

DRAFT
MINUTES

REAP Business Meeting

April 8, 2021

11:45 a.m.

Zoom Meeting ID#761-014-5598

The monthly meeting of the I-70 Regional Economic Advancement Partnership was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Chair Kirk Howell, who welcomed the attendees and called for introductions.

The following Board Members were present:

Jeff Baker

Kirk Holwell

Gary May

Tom Turrell

Jan Yeckes

Becky Zierer

Guests attending were:

Brad	Brauer	Antelope Hills Resident
Andres	Carrera	Sen. Hickenlooper's Office
Tracy	Carter	SBDC
Loretta	Daniel	Arapahoe County
Curt	Freed	Morgan Community College
Steve	Hebert	Town of Bennett
Julio	Iturreria	Reap
Cynthia	Kiyotake	Arapahoe Libraries
Kari	Linker	Sen. Hickenlooper's Office
Kathy	Mahan	Reap
Stephanie	Mufic	Douglas/Arapahoe /Works!
Wes	Price	Reflective Wellness
Cooper	Raines	Real Estate Agent
Hollee	Swain	May Farms
Lynette	White	Town of Bennett

Eric	Zacharias	Anythink Library
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Approval of March 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

Minutes were approved as submitted.

Chairman Report:

Executive Director Report:

Julio Iturreria welcomed and thanked the guest for attending.

“I do have a couple of announcements to make. The I-70 Chamber holds a coffee with the Chamber every Friday at 8:30 a.m. and they are having a segment with Angie Serna who is a real estate agent. Their meetings are very insightful and if you have the opportunity, join in.”

“We did receive a couple of referrals from Arapahoe County. The first one is the old dog track which is out east between Byers and Deer Trail and they are going for a rezoning from a PUD to AE conventional zoning. The second one is called Ryan subdivision and it’s a split of a 39-acre parcel into 2 lots and that’s located south of the Colorado Air and Space Port facility. I wanted to give a shout out to Stephanie. Over the course of this past year, I’ve had the opportunity to attend many of Stephanie’s meetings. Dealing with Douglas/Arapahoe Works with the grants and all the things coming down from the Feds, the citizens, property and business owners, her and her team have done a tremendous job. Included in part of that team is Tri-County Health a very important segment during this pandemic. “

Guest Speakers:

Stephanie Mufic, Supervisor – Douglas/Arapahoe Works!

“Today I’m going to go through and talk about why we have this task force and some of the things it has produced. I’ve pulled some data from what we discuss to show you a sampling of it. Then I will go through some of the virtual business events that were driven because of the conversations of this task force with information about final reporting. This task force helped us to take the CARES money into the County and drive it to the business community. I will start off with why we have the task force. We wanted to identify business needs because of the pandemic. This started last March when the pandemic started, we noticed a huge impact on the business community and things were starting to change at lightning pace. We wondered how we keep tabs on what the business community needed. So, we put together a task force that was comprised of chambers of commerce, municipalities, economic development across the County to talk about the resources that were needed, look at the current issues that were happening, try to develop an innovative solution and have that group conversation about what is happening right now. We wanted to make sure we had a way to provide feedback to political leaders. The CARES money was coming in and we wanted to provide recommendations to our leader to try and help the community in the fastest and most efficient way. Now I’m going to go through some of the details we go through every other week. We partnered with Arapahoe County’s Office of Emergency Management and Tri-County Health and they would come to the meetings and give updates of what was happening throughout the County. We would look at where we were on the dial, how is it impacting

