

# Northwest Colorado Council of Governments eNews July 2017



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## From the Director's desk...



NWCCOG programs with state or federal funding just closed out a fiscal year and began a new year July 1. From my town and county experience, closing out a fiscal year is primarily a bookkeeping exercise followed by a fiscal audit. So, it was eye-opening to see the parade of state agency representatives setting up shop at the NWCCOG office this past month to interview staff, review files as well as our written Policies & Procedures and assess alignment of practice with P&P. Some actually spent time in the field observing personnel perform their duties, basically checking under the hood of nearly every department as a function of annual closeout.

As a new ED, I see these visits as an invaluable opportunity for input towards system improvements. A program review with consequences raises anxiety, especially if the agency reviewing holds the programs purse strings and ability to do business. If viewed as more than a compliance visit to endure, such an exercise is an opportunity for rare insider

feedback and perspective.

Many of our public-sector departments don't have such an established vehicle for that kind of valuable feedback. With all due respect to the many public works, planning & building, IT, clerk, marketing, HR or other outstanding public department heads I've known and highly respected; frankly, this outside agency accountability is a different level of oversight - in the content-- than the generalist manager town or county manager often can provide.

With our young elevator inspectors, spending a day being observed by a state employee with over 30 years of experience in that content area and getting feedback, provided a level of peer review input that was invaluable. The head of that state department spent close to two hours with me providing perspective and feedback. I don't recall, say, a county community development department inviting that kind of assessment exercise just for the heck of it-- unless there was a crisis.

At the town of Eagle, in my 10 years as a board member and 3 as a manager, no less than three times town leadership called in outside experts to reset the mysterious inter-workings of the local Police Department. Talking to Heather Coogan, of *True to Course*, who is a retired Police Chief from Littleton who audits and investigates departments across Colorado - local town police departments going south for lack of accountability is hardly unusual. By the way, the binder of recommendations Coogan built for the Eagle Police Department, is still the road-map for department improvement three years later.

At NWCCOG, I've sought to leverage the input from these state agency reviews to improve our processes. For Council members, one result of this oversight is that a number of NWCCOG policies and procedures are being updated in July and August packets. Most of our general P&Ps were last updated in 2011. I admit that reviewing and updating systems, processes and policies at NWCCOG was "on my radar screen," though it was unlikely this would have occurred without the prompt of outside oversight - or a crisis.

A few of our local jurisdictions with the means have gone so far as to hire systems analysts to help departments self-evaluate. NWCCOG doesn't have pockets that deep. So as a new ED, these visits by professionals in each of these fields, their verbal feedback and written reports have provided a welcome and unexpected deep dive of accountability which my nascent knowledge base as a general manager to these programs could not. We don't have the luxury of waiting for a crisis to tell us things are broken - and probably you don't either.

*Jon Stavney*

## **A short list of Recent NWCCOG Program Accountability Exercises**

A representative from USDA personally reviewed our building compliance for ADA and our personnel/council makeup for EEOC compliance for the 10-year old building loan.

The Weatherization program visit involved a two-day, in-office administrative review by a representative from the Colorado Energy Office, culminating in a 6 page report with a number of recommendations. While here, he checked procurement practices against our processes, and reviewed a sampling of project files. He also reviewed personnel files for our inspectors and the new Employee Handbook. This was the second round of review this summer from CEO, and followed a four day "quality assessment," with a different state inspector choosing 4 random weatherization jobs that were closed out this past year - meaning work had been performed and audited internally already. With our team, the inspector traveled to these homes and reviewed work there to insure that the weatherization was performed to standards.

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Division of Oil and Public Safety, performed an annual program review of the Elevator Inspection Program over the course of two weeks in June, which included a full day shadowing each elevator inspector through an on-site inspection, and a general program audit culminating in a report with a number of recommendations. As of this print date, that report has not yet been issued, though I have personally been given close to two hours of verbal input by the head of that Division.

At Alpine Area Agency on Aging, the annual on-site state unit on aging evaluation was performed followed by a random "desk evaluation," in which several specific senior services - congregate meals, and case management to mention a couple - were reviewed to see that our policies and procedures are in line with state law and state P&P. As a part of AAA programs we are required perform evaluations of our beneficiaries, so this evaluation was an evaluation of our evaluation. On top of that AAAA had an unscheduled "best practices information gathering" exercise by the Colorado Department of Human Services to review tracking of program income, match and unit costing.

For the Northwest All Hazards Emergency Management Region, Kim Cancelosi, just performed a training for all of her peers at the NWCCOG office with her Department of Homeland Security

and Emergency Management oversight team in attendance.

The Mountain Ride Call Center is in an off year since CDOT reviews compliance every three years.

