternative would be for USFS to sell of that site. They see this lease model would actually deter the selling of federal lands. This program would allow the USFS to enter into a lease with a local government or developer to utilize an unused or under-utilized USFS administrative site. For example, the City of Aspen could lease such a site from the USFS to have under their control for 50-100 years. They could develop a housing project for example and the redeveloping of the site would be considered in-kind payment of the lease. The critical housing shortage was part of the impetus of this bill. An affordable housing project that resulted from a land exchange in Summit County also led Sen. Bennet to look for a better way to do such a partnership with local governments.

The Regional Forester would first determine eligible sites and then enter into consultation with local government and give public notice. The bill requires consultation with local governments. This relates to an expired bill (at end of 2016) that already gave USFS the ability to convey and lease sites, but it only allowed cash contributions. This bill allows USFS to consider in-kind contributions. They envision it would mostly be used for housing, but Arkansas is considering creating a recreational hub on a site there. The bill currently has the support of Grand, Summit, and Eagle Counties. It might be wrapped up with the Farm Bill. There is a list of facilities that might be considered under the Existing Facilities bill that has since expired and the USFS wants to reauthorize. Seeing that list would be of interest. Sen. Bennet's staff has requested it and would be shared with stakeholders.

### Open Discussion:

- This seems to be an innovate approach with lots of opportunities.
- The Jackson Housing Trust has talked to the USFS about a lease on a local admin site.
- If land were to be leased to a private company, how does a local government assure the project is meeting county housing standards? Could a local government have veto power? Veto power of a local government in a bill would be tricky.
- Would the revenue from a lease stay on the local forest? Our local forests desperately need those funds.
- The current language doesn't put a cap on lease length and perhaps one should be added.

- The USFS won't be profiting on this as they would just receive market value for lease.
- Developers won't likely be interested because they wouldn't want to invest in a project that they wouldn't own.
- Perhaps the bill should only authorize local governments to lease this land. Then local governments can enter into partnerships with the private sector to develop housing projects.

CAST members are encouraged to reach out to Sen. Bennet's office with questions or concerns. They will consider these comments and are willing to come back to a future CAST meeting to discuss further. There is plenty of time for input.

#### **IX. Innovators Showcase**

This will be a re-occurring agenda item where five members have three minutes each to highlight an innovative or successful effort.

Aspen Mobility Lab-Aspen is attempting a three month mobility experiment in how people move in and around in Aspen. Aspen is "drowning in single occupancy vehicles." They are looking at next generation mobility solutions to increase mobility, decrease congestion and foster a people-first downtown that is economically viable and socially equitable. They hope this will be a model that can be replicated.

Park City and Summit County, UT created a ¼ cent resort tax on goods and services. With this funding stream they brought in 88 electric bikes at nine locations and created 11 miles where ebikes can use a paved path. Those 88 bikes have traveled 29,000 mile. They have tracked the resulting CO2 reduction. The demand has exceeded supply and they will add 88 bikes next summer. Stations were set up along existing transit routes so the ebike program is increasing connectivity. This program is working towards Park City's goal to utilize renewable energy sources.

Durango Urban Renewal Redevelopment District-Durango established this District to address a section of town with aging buildings and they now have ten Character Districts with mixed use developments. The city is knocking on doors to inform land owners what their building could look like with redevelopment, new signing, etc. They have the RE:NEW matching grant program to support small business and incentivize reinvestment. They also have the Durango Creates Grants which invests in small scale community projects focused on place making and community engagement. They are implementing a vision that will capitalize on Durango's uniqueness.

Vail Intermountain Fuels Reduction Project-This wildfire mitigation took place entirely on USFS land and was financed by many partners. Pile and burn was Phase 1 and Phase II was helicopter logging. 725,000 board feet were removed by a Blackhawk helicopter, and logs were then dropped and piled. Although this successful project was expensive, the mitigation work was accomplished with very minimal environmental impact.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.