the business community, testing numbers, and the rates of cases spreading throughout the County. One of the things that came out of this was the 5 Star Program for Arapahoe County's businesses that were certified, and the goal was to get that up and running as soon as possible to provide the relief that businesses needed to operate safely. If they could show that we would open up capacities. We as business support system knew again what was happening to support the business community. We would look across the County and see each of the metrics. We wanted to make sure we had the right message out to the community. Right now, we are in a level blue, the next date on the dial to be looked at is April 16th. After April 16th it looks like it will open up some more, but we still need to be cautious because our case counts are growing now so we need to continue with mask wearing and vaccinations to keep as open as possible. Next up, we look at the economic impact of the pandemic to the community and there is not a better indicator than unemployment. We would go through every week to see where we are with unemployment and look at the number of unemployment claims filed, we can see over time how many claims are continuing and look at pandemic unemployment to see how many claims are out there. Those are indications of recovery or non-recovery. We are not on a good track now in Arapahos County we are at 7.1% unemployment which is a little bit worse than we are for the state and the Denver Metro area. Arapahoe County has quite a bit of hospitality. The current labor statistics throughout the United States is 6.2% unemployment as compared to Colorado it is 6.6%. A lot of the reason for that is we have a strong tourism and hospitality industry and that has been impacted most from the pandemic. We also watch for job growth and in Colorado between January 2021 to February 2021 there were 5,200 jobs added. Having positive job growth in January is a good indicator. Then we look at the skills gap, we want to keep the pulse on where the needs are. 29,436 people within the Metro Area have been impacted in the food preparation and service-related industry. Hospitality has been obliterated by the pandemic. We ask where are the jobs open? We have health care, IT positions, so we have highly skilled positions open. In the future we will develop programs for the people impacted by the pandemic, and they will probably stay impacted for a longer term and try to get them upscaled into positions that the business community needs. Before we go into the next area I wanted to stop to see if anyone has any questions?"

Andres Carrera: "Kari Linker is here, and she is incredible when it comes to economic development, I don't know if she has talked to you yet about the apprenticeship push from our office? Senator Hickenlooper Chair's the Employment and Workplace Safety, I'm seeing parallel conversations happening. I will be coming back with updates on what our office is going to do regarding apprenticeships but that is going to be a huge push from our side."

Stephanie Mufic: "I have a good example on apprenticeship in our office. We are working with the State, we have just signed the agreement last week for the first workforce development apprenticeship. We have a business-person liaison with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and with Arapahoe/Douglas Works. The goal is to get workforce center services directly out to the business community, and we are working with the Castle Rock Chamber of Commerce as well."

Tom Turrell: "Keep in mind that on the schools, we are always looking for opportunities for our students."

Brad Bauer: "Could you expand on healthcare?"

Stephanie Mufic: “What happened with the pandemic is we seen healthcare workers being laid off because these are the people that perform procedures that are not critical, elective procedures. In the healthcare community there was a big impact on those elective procedures that were shut down to provide capacity for the pandemic and that’s where we say layoffs. Where you saw need for healthcare practitioners technical that’s your CNA’s, nursing, long term care facilities are consistently in need of people. One of the huge needs we got out of the Task Force was some CARES funding that Arapahoe County Commissioners supported which we were able to go through and do monthly virtual business seminars. We kicked off with the Executive Director for CDLE and we had Betsy Markey Executive Director of OEDIT, they came on and gave us an update on what was happening at that time of the pandemic and how it was impacting the State and looking at national trends. Cyber security was one of the big topics we started off with to try and help the business community to protect their data their virtual work. We did these topics based on feedback from the Task Force. We went through healthcare, PPE, work life solutions, there was some mental health support available. We had a round table talk about the impacts on manufactures throughout the area. We had a person come in and talk about OSHA, ADA. We got a legal perspective on impact on businesses. We ended the year with labor force trends and what is changing in the labor force. All of these events happened because of the Task Force and support from CARES Act funding and Arapahoe County. Finally, we ran grant programs throughout the County. Through the CARES Act we ran 3 different programs. The programs focused on the business community in a variety of ways. The first one was replacing lost revenue, we also had infrastructure and PPE support for businesses and the third program was loss gross revenue throughout the year. Overall, in 2020 we administered \$15,325,000 in grants to 869 businesses across Arapahoe County. The average grant award was \$17,635.31. The main focus in 2020 was to take the CARES money and get it out to the business community to keep them as stable as possible. We also had the opportunity to work with the Small Business Relief Grant for the State of Colorado. We were able to help 255 businesses with an average award of \$4,788.90. This was focused on the entertainment and restaurant industry with 50% of the funds going to the restaurant industry. These programs are run through and communicated by the Task Force. Currently Arapahoe County has a grant program we started last week and ends April 16th and it’s called the rent rescue program. That program is active right now to provide support to stabilize those businesses that are behind on commercial rent or mortgage payments. The Task Force has done a lot of work over the last year and it’s all due to the participation within the Task Force and the support we received from the Arapahoe County and the Commissioners. We are looking forward to 2021 and looking to areas that we still need to work on for financial assistance for the business community or the community itself in Arapahoe County. If anyone has any feedback for me, please reach out to me anytime. “

