



**Minutes**  
**March 7, 2019**  
**Colorado Municipal League, Denver, Colorado**

**ATTENDING:**

Tom Acre, Dillon	Sean Murphy, Telluride
Dean Brookie, Durango	Jim Peterson, Grand Lake
Todd Brown, Telluride	Keith Riesberg, Winter Park
Joyce Burford, Honorary Member	Steve Skadron, Aspen
Greg Clifton, Vail	Karn Stiegelmeier, Summit County
Thomas Davidson, Summit County	Gary Suiter, Steamboat Springs
Jeff Durbin, Fraser	Nick Teverbaugh, Honorary Member
Joe Fitzpatrick, Mt. Crested Butte	Philip Vandernail, Fraser
Russ Forrest, City of Gunnison	Gary Wilkinson, Frisco
Erin Gigliello, Breckenridge	Delanie Young, Telluride
Ross Herzog, Telluride	
Rick Holman, Breckenridge	<b>Guests &amp; Staff</b>
Ryan Hyland, Silverthorne	Margaret Bowes, CAST
Elizabeth Jones, Beaver Creek Resort Co.	Sam Mamet, CML
Nancy Kerry, Frisco	Ben Mendenhall, ColoTrust
Frank Lancaster, Estes Park	Drew Nelson, Salida
Dara MacDonald, Crested Butte	Jane Templeton, Salida
Eric Mamula, Breckenridge	Dan Shore, Salida
Kathi Meyer, Steamboat Springs	Harald Kasper, Salida
	Cheryl Brown-Kovacic, Salida

**I. Call to Order and Introductions, Greg Clifton, CAST President**

Following a networking lunch, the meeting was called to order at 12:20. Introductions were made around the room. Winter weather and an avalanche across Interstate 70 kept many members from attending this meeting.

**II. New Business**

- Approval of January 2019 minutes: The January 2019 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.
- Sam Mamet Recognition: Sam has served as CML Executive Director for 40 years and has done amazing work bringing the organization to new heights and accomplishing much in his tenure. He is retiring at the end of March. One of the most notable attributes was his connection with Colorado communities and how he got out to meet with his members individually. CAST presented Sam with

a certificate for both a 2019-2020 Ikon and Epic season pass along with other gifts from individual members. Sam remarked that public service is a noble cause and that is what CAST members do.

### **III. Keynote Address: Governor Jared Polis**

The Governor noted some of the western slope/resort communities that are well represented through individuals serving on his cabinet and commissions. Governor Polis represented many western ski towns in Congress so he is familiar with the issues resort communities face. Summer tourism and outdoor recreation are an important part of Colorado's economy and part of the state's fabric. Outdoor rec defines our state with 92% of residents participating. We are the national leader in winter tourism and summer is growing. The Governor expressed his intention to focus on outdoor rec at the highest levels. He looks for strong leadership to replace Luis Benitez at the state's Outdoor Recreation office.

Renewable energy is a big focus for the Governor and he wants Colorado to play a national leadership role in this arena. He recognizes that many CAST members have very aggressive goals as well. Updating oil and gas laws to support a sustainable long term economic role of that industry is another goal. He wants to see changes in health care and the high premiums that Western Slope residents pay and he expects great progress in the next few years on health care costs. Free full day kindergarten is a goal for the Governor for the next school year. He closed with stating that all of these issues are connected and together we can work to make ski town economies thrive.

### **IV. Legislative Update, Kevin Bommer, Deputy Director, Colorado Municipal League**

Sam Mamet introduced Kevin Bommer who is replacing Sam as the CML Executive Director in April.

There is still a lot of dancing going on with new Governor, the new legislators and one party having control of the House and Senate. There isn't much bi-partisanship except for the low hanging fruit. There are going to be debates and discussions even among the majority.

Health Insurance: Bills are trying to address cost impacts and what people pay.

Transportation: We will leave this session without a statewide funding solution for transportation. Speaker of the House Becker is writing a referred measure to debruce and take those dollars to pay for transportation, early childhood, k-12. This question would go to ballot. CML will watch this proposal for both benefits and impacts.

There is discussion about how we fund the Colorado water plan and insure a conservation ethic exists and that communities keep their local authority. CML is supportive of the Oil and Gas bill, but recognizes that it needs some work.

Megan Dollar shared that there haven't been many affordable housing bills so far but she expects some to be introduced. It comes down to a question of where the state funding comes from.

