

Minutes for Crystal River Caucus Regular Meeting March 13, 2025

John calls meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Draft minutes from the November 14, 2024, Annual Meeting and the January 9 regular caucus meeting were sent out. Any questions or discussion? Hearing none, Francie Jacober makes motion to approve and Bob seconds. Unanimous approval of the draft minutes.

Treasurer report by Bob Dupre. Same as last meeting. \$50 went to Church at Redstone and we gained a couple bucks in interest. Balance \$1,299.40.

Francie stands up to catch us up on topics with the BOCC:

There has been much turmoil about the Boulevard Barrel. The business came to the Board of County Commissioners way back for approval of a store license for off-site consumption and was looking to get a tasting license in the future. Subsequent complaints were that he was serving wine and beer on the premises, and that was not part of his present license. The commissioners received about 100 letters from the public. At this point the owner is asking for a license to serve beer and wine in the side yard area. County staff recommended a denial for the interim, stating that more time was needed. The owner was encouraged to come back later to reapply when things settle down. It will come back to the county for permitting in a few weeks. Bob asks what the pushback is about. Francie said many people were concerned about his lack of compliance, noise and lights, and misrepresentation of his license. People in favor loved his business model.

The BOCC passed a new resolution to change permitting charges favoring people who build smaller houses.

Presentation on Redstone South Bridge Replacement Project: Pitkin County engineer Andrew Knapp and Mary Jean Frymeyer with SGM.

The start of the presentation was briefly interrupted by Bob Dupre who said we need to get something in the minutes about the water crossing the road at Swiss Village. It was supposed to be on the agenda tonight, but the person invited with knowledge couldn't make it. Thinks we need to address it at a later time. Kate Hudson asks that perhaps the county can put pressure on CDOT.

Back to the South Bridge Project: an asset management study found the south bridge was at the end of its life. Planning began and SGM was selected to design with DHM. Survey and Geotech work started last fall, then work was started on the design. Over winter, progress was made, and they are bringing this outreach with preliminary design to the public. After this outreach phase, the plan is to proceed to final design with a goal of 90 percent design completion by August and then coming back to the public yet again. They would like to

begin construction in 2026, but grant dollars are not looking promising. They are using county funds without grant funding, and there could be an impact resulting from federal tariffs.

Mary Jean spoke about preliminary work. They were looking at alignments, and they investigated skewing the new bridge to the north to allow for use of the old bridge during construction. As they got further along, they found a lot of environmental impact with that design and a need for lots of fill and disturbance, which presented more challenges for the contractor. To clear 100-year flood provided another con for the new location, and as a result the new bridge will be in same location as the present bridge

Andrew clarifies more reasons the new location would not work. Leaving the old bridge open during construction might risk the safety of the public and contractors. Also, the project would take longer. Putting the new bridge in the same location will result in a better product for the community. Luckily, we have the north bridge for a detour. The use of Elk Park as town guest parking should be more encouraged. There are concerns for speeding on Redstone Boulevard at present as well as concerns about increased infraction during the detour. Law enforcement and speed control will be in place. Increased signage for North bridge is also planned.

Mary Jean Frymeyer says the existing bridge was built in 1947 and has a pier that catches debris in the river. Some significant repairs were completed in 2017. The railing is deteriorated and does not meet present standards. The New bridge will be the same width as the old one and will still be narrow to keep traffic slow. A sidewalk will be on the north side and will be separated and safer. The middle bridge pier will be removed, which will result in less scouring and maintenance. The new bridge will be 10 feet longer to improve river hydraulics. The guardrail will be updated but will match the aesthetics of the old bridge with a doghouse rail.

Andrew talks about color choices – concrete grey. There has been discussion about red to match the surroundings. There is a county webpage in place, and you can sign up for email updates to get communication about further outreach.

Maciej Mrotek asks about the estimated cost of the project, which will be about 4 million dollars. Kate asks about mitigating impacts to the river during the construction. Andrew says they are being mindful and will be permitting with the Army Corp of engineers. They are hoping to get in the river in early spring when water is low to minimize impacts. The vast majority of the project will be out of the river. Kate adds the concern of sediment load. Andrew admits there will be some. The contractor must be compliant, and efforts will be made to minimize.

The duration of the bridge closure is not yet known. Kate brings up the notion that fire station response might be potentially compromised by the south closure. The captain was not concerned as long as he is kept in the loop.

Update on the Redstone to McClure Pass Trail: Gary Tennenbaum, Director of Pitkin County Open Space and Trails.