Julio Iturreria: “Do you anticipate any more grants coming out before the end of the year? Into what categories do you think they will fall?”

Stephanie Mufic: “I do see grants coming out in upscaling workers into mid or high-level positions. I don’t know if it will be a grant program or funding being made available to support that. I do see more funding around businesses that are teetering on the edge of going out of business because of the pandemic. So, partnering with the SBDC to get those businesses into a stable and healthy position, that will be a focus as well. There is money in ARPA for broadband improvements, water, sewer, those kinds of projects. I have a question for everyone on the call. If you had a grant program to focus on the business community, what would it look like?”

Julio Iturreria: "I notice on the screen that you have that there is Byers and Watkins, was there anybody on the I-70 Corridor that you may have dealt with, I don't see Deer Trail?"

Stephanie Mufic: "I want to make sure that we are communicating the grant opportunities to everybody, I have sent out information to Deer Trail but I'm not sure if it's getting out so am I missing anyone that would be good feedback for me?"

Julio Iturreria: "We do have a representative with the I-70 Chamber I don't know if they are on your mailing list? That would be the most direct route I can think of."

Stephanie Mufic: "I will make sure the I-70 Chamber is on the contact list."

Tracy Carter: "I do communicate that with the I-70 Chamber too and the information goes out on a news release. I do have clients in Deer Trail that we work with, with the grants."

Jeff Baker: "I want to comment that we have a weekly column in the I-70 Scout/Eastern Colorado News to get the information out that way and it is also on our website and then word of mouth. I've had people call me and explain to me their circumstances. I think this rent and mortgage assistance for businesses is unique and as of right now it's not being done anywhere else in the State of Colorado. This is for folks that may have had to cash in a 401k or life insurance to pay their landlords so that they can keep open or at least keep their head above water. So, if they have had extreme circumstances, maybe they had to take out a loan. This grant that is underway now is really important for folks. Adams County is doing a fantastic job as well with their CARES funding and ARPA funds. I think we have done a pretty good job about getting the information out judging by the people that have taken advantage of it. There will always be some folks that are cautious about accepting Federal money. We have to set up criteria because we are on the blame line for the Department of Treasury to make sure this is COVID related. We have broadened our interruption about how COVID has affected a lot of businesses. I can't rave enough about the work the Task Force has been doing and the innovative and creative way of helping people out through this pandemic."

Brad Bauer: "Jeff I have seen your announcements through the I-70 Scout, and I appreciate that. I think one of the problems I usually hear on the Corridor is our communities are straddling or bordering the Counties of Adams and Arapahoe so some of the things that might be available since the main area is up in Adams."

Stephanie Mufic: "I pulled up the grant program and this is for those businesses that are behind on their rent or mortgage and/or gone through extraordinary circumstances to stay up on their payment and we are asking for the direct correlation of selling a life insurance policy or borrowing against a 401k, taking out a second personal mortgage on your home or something like that to stay up on rent payments. We are considering those cases and we will fund back to March 1st, 2020 for up to \$100,000 dollars, so it is a fairly large grant program. We have 7 million dollars for this and it's a fairly short time frame. We have 62 applications now with an estimate of about \$3.5 million dollars to go out for those 62 applications."

Kirk Holwell: "Thank you Stephanie for talking about this with us and making it available."

Wes Price: "We run two mental health clinics in Aurora and one in Bennett in the old Morgan Community College Building. We have seen a couple of grants come our way. We had many cancelations at the beginning of this pandemic. Thousands of cancelations until everybody realized that things weren't going to change anytime soon, so now business is very good so I'm hiring all the time."

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.