The living wage bill is controversial within the membership but CML is supporting it. It is expected to pass. The family medical leave insurance bill should be introduced soon and the concept behind the bill is to have a state-level medical family leave act that includes wage replacement.

On plastic bag and other plastic bans, a new bill is coming that would develop a statewide standard on polystyrene. Kevin sees us getting to a statewide standard that would allow municipalities to be more restrictive if desired.

Minimum Wage Bill-CML will talk to sponsor about some guardrails to ensure it can't cause problems with local initiatives.

Gallagher: Lots of talk but little action. Kevin thinks there will be something crafted for the 2020 ballot but nothing this session.

Once this session is done Kevin will do a 25 stop outreach meeting tour and he looks forward to talking to CAST Members.

#### **V. Economic Update, Brian Lewandowski, Associate Director, Leeds School of Business**

We are set to break a record on the longest stretch between recessions. We see strong national employment, low unemployment, pretty good economic growth, but we are growing slower than last year. Colorado is still a leader in employment growth nationally. Colorado has a higher labor force participation rate than nationally. Maybe this is because we are a young state. We are at record lows in terms of debt burden although this might be different in resort communities. Strong state and national trends leads to more tourism in our resort communities. All these metrics lead to the high consumer confidence that we have nationally, statewide and especially in the mountain region.

Colorado benefits from attracting people who want to live here so there is a continued net migration into the state. Colorado wages are above national average. There has been huge wage growth in accommodation and food services. Construction has grown but is still behind the mid-80s.

Colorado ski counties have 20% of the land area and 6.6% of employment. They saw an increased population in 2018, higher migration growth, but a slower pace of growth than the state as a whole. Ski county wages were up 4.9% and the unemployment rate is lower than rest of Colorado and the nation. There is lots of variance among ski counties in annual pay. The tourism industry has recovered well from the recession.

Potential headwinds for 2019: trade agreements, interest rates, and global growth. State headwinds are drought, weather, housing affordability, talent shortage, health and childcare, real wage increases, and commodity prices/cycle.

How are locals benefiting from the growth? The state can't keep money due to Tabor. We are seeing higher traffic and cost of living but our quality of life still looks great to those coming from other metro areas. Brian is not worried about a real estate crash in Colorado as there is plenty of demand with in-migration.

## **VI. Overuse/Overcrowding on Trails/Trailheads: Local Action**

### Greg Clifton, Town Manager, Vail

This will be a continuing topic for CAST as it is likely a growing trend. Funding is central to this discussion as funding and visitation are moving in opposite directions. Much of USFS dollars are being directed towards wildfire management/mitigation. Guest experience is the business we are all in and it is no longer just about skiers. What is the visitor experience when there is no parking, illegal camping, sanitation issues and wildfires? Organizations and entities at the local level must get very creative and seek new ways to address these issues. The decline in the guest experience has led to programs such as the Front Ranger Program. The Front Ranger Program is all about partnerships, sharing resources and doing things differently. That is the new climate we live in: forging partnerships, crossing jurisdictions, sharing resources.

### Aaron Mayville, District Ranger, Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District

Aaron is a district ranger on one of the five districts in the White River National Forest. The White River National forest is the most visited forest if including skier visits, and 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited without skier visits, but budgets have not gone up to meet this demand. Staffing is continuing to decline, but the communities adjacent to the forests are thriving. The White River district has challenges that are unique in the USFS.

Before Hanging Lake was actively managed the parking lot filled and a long queue of cars backed-up onto I-70, conflicts erupted and the visitor experience was impacted. There were extensive trail impacts from overuse and abuse. In 2012, a stakeholder group was formed to look at a process to manage that destination. They now have a management plan that includes maximum daily visitors managed by a mandatory reservation system, mandatory shuttle service, and an adaptive management plan that allows them to tinker with usage numbers/signage/etc. Glenwood Springs and CDOT worked on shuttle service infrastructure so there were lots of partnerships.

Aaron gave kudos to Greg Clifton for taking the leadership on the Front Country Ranger Program. It might not be unique as other communities have partnered with their local USFS district, but this was new for Aaron's district. All municipalities have put in \$60,000 to hire six front country rangers starting in May. These rangers will manage illegal camping, keep an eye on fires at campsites, do trash pick-up, etc. Aaron hopes the Front Ranger Program is a short term fix. We need to address funding for public lands at the federal level.