Kevin Warner, USFS Sopris District Ranger, comes up to join Gary. The Crystal Valley Recreational Trail has been on the table for a long time. The first and only phase right now is the segment from Redstone to the top of McClure Pass. The county did a NEPA Environmental Assessment and got an approval from the Forest Service, all of which is on the Open Space webpage. The first piece of the implementation will address the Old McClure parking area. Gary says there is no plan to change trail a lot except address drainage. Big machinery will be needed where there is a creek crossing up high. There will be lots of work with CDOT on the segment from Redstone South Bridge to Bear Creek. In the Bear Creek section there is not a lot to do. Near the top of McClure, there is a proposal to do an underpass to create a trail to ultimately connect Old McClure to the Gunnison side. The county is holding off on construction until more is known about the status of the communications project (the next agenda item) which would follow much the same route as the trail on the old McClure Pass Road.

Maciej asked about the shooting range. Gary said the trail will move away from that. Kevin said they are not making any changes to the shooting range activity unless there is an outpouring of concern from the community. Kate asked if trail construction will coincide with wildlife restrictions. Gary said all actual trail construction will be after July 1st, but parking area might be earlier.

Delia Malone speaks out on behalf of Audubon and Sierra Club, both of whom opposed this trail. Delia reminds Gary that there was an agreement that no construction would occur before July 1st and she insists that the parking area would certainly impact birds, as it was also looked at by Audubon. She asks that Gary agree to abide by the former agreement. Gary then says he neglected to clarify that they will be doing all construction after July 1st.

Discussion of the Proposed Communications Project on the old McClure Pass Road: Kevin Warner, USFS Sopris District Ranger

Kevin is here to discuss a proposal that has come to the Forest Service so is going to rely on Scott Morrow, the Emergency Coordinator from Gunnison County and Parker Lathrop from Emergency Management in Pitkin County. Kevin introduced Chris Stryker, the proponent bringing forward the McClure Pass communications proposal. This is still a proposal not yet accepted by the Forest Service, so this is for public information only. There is an old

communications site, but Gunnison County has been working on this for a while. The McClure area is the darkest hole for communications. The existing facility is 40 years old. The site will be upgraded primarily for emergency communications, designed to signal both ways on 133 from McClure. Power and communications lines will involve 6 miles of open deep trenching and directional boring traveling up the old McClure Pass Road. Site at top would change from a 70 ft tower to a 195 ft tower with a larger shelter.

The burial of the lines would start by the present parking area for the old McClure pass road and would follow the trail all the way to where it will run into 133 at the top. Some directional boring at top and then continuing up to side of HWY towards the pass, and then to the present communication site. There has been discussion about the view plane. A helicopter was used, and it was determined that the site would not be visible.

A vault would be placed every 500 feet, end to end. Chris says the vaults can be color specific and allow for piecemealing of repairs. The vaults will be flush with the service. Down by Placita the tower will not be visible. There will be no flashing lights and no painting. The existing site is solar and needs to have enough power for all upgrades. A backup generator is proposed that will run 10 minutes every 30 days. The proposed shelter will be 12' x 40' with chain-link fencing. Tenants will be AT&T and Verizon. Francie asks who is paying, and the response was that they are going after grants. This was a joint project with Pitkin County and Gunnison County. Gunnison County is not the proponent - Emergency Management is. There are no Forest Service approvals yet; they have not accepted the proposal or done any environmental analysis.

Wild and Scenic Update for the Crystal River: Michael Gorman, Wilderness Workshop

Michael is the Campaign Director of Wilderness Workshop and co-chair of the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee. Discussion about Wild and Scenic designation for the Crystal River has been going on for decades. W&S is the strongest level of protection we can get for the river. Legislative efforts are important in this volatile political climate. We need durable protection for the river. No legislation is likely to move in the next few years. However, there is lots of work to do and our senators care deeply about what the communities want. Three subcommittees were formed by the Crystal River Collaborative Steering Committee: these included the Intergovernmental Agreement Subcommittee, the Peaking In-stream Flow Subcommittee, and the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee. The Wild and Scenic Subcommittee is working on a proposal based on community concerns given that there is lots of flexibility in the Wild and Scenic act. Additional research and reaching out to stakeholders is ongoing. The subcommittee is trying to get to what the language might look like. The goal is to take all of the input and produce a report with the help of a facilitator – to protect values identified pertaining to the river and address stakeholder concerns as to

private property rights. The subcommittee is preparing to hire a facilitator to help stick to the timetable of getting a report by the end of the year.

Bob Dupre asked what has been accomplished. Michael said they have a draft report, but no official product. There has been lots of research and fact finding. The subcommittee is ready to dig in and make determinations about the act, what it does, and how best to address the concerns of landowners. At the moment, there is frustratingly little to show.

Kate pointed out that the caucus has supported W&S as has Pitkin County and Wilderness Workshop. Kate asked if we are still talking about all of the above (three) designations and said that is being held up by a small minority of individuals that make it their mission to not allow W&S to happen.

John mentions how late it is. Doesn't want to run past nine. Asks for motion to adjourn. None opposed, The meeting is adjourned.