

ROUTT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

FINAL MINUTES

June 11, 2020

The regular meeting of the Routt County Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Chairman Steve Warnke, Bill Norris, Troy Brookshire, Greg Jaeger and Billy Mitzelfeld. Brian Kelly, Peter Flint, Roberta Marshall, Rohail Abid and Andrew Benjamin were absent. Interim Planning Director Kristy Winser and staff planner Chris Brookshire also attended. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes. This meeting occurred via Zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ROUTT COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

Ms. Winser stated that she had been contacted by Routt County Emergency Management regarding the update to the Routt County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). She said that a presentation of the draft HMP at a public hearing is a requirement of the update process, and because the material included in the plan is important for land use decisions it is being presented to Planning Commission. She added that Planning Commission may also want to consider how the HMP should be referenced or integrated into the Master Plan.

Mr. David “Mo” DeMorat, Routt County Emergency Manager, introduced the representatives of Tetra Tech, the consulting firm that assisted with the HMP update, and Mark Thompson, a representative of the Colorado Office of Emergency Management. He noted that Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that the HMP be updated every five years, and FEMA can withhold certain grant funding if plans are out of date. Mr. DeMorat stated that the HMP is critical element for understanding the potential hazards in order to be optimally ready to respond and recover from incidents. The HMP is intended to guide mitigation projects intended to reduce the potential damage from hazards. Mr. DeMorat reviewed the process through which the draft HMP is open to public comment, amended if necessary, then presented to the BCC, the State and FEMA for approval.

Mr. Rob Flaner of Tetra Tech presented a circular graphic to illustrate the cycle of mitigation, prevention, protection, response and recovery regarding natural disasters. He emphasized the importance of understanding the risk of various hazards. He reviewed the drivers behind the development of HMPs, and the desired outcomes, including the identification and prioritization of effective and sustainable mitigation projects. Mr. Flaner reviewed the list of stakeholders in the HMP, which include the municipalities, the water districts and the fire districts. He reviewed the public outreach that went into the plan update.

Mr. Flaner discussed risk assessment and stated that the RCHMP assesses the following natural hazards:

- Avalanche
- Dam failure
- Earthquake
- Flood
- Landslide (earth movement/ subsidence)
- Severe weather (drought, extreme heat, hail, winds, tornado, and lightning)
- Severe winter storms (snow, blizzard, extreme cold, ice storms, and ice jams)
- Wildfire

Mr. Flaner noted that pandemic is not on the list, but certainly would be included in the next update. He described the detailed GIS mapping with overlays that was developed for the HMP and distributed to each of the planning partners, specific to each geographical area. The next steps included the development of prioritized action plans with cost/benefit analyses of a variety of alternatives, and determining the capabilities of each partner to accomplish specific projects.

Mr. Thompson emphasized that the plan is very much a community plan, and added that this is why review by Planning Commission is important. The HMP, through its coordination with the Master Plan and other land use planning tools, can be used to direct future development away from hazard-prone areas.

Commissioner Jaeger asked about updates to the GIS mapping. Mr. Flaner said that the mapping should be updated whenever possible. He also noted the importance of capturing data from events as they occur.

In response to a question from Chairman Warnke, Mr. Flaner stated that some, but not all, pre- and post-disaster funding is contingent upon an up-to-date HMP. Mr. Thompson confirmed that FEMA can and will deny funding for disasters when the HMP is being updated in response to an event.

Regarding the Master Plan update, Ms. Winser said that she had had preliminary conversations with Mr. DeMorat. She said that it will be important to ensure that the policies included in Chapter 8 are current and applicable. Commissioner Brookshire asked if Routt County Emergency Management would provide referral comments on individual applications, and whether the MP would simply cite the HMP or whether it would contain specific language from the HMP. Ms. Winser said that typically referrals are sent to the fire districts, but could also be sent to Mr. DeMorat if Planning Commission feels that is appropriate. Mr. DeMorat offered that the HMP should inform the Master Plan, and that some elements of the HMP could be incorporated into the Master Plan. Mr. Thompson said that some communities have tried to fully integrate the HMP into the Master Plan, but that a more successful approach is for the Master Plan to refer to elements of the HMP. Mr. Flaner said that this allows the HMP to be updated more frequently

than most Master Plans are. Another approach is for sub-elements of the Master Plan that pertain to the HMP to be updated without waiting for a full update of the Master Plan. With regard to specific referrals and recommendations based on the HMP, Mr. Flaner said that the issue is whether there is regulatory support for restrictions based on the HMP.

Commissioner Mitzelfeld recommended adding avalanche mapping and specific requirements for avalanche mitigation. Mr. Flaner noted that regulatory standards are often viewed as political obstacles, adding that there has been little appetite for avalanche-specific codes and standards. He said that the primary risk in Routt County of damage from avalanches is to roads. Ms. Winser stated that the current Master Plan includes avalanche specific policies, and that mechanisms are in place for the review of hazards. Commissioner Mitzelfeld expressed support for expanding referrals. He also asked that the sources of maps be provided.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Ms. Winser reviewed the upcoming agendas.

Ms. Winser stated that John Merrill had resigned his position on Planning Commission and that Rohail Abid had not responded to communications. She also noted that the Board of Adjustment is short several members, and that she is looking for volunteers for the next several meetings. Ms. Winser said that she would pursue advertising for new PC and BOA members, and asked current members to solicit potential new members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.