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From the Director's Desk: City Manager or Philosopher? The power of asking questions.

I had a [Martin Buber I-Thou](#) moment at this summer's CCCMA Emerging Managers Summer Camp in Fort Collins when the welcome was delivered by Darin Atteberry, City Manager. His enthusiasm for the job, the place and the people after 24 years is infectious. "I happen to be one of those guys who loves the job, our workers and our industry," he says.

It was clear that the feeling is mutual with his employees as he was praised by Kristen Silveira, who was Process Improvement Program Manager at the time she spearheaded the event and Sam Houghteling, now Program Director at CSU Straayer Center for Public Service Leadership. Houghteling said to the group that after years of working with Darin, "one of the things I admire most along with his vision is his trust in the people around him. It is a distributed leadership model with a high level of trust across the organization."



Atteberry shared what he asks each of the 2,400 city employees when he gets the chance, which he admits is now less often than he would like. The questions invite self-reflections that focus attention on three areas of meaning. The asking of them is a powerful culture statement.



First, "the It." What in the work that you do gives you goosebumps and links you to something larger? He talks about the importance of a personal narrative, and how cultivating it is your key to authentic leadership. Along the way, he has heard some compelling stories, like the city cemetery worker whose dad died when he was a teenager, and how the respect shown to his family then motivates him in his job now; and

from wastewater workers, and police and individuals in every department when they have a personal connection to the work that motivates them. It may be about a particular project that is a "career opportunity" that they got to do. If employees are not asked, they may not have even made the connection to why they do what they do. When they do connect, it puts them at another level of within the organization and the people they serve.

Second, "the We." Darin asks two questions in quick succession; do you genuinely love the people you work with?" and "is that creepy?" Darin spent a bit of time backpedaling his earnestness on this which can feel a little weird in the "me too" era. It is not an idle question; it indicates whether people genuinely are connected to those around them. Though hard to measure it is a very high indicator of the health of the culture within an organization. Darin's response to an employee who responded, "I only say I love you to a couple of people in my entire life," is "get used to it. I'm all in. I would do anything for you."



Third, "The I." Darin asks each employee, "is this work allowing you to do something significant in your personal life." Among the notable answers he shared, "this job gets me health care for my daughter who has cancer," "this job allows me to be a climber," and "I'm in an abusive relationship at home and work is the only place I feel safe." As Darin puts it, you have to embrace employees as people, he notes, "any single day, right now, any of our 2,400 colleagues may be sitting down with their spouse saying I want a divorce, another is getting proposed to, another's dog just got ran over."



To tie it all together for the emerging managers he offered, "If the work genuinely gives you goosebumps, and you genuinely like those you work with and it is doing something for you personally,

then, people's core needs do not change. People want the same thing across generations. People want significance, validation."

His final words of wisdom, "just stay curious. You come in with all this knowledge. Just recognize that the person in front of you may have different needs. Be present."

By the way, I asked Houghteling before doing this write-up if Atteberry's "The IT, the We and the I" talk was a known philosophy in Ft Collins or was just a reflection. His text reply, "It is an intentional approach. He has given that spiel to the entire staff at Fort Collins."

Do you have a deliberate approach to engaging your employees or your team that underscores culture and vision? I'd like to hear about it.

Jon Stavney

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Colorado Congressional Delegation -
Shepherd Fire Money through

Appropriations...Please

At the August NWCCOG Council meeting, we learned that after a few months of lobbying for additional language in the Ski Area Fee Retention Bill it was introduced without it. NWCCOG Council and nearly every jurisdiction in the region, as well as Colorado Association of Ski towns last year requested the same bill be expanded to allow the new revenues to be used for other uses beyond ski area reviews, including Front Country Ranger and other USFS needs. Congressman Tipton and Senator Gardner introduced the same bill again. After a lively discussion about



what position to take again, it was decided that the bill likely didn't have much of a chance, and that it was more important to comment on "protecting" the fire fix dollars which were scheduled to return to USFS coffers in 2020.