### Karn Steigelmeier, Commissioner, Summit County

Summit County has lots of overcrowding on trails and Quandary Peak trailhead is a severe example. A Leeds Business School plan suggested looking at Hanging Lake and Maroon Bells models to manage demand. Karn talked about the correlation between over-visitation and wildfires. After two major fires

in the recent past, Summit County and the towns pooled \$86,000 to fund seasonal rangers and support the Sheriff's office. A recent mill levy will continue to fund this program with \$1M to use for fire mitigation. There is also \$200K to go to the Front Ranger program, overtime to the Sheriff's office and messaging to community and tourists around fire prevention. Summit County also has a chipper program that collects slash two times each year from residents to encourage creating defensible space. The Wildernest fire is a poster child for fire mitigation work as that is what saved 2,000 residences. That prompted the County to be even more proactive so they will pay for USFS-managed contractors to do cutting/clearing around strategic areas.

Locally, Summit County has worked with all stakeholders including towns, the Sheriff's office and fire management to get consistency around fire ban rules so it is easier for visitors and residents to understand. Summit County wants to work with the USFS to change the criteria for implementing a fire ban. Currently the criteria is based on 90% Energy Release Component (ERC) which is based on moisture level and fuel. Summit County has been saying for years that we need make that ERC lower but to also consider the volume of visitors at any given time in the criteria. The county also believes that local, state and national resources available as well as the weather forecast should be considered. They have started this conversation with the USFS.

#### Open Discussion:

Breckenridge: The Summit County Front Ranger program was easy money to commit.

Grand Lake: Their fire last summer became an emergency management drill and the town has since talked to all involved to consider how the response could be improved. Fire mitigation work in town is very important, but they are surrounded by national forest where mitigation work is not being done.

Aspen: Maroon Bells has added more shuttles from Aspen Highlands. A new permit system started last summer at an area hot springs. It is a free permit so that caps the numbers of visitors. The Four Pass Loop is being considered for similar management because its popularity is affecting the pristine nature of the area.

Vail: In past, signs and gates noting trail closures for things like calving/mating seasons were ignored and trail poaching was increasing. Volunteers started doing outreach with trail users and put it back upon the community to hopefully police themselves. This effort has increased compliance with closures. Education is a very key component and that falls upon us at the local level.

Estes Park: Rocky Mountain National Park is working on utilizing more shuttles and looking at permits to get into the park. The destination marketing folks have been asked to identify products they have to entertain folks until they can get into the park. The rafting industry has used permitting as a way to manage numbers for a long time. It is a pain, but you know you are going to get a good experience.

City of Steamboat Springs has a lodging tax that is dedicated to trail building and they are doing it on federal lands. They have started an endowment fund for maintenance and another endowment fund for wildlife management.

## **VII. The State of Colorado Wildlife, Jeffrey Ver Steeg, Acting Director, Colorado Parks & Wildlife**

Challenges: Human population increases expected, elk herds showing decline, demand for recreation expanding into formerly secure habitats, intensity of use, backcountry access becoming easier. Energy sector pressures include more oil and gas development, transmission lines, wind turbines, and oil rigs. Development impacts include roads and houses. Under and overpasses on Hwy 9 decreased collisions by over 90%.

Mitigation & Recreational Impacts: Planning is important including well-planned recreation. Ideally recreation happens in low quality locations, limits activities during crucial periods of year, and has spatial buffers to minimize impacts. Year round/winter use of rec puts a lot of pressure on wildlife populations. Research/monitoring should be utilized to better understand the impacts. They know they need to plan for increased recreation and work with neighboring communities. The top three barriers to participation in outdoors cited by users were: limited time, crowding on trails, and traffic congestion. Land managers top three was: inability to maintain infrastructure (people want amenities), maintaining visitor safety, and providing programs to engage youth.

Climate: Climate models aren't always correct so this forces us to be reactive. All habitats will react differently to changes in climate as will wildlife populations. Bear hibernation is shorter so they are out more actively than before, increasing opportunity for conflict. Insect infestations are impacted by temp/climate. The Grasslands are dry and likely to get drier. The standard rule is to look to the southwest and what you see there is likely what you will see in your future for wildlife and habitat. It can take 30 years to be impacted by changes. Management actions are underway to improve resilience such as fish passages, increasing water flows and improving habitat.

The Dept. of Parks and Wildlife offers management options and expertise, but lets communities decide which tools to use.

*Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.*