



From the Director's Desk: Dillon & Keystone Join Forces for a New Police Department

It isn't every day you get to plan municipal operations from scratch which the most recently incorporated town in Colorado did last year. In a big win for regional collaboration, the Town of Dillon and the newly incorporated Town of Keystone just approved an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to establish the [Dillon-Keystone Police Department](#). This decision avoids the downsides of standing up a brand-new police force (not to mention being titled "the Keystone Cops") while ensuring residents of the nearby towns, just 3.6 miles apart are served by a combined, high-quality law enforcement. The process to arrive at this solution was a model of good governance, thorough research, and pragmatic decision-making.



Early on, [when Keystone was exploring policing options](#), NWCCOG shared models from towns like Gypsum, Minturn, Grand Lake, Hot Sulphur Springs, and Winter Park/Fraser—each leveraging partnerships with county sheriff's offices or neighboring municipalities to provide law enforcement services. NWCCOG also connected Ken Riley, who is now Mayor of Keystone with Managers from those municipalities. He noted that "overwhelmingly, the recommendation from town managers was clear: whatever you do, don't establish your own police department." They advised Keystone instead to contract for services or seek a joint department with a nearby agency to reduce costs while retaining local control. Initially, Riley explored contracting with the Summit County Sheriff's Office (SCSO), but the Sheriff's Office was unable to commit to dedicated deputies or enhanced patrols. Dillon, however, was open to exploring a shared model, leading to a series of discussions that evolved from contract policing to a fully integrated joint department. This approach allows both communities to share overhead and operational costs, ensuring better service at a lower price point than two separate departments.

Ken Riley, before Keystone had incorporated, played a key role in the decision-making process. He explained, "Leveraging the capabilities of an existing police department was the most effective way to meet Keystone's needs. We looked at contracting as a starting point, but through discussions with Winter Park/Fraser, it became clear that a joint department would offer the benefits of local control while keeping costs manageable."

NWCCOG has focused on local policing a number of times including [INSIGHTS Issue: 3 – High Speed Chase, Police Wage Shopping](#) FDD newsletter, which discusses how police wage competition between agencies can impact recruitment and retention, a challenge that a joint agency avoids. Also, the [Regional Impacts to Law Enforcement: SB20-217 Use of Force Bill report](#), published in 2020 in response to the Colorado Legislatures SB20 -217. Additionally, the discussion surrounding law enforcement funding, highlighted in the [June 2020 report "Use of Force? What Defunding Police Means,"](#) underscores the importance of strategic budgeting in policing, and highlights how smaller municipal budgets are often overwhelmed by the cost of policing to the detriment of other services.

So, what does the IGA agreement mean for residents? More efficient policing, reduced response times, and access to specialized services like detectives and SWAT—capabilities that would be difficult for either town to afford independently. The joint department also offers more flexibility in staffing and operations, leading to enhanced public safety. In short, this is a “more bang for your buck” arrangement that strengthens law enforcement while keeping local control intact.

This agreement also highlights a broader trend of service-sharing in Keystone, which chose to contract with Summit County for building department services and inspections. One of the early values that Riley believed helped get the incorporation approved by voters was minimizing overhead and staffing. With that in mind, Keystone also contracts with private vendors for public works and maintenance as the town continues to explore other opportunities.

By pooling resources, Dillon and Keystone can offer more competitive wages and benefits, making the department a more attractive place to work while narrowing the competitive disadvantage with larger nearby agencies such as Breckenridge PD, Silverthorne PD, and the Sheriff’s Office. Underfunding, regular unfunded mandates and full staffing are constant challenges for smaller agencies which the Dillon-Keystone joint department model hopes to avoid. Shared resources make compliance with new policies more manageable. Mayor Riley: “Bottom line, you get a lot more bang for your buck significantly enhanced service for your citizens, while maintaining local control. It’s a win-win for both towns.”

Kudos to the leaders from both towns for taking a thoughtful, cost-effective approach to public safety. This partnership is an example of how cooperation between neighboring communities can lead to smart, sustainable solutions for the future. NWCCOG is proud to have been a resource during early phases of inquiry.

Thanks to Dana Wood, NWCCOG Mobility Director for collaborating on this story.

Jon Stavney

Executive Director - NWCCOG

JStavney@nwccog.org

Expanding Energy Efficiency: NWCCOG Signs MOU with Tri-State Electric



The NWCCOG Energy Program is making a major leap forward in expanding energy efficiency services to underserved communities. Beginning in 2025, NWCCOG will provide additional weatherization services to low- and moderate-income (LMI) households in White River Electric territory, thanks to a new three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Tri-State Electric. This is the first time NWCCOG Energy Program has partnered directly with a local utility for weatherization services. Local utilities such as Xcel, Holy Cross Energy, Black Hills Energy and Colorado Natural Gas have supported our work through rebates in the past, but this is the first time NWCCOG Energy Program has worked directly with a utility company to

weatherize additional households in their service territory.

“This partnership is a game-changer for families in the greater Meeker area,” said Doug Jones, NWCCOG Energy Program Director. “Historically, Rio Blanco County has been underfunded when it comes to weatherization, and this agreement allows us to serve more working families who need safe, energy-efficient homes.”

Until now, only about 1% of the families served by NWCCOG’s Energy Program have been in Rio Blanco County—roughly five homes per year. Under the new agreement, that number will jump to 35 LMI-qualified households annually, significantly increasing the program’s reach in the region. Families earning up to 150% of the area median income (AMI)—\$141,300 for a family of four—will now qualify for free weatherization services.

Beyond traditional weatherization, NWCCOG will also serve as a contractor for White River Electric’s On-Bill Repayment program, which offers financing for energy efficiency and electrification upgrades.

“This is another step in diversifying our budget, increasing our impact, and helping more families,” Jones added. “By reducing energy waste and improving efficiency, we’re not just saving people money—we’re making real progress in cutting greenhouse gas emissions across the region.”

For more information about NWCCOG’s Energy Program and how to qualify for services, visit <https://www.nwccog.org/programs/energy-program/>.

Upcoming Board Meetings

Thursday, March 20, 2025 – Gypsum Conference Room, Energy Program Warehouse

Full Council & EDD Board Meeting, Training Center Tour afterwards

Primary Agenda Items: Approve January meeting minutes, program overviews, distribute electronic version of Member Handbook, approve Policy updates; EDD Board meeting

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments | P.O. Box 2308 249 Warren Ave. |
Silverthorne, CO 80498 US

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