Whew!

## NWCCOG Weatherization and Yampa Valley Sustainability Council team up to make a big difference



*Paint Brush photo by Jon*

She sure doesn't act like it, but energetic Steamboat Springs resident Karen D. (with respect to the privacy of our clients) officially became a senior citizen last winter turning 66. Now she is retired from her long career in retail and food service jobs through the past 45 years in Steamboat. That also means the widowed retiree is operating on a limited income and needed help controlling utility bills in her 1978 trailer home.

Karen was one of 14 Colorado Affordable Residential Energy local clients assisted via Yampa Valley Sustainability Council during the 2016-2017 CARE funding cycle. Her 910-square-foot trailer, where she has lived for 31 years, was extremely leaky, and she experienced repeated issues with her aged furnace going out for days at a time last winter.

Knowledgeable weatherization services provider NWCCOG, conducted an energy audit on the trailer including a blower door test and duct leakage testing. The team worked on the trailer for multiple days including sealing drafts and major air leaks in the bathroom, tightening heater duct boots in the floor, adding 20 bags of insulation to the attic that only had a R-11 level previously, upgrading to LED bulbs, and installing five new custom-fabricated storm windows over single-pane windows. The work reduced air leakage in the home by 53 percent, confirmed by a follow-up blower door test.

Karen selected a new Energy Star rated refrigerator from Sears in Steamboat to replace her 21-year-old model. Although she may still need help in the future to replace her older and only 65 percent efficient furnace, Karen said she is already noticing a positive difference as her trailer is staying cooler this summer with the additional attic insulation.

"God bless you guys," Karen said enthusiastically. "I'm so grateful and thankful because every day I can feel the difference."

## Around Region 12

### Short Term Rentals - The good, the bad, and the ugly

This topic has been reported on recently here, specifically Grand County's ongoing

efforts. Recently the Town of Minturn passed a short-term rental ordinance after evaluating other ordinances. At a recent Eagle County Mayors/Managers meeting Mayor, Matt Scherr stated that the Minturn ordinance was "tailored to Minturn," specifically he cited that with the size of the town, it was relatively easy for staff to monitor websites through search engines and to respond mainly on a complaint basis (instead of hiring a private firm to monitor and respond as Grand County is considering).



Manager Willy Powell noted that the effort was vetted through public hearings and by inviting the STR community in. The Town of Vail has also been in the news recently for considering regulating STRs. Commissioner Chandler-Henry at the meeting noted that [Outside Magazine just published on July 11](#), a lengthy article about Crested Butte entitled, "Did Airb&b Kill the Mountain Town?" The article is teased with the statement, "Living the dream has never been easy in the West's most beloved adventure hamlets, where homes are a fortune and good jobs are few. But the rise of online short-term rentals may be the tipping point that causes idyllic outposts like Crested Butte, Colorado, to lose their middle class altogether - and with it their soul."

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## Medicaid Usage Increases at Mountain Ride Call Center



If you are looking for clues about Medicaid usage in Northwest Colorado, one indicator is the Mountain Ride Transportation Resource Call Center program run by Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG).

Mountain Ride books transportation for medical visits across the remote corners of Colorado where individuals often travel well over 100 miles to Grand Junction or Denver to see a specialist. The center processes Medicaid reimbursement for individuals and transportation companies across an 8-county region. In 2016 the Call center processed 8,533 one way trips and associated services. Of these trips 6,461 were Medicaid reimbursed Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT) trips. Think of NEMT as a doctor visit, often a recurring visit to a specialist, which is non-discretionary but doesn't require an ambulance-for instance dialysis.

One surprise of the program has been learning how high the percentage of Medicaid beneficiaries are to County populations, especially since much of the Call Center's territory is the mountain resort region:

- Eagle County 13.90% of the population, or 7,450/month are enrolled in Medicaid
- Grand County 15.57% of the population, or 2,276/month are enrolled in Medicaid
- Jackson Cnty 24.12% of the population, or 327/month are enrolled in Medicaid
- Pitkin County 8.91% of the population, or 1,585/month are enrolled in Medicaid
- Summit County 14.14% of the population, or 4,278/month are enrolled in Medicaid



The fact sheets of Medicaid usage by county statistics are posted on the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing website at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/hcpf/county-fact-sheets> also notes of those monthly individuals enrolled, how many were added as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) expansion to Adults & Parents.

## Introducing Project THOR

Project THOR is the next phase in Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) Regional Broadband effort. In 2013 NWCCOG facilitated the development of a regional broadband plan and created a Broadband Steering Committee. Then hired a Regional Broadband Coordinator, Nate Walowitz, for the 5 county region. Nate has provided technical support to numerous local broadband projects. Nate is now spearheading Project THOR to interconnect these local projects, by assisting county and local governments by creating a resilient regional Middle-Mile Transport Network. Funded initially through a DOLA grant and the budgets of participating entities.