Congressional staffers commenting at our meeting said that there was a real risk that those "new" dollars could be redirected through the appropriations process which would mean, among other things, that local governments would likely need to continue to fund USFS staff for years to come if they wanted boots on the ground for such basic needs as monitoring dispersed camping,

checking on campfires, basic trailhead monitoring and maintenance, not to mention the many bigger issues such as fire mitigation.

On September 10th, [NWCCOG issued that letter](#). Turns out in addition to the hundreds of thousands of dollars our local governments are spending to staff local Forest Service offices, Denver Water is also spending \$3-4 million dollars per year on fire mitigation on USFS lands. It is all the kind of work that the Forest Service used to have a budget to do themselves before fire spending overwhelmed the agency. At their request, Denver Water co-signed NWCCOG's letter which can be read here. Though all members are listed on the letterhead, we recommend that local jurisdictions double down with their own letters as well. NWCCOG will send a copy of the letter in WORD upon request to make that easier. Email office@nwccog.org - subject line Ski Area Fee Retention.

Statewide Transportation Funding- "Lower shields, prepare for Balkanization"

Well, it's happening. Last year voters failed to pass the statewide ballot measure 110 to adequately fund CDOT. It would have been the first funding increase since the early 1990s when there were 3.3 million residents, not the 5.7 million we have now. Now Metro areas are doing what they said if it failed-pursue other options.



Most of the options they are studying involve tools we don't have in the high country. One example is a regional RTA, say across the entire 58 entity DRCOG region, a tool which already exists in statute, then each local government would have to opt in which would create a patchwork of participation. This is not likely to be a slam-dunk with metro voters any more than rural voters. If they

were to pursue an RTD model with the Legislature creating the boundaries, that framework wouldn't have to go to the public to be created, but it would go to the voters to be funded. Voters in pro cities could carry others along. This would avoid the "patchwork" of participation, but the existing RTD is not so popular with voters.

The most likely approach appears be to seeking funding through the "existing" Metropolitan Planning Organization structure, of which there are already 5 in the state representing 83% of the population. In the Denver Metro region, this puts the discussion squarely in the lap of the Council of Governments which already has that skill-set with over 20 transportation planners on staff, and a track record of collaboration. Problem for most of the rest of the state, like the 5 counties NWCCOG represents, is that this tool doesn't exist currently, nor is it clear that federal guidelines would allow it.

When Ballot Measure 110, a sales tax for transportation, failed overwhelmingly (40% yes to 60% no) in November of 2018, this was in the tea leaves. One-ten only "won" in five counties-Denver 57%, Boulder 58%, and in three rural counties, Pitkin, San Miguel and Summit (Eagle and Routt were 47% for). Most rural counties were 30% in favor or below. There could be another statewide effort, but it isn't likely soon. How could it recover from such a dismal thrashing? Many believe there were far too many other distractions on the ballot in 2018, including an intentionally obfuscating second transportation measure, and that proponents focusing on aggregate costs and big picture narratives failed to deliver a message that resonated personally with voters, the way a pothole resonates with your alignment, or the difference between a single project cone-zone spanning a decade vs a season, for instance.

What I learned in meeting with DRCOG is that the Metro Mayors Caucus is well out in front pushing for a regional (read Front Range/Metro) solution to "state" transportation issues. DRCOG staff has been directed to look more closely into the funding models above and



any others. They will be asking the DRCOG Council in October if they should pursue

during this session, one of the solutions which would involve legislation. What this means for the rest of the state is a an open question.

I am grateful that on September 12th, at the invitation of longtime partner, Flo Raitano who is Director of Partnership Development and Innovation at Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), I was able to meet with DRCOG Executive Director Douglas Rex and DRCPG Director of Transportation Planning and Operations, Ron Papsdorf who briefed us on this emerging topic. Margaret Bowes was also invited, but was backpacking in Glacier National Park instead, so the I-70 Coalition was represented by Clear Creek County Commissioner Randy Whitlock. Eagle County Commissioner Scherr joined us.

Commissioners Scherr and Whitlock had a lot of "what if" questions that day that I'm sure we will all be discussing when this reaches the next level. NWCCOG and I-70 Coalition (Margaret and I) have been casually discussing for a few years if between our two TPRs and the Coalition if there would be benefits to a different regional structure for transportation. Suddenly it may become urgent depending on how the rules of the transportation funding game change in Colorado. Stay tuned.

Project THOR is on Track for Deployment this Fall



Meet me Center host communities continue to participate in weekly calls with Nate Walowitz and the team from Mammoth Networks to stay up to speed on the complex and evolving details of the network construction. A draft deployment schedule was shared with the group this past week. A sub-committee of participants continues to discuss marketing and pricing

guidelines for end users-those anchor institutions and private ISPs who will be tying-in at the MMCs to provide last mile broadband service to customers.

CDOT continues to prove a very adaptive partner to hone in on the innumerable details of connection points, what is actually in the ground. Right now, Project THOR implementation remains "internal" to those participating, but Nate also is beginning to hear from entities who are interested in participating in the next round of Project THOR deployment, which will be a focus of his in 2020 after Project THOR is fully operational this year. For more detailed information, please contact Nate directly.

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On another note, thank you to the many jurisdictions and Colorado Broadband Czar Tony-Neil Graves who sent us support letters for our DOLA grant to fund the Regional Broadband Director position for another two years starting January 2020.

Peak Health Launch

Tuesday, September 10th, taking a cue from Governor Polis' large poster boards behind him the night before while presenting at Keystone Lodge & Spa for the announcement of Peak Health Alliance headlined, "Premiums to go down 41%."



It was the culmination of years of effort and persistence to reshape the insurance market with a locally negotiated health plan through three providers with a variety of options [here](#).

Mark Spiers, Chair of the Summit Foundation who kicked off the announcement put the agonizing dichotomy that has befuddled leaders across the high country for many years, "why do the the healthiest counties in the nation (USA Today again in September listed Summit, Pitkin and Eagle as top three healthiest

counties in the nation, with Grand at 29th and Routt just behind) paying the most for healthcare?"

There was much praise to go around at the event, not least to the relationship between the Governor's office and a unified Legislature which passed a bill to overhaul reinsurance led by Summit County's Rep Julie McCluskie (D-House District 5), which compounded - for the better for a change - the persistent work of leaders in Summit County to bring "transformative" savings to working families. Special thanks were often repeated for Tamara Pogue-Drangstveit, now ED of Peak Health and Sara Vaine, now Assistant Summit County Manager. The Governor noted that Grand and Eagle County as well as Summit "will be down 30% in premiums in 2020, translating to a savings of \$14,000 for a family of four on the individual market." He also praised the bi-partisan triumvirate of state legislators, Donovan, McCluskie and Roberts for working toward this."

Gov Polis stated, this is "a win for consumers, a win for the free market and a win for the economy," to see a decrease in the average premium rates of 18.2% across the state. But he wouldn't have made the visit if it weren't for Summit county leaders "incubating the alliance model."

Even with the Governor and luminaries from across Summit County, as well as observers from the Vail Valley Partnership who are less than a year behind in a parallel effort, the clear celebrity of the afternoon announcement was Pogue-Drangstveit who closed out the session with her motivating story.

She explained that after having premature twins 4.5 years ago how in her insured, but vulnerable situation, her family was able to move forward, purchase a house and anchor in the community, while in her role at the Family Intercultural Resource Center (FIRC) overheard of a parallel case of a mother without insurance was unable to buy a home, lost her job, couldn't afford early child care and is still paying for physical therapy for her twins with credit cards." This injustice is what motivates her, and has borne a high country success story that now shares many parents, as all success stories do.

NEXT 2019 NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Thursday, October 24, 2019

Location: Grand View Community Space 395 E. Lionshead Circle, Vail, CO,

Time: 10am - 2pm

Agenda: Primary Business, review and approve 2020 NWCCOG Budget

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