Many local jurisdictions are served by single non-redundant broadband which leaves entire communities internet service vulnerable to outage. By entering into an arrangement with a Network Aggregator to deliver network connection data circuits and manage the network, NWCCOG hopes to strengthen connectivity through multiple Project THOR objectives. Project THOR will work with multiple existing broadband providers to create a broadband transport network that will deliver abundant, reliable, and lower cost broadband service to the entire region. The network will leverage the needs of local governments, local schools, colleges, health care facilities, public safety, as well as state and federal agencies. For more information contact Nate at [Nwalowitz@nwccog.org](mailto:Nwalowitz@nwccog.org).

## Focus on Workplace Wellness

As part of our commitment to workplace wellness, the NWCCOG invites employees to set a wellness goal at the beginning of the year. They are given six months to achieve their goal. Employees complete a form that details their goal and how they plan to achieve it. A copy of the form is sent to them either by mail or at work twice within the 6 month period as a reminder. For those folks who achieved their goal, 8 additional hours of paid annual leave is added to their leave "bank". This year 15 staff members achieved the goal they set for themselves. Congratulations for making a healthy lifestyle change. Here's the form they use to help themselves stay on track:



NWCCOG WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM

# 2017 NEW YEAR'S WELLNESS CHALLENGE!

Intellectual \* Emotional \* Communal \* Environmental \* Physical \* Financial \* Occupational \* Spiritual

Specific Goal (make it attainable):

**Specific Goal** (make it attainable):

**Game Plan** (how are you going to achieve your goal):

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

**Why** (why do you want to meet your goal?):

**Life Happens** (how will you stay on track?):

**Accountability** (who will you hold yourself accountable to?):

**Motivation** (what will keep you inspired?):

## Ergonomic Equipment Equals Energized Employees -- In their own words....

Over the past year, NWCCOG has seen an increase in the standing desk trend, however budget constraints slowed things down. Once executive director, Jon Stavney and office manager, Elaina Wiegand received funding from Health Links as part of the Health Business Accelerator Action Plan they used the funds make capital improvements:



"This past month I decided to follow in the footsteps of other NWCCOG office staff and stand up for my own health. Literally. With my new standup desk, I don't have to take my work sitting down. Since I am a commuter, being able to stand at work really takes a load off of what were often ten or greater hours of sitting a day. I feel more energized through the day. The desk is fully adjustable with 4 settings which change at the push of a button. Oh, and I turned my workstation 90 degrees



West, so now I have a view in the background. Bonus." -  
**Jon Stavney, Autonomous SmartDesk 2**

Since purchasing the Platronics Voyager Legend CS, I experience less neck strain and more productivity! This Bluetooth headset is ergonomically savvy by allowing me to simply press a button to answer the phone while stationed from anywhere in the office. Most importantly, I no longer cradle the phone in my neck, significantly reducing neck and shoulder tension. Being hands free allows me to maintain some focus on what I was doing before the call, easing my transition back into that

project. Freedom of movement = happy, healthy, & productive employee!" - **Elaina Wiegand, Platronics Voyager Legend CS**

Erin Fisher AAAA Director, hopped on the bandwagon with her own program funds:

"I've never been a trend setter (but don't tell my college-age self that). So, it comes as no surprise that I just recently jumped on the standing desk bandwagon. Even after the newness of the bells and whistles subsided (motorized lift! pretty bamboo! squishy mat!), the benefits remain. A 2011 study suggests that Americans can increase their life expectancy by two years by reducing sitting time from the standard six hours in half. And as a person who works in the field of aging, that's a statistic I like to see!" - **Erin Fisher, Jarvis Bamboo Adjustable Standing Desk**



## 2017 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

### **Thursday, August 24, 2017**

Full Council & EDD Board Annual Planning Meeting  
Location: Airport Operations Center (AOC), Aspen  
Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Agenda Items: Strategic Planning for 2018

### **Thursday, October 26, 2017**

Full Council Meeting  
Location: NWCCOG Office/Conference Call  
Time: 10:00 a.m. - noon  
Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2018 budget

### **Thursday, December 7, 2017**

Full Council, EDD Board & Foundation Board Meeting  
Location: TBD - Summit County  
Time: 10:00 a.m. - noon  
Primary Agenda Items: 2017 budget revisions; approve 2018 budget; adopt 2018 meeting schedule; annual NWCCOG Foundation Board meeting.

**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

**[www.nwccog.org](http://www.nwccog.org)**

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN NWCCOG!**

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