

May 8, 2025, Crystal River Caucus Meeting Minutes

Meeting was brought to order by Chairman Emerick at 7:00 PM.

Minutes the March 13 Caucus meeting were unanimously approved without comment.

Bob Dupre presented the Treasurer's report: Last month the caucus account balance was \$1299.00 and as of today is the same.

Commissioner Francie Jacober did not attend, so we move to the first agenda item.

Dark Sky Initiative with Aaron Watson on Zoom. Aaron lives in Paonia, a dark sky community certified by Dark Sky International. He is a dark sky advisor.

We have dark skies where we are, and we want to protect that darkness. There's glare light trespass and clutter, which can affect people. Examples of light pollution are many and varied. For example, it looks like twilight all the time. Light trespass is light from another property. 80 percent of us cannot see the milky way. We are losing night sky. Why are dark skies important? One reason is ecological integrity. 70% to 80% of birds migrate at night. Migrating birds get trapped by artificial light and it affects their survival rate. Many of our pollinators work at night and are affected by light pollution. The effect of artificial light is causing insect decline.

Legislators are starting to take notice. All of this light shining up into space is wasted energy. The town of Paonia was able to save \$1000 a month by changing out their streetlights. Human health is impacted by artificial light, which affects melatonin and can be linked to Alzheimer's and cancer and metabolic disease. Public safety is often cited as a reason for night lighting but that has not been proven to increase human safety. Glare impairs vision, causes migraines and makes it easy for people to hide. More light is not necessarily safer. We are lucky to be able to see the stars in western CO.

Why get certified? It is the best way we have to protect the night sky. Towns are getting international recognition for their work. The quality of life of residents has improved. Pristine night sky is so desirable, and it helps to preserve the character of the community. It also promotes economic development and tourism. We have 18 certified places in Colorado.

Getting certified takes people getting involved to develop community support. It is necessary to examine public lighting. Does it follow the dark sky principle? Land use codes and lighting ordinances can have comprehensive effects on lighting. Master plans can get reviewed and modified to integrate dark sky initiatives. Timers and sensors are important as

they maintain light use only when needed. Light meters are important for the purpose of reading light pollution and maintaining a database.

If you're interested, what do you do next? Form a steering committee – a coalition for the stars. A champion is really helpful to keep the inspiration going. Aaron can work as a mentor and consultant to help. Once you are in the process, work to get certified. There are five principles: 1. Only use light if needed; 2. Keep light targeted and shielded; 3. Lowest brightness; 4. Control with timers, dimmers and sensors. 5. Color temp warmer better than blue, which is less stimulating to our health.

Martha Ferguson, from the Old Snowmass-Capitol Creek Caucus, is here to make comments. Martha spearheaded a dark sky initiative for Old Snowmass. Huge lights next door ruined her experience viewing the night sky. She reached out to Aaron Watson who was a great resource. Old Snowmass is 2.5 years into the process that Aaron explained, and their application has been submitted. She said that the process is faster if you work with Community Development. They were on board and had hired a group out of Boulder. The first city to adopt a dark sky initiative was Flagstaff AZ.

Martha holds up a sky monitor four times a year to take data. The lighting code now will enable faster tracking; it is very progressive and will streamline the process. Dark Sky International was not familiar with caucuses. You must submit a mapped area and have a board that can vote. They want to know you have enforcement. Pitkin County has the power of code enforcement if someone is not within the guidelines. Within her caucus they formed a committee. They talk to people. Seasonal lighting could become an issue. A curfew with the new Pitkin County lighting code ensures lights are not left on all night. They invited Dr. Jeffrey Hall who was responsible for Flagstaff. He did a talk and showed dome photos from an athletic field. New lighting improved dramatically. Larissa Lalonde is the PC liaison for this issue.

Be Bear Aware. Emily Casebeer is a Community Response Officer from the Pitkin County Sheriff's office and is here on behalf of John Groves from Colorado Parks and Wildlife. She also does animal services when wildlife becomes a human safety issue and works closely with John Groves. She is here to remind us to be bear aware. The bears are awake and active. Pull in bird feeders. Lock up trash. Clean your barbeque grill. Trash pickup suppliers must provide bear proof containers. This is code enforced. Delia Malone spoke up and said Francie Jacober had a health issue preventing her from being here tonight, but is in support of securing trash, and she hopes the county will step up enforcement. Martha says there is a schedule of fines, both residential and commercial.

Update on Redstone Castle project. Stephane De Baets is on Zoom. It has been a long journey between commissioner approval and resolution: about a year. Two weeks ago we got resolution: a permit for road improvements. We need to do work to protect the road from a 100-year flood. We are more than ready to go but need to follow a process to get final permitting. Leslie Lamont is here to answer any questions. Stefan said there is language in the resolution that addresses what they can and cannot do while construction is going on. Leslie adds that they have been working with Andrew Knapp of Road and Bridges, and they have designated places to store material in case they have issues. Leslie worked with Stephane to get to where they are today. Stephane can now start submitting for his permits. Chuck Downey asks when the first equipment will show up and how long it will take. Stephane says the start depends on the county. They hope to do as much off-site as possible, so they have the least disturbance on site. He would have liked to have started a year ago. They are hoping for a 2027 opening but it is not up to him. Are you doing tours? Stephane says you can book right now. So yes! Leslie is asked if the conservation easements have been recorded. Yes. April asks about how Stephane feels about the trail from Redstone to McClure Pass. Stephane is not aware of a trail going through his private property. Wayne Ives is here as the rep for the Open Space and Trails Board and says it will not go through the castle. The approved trail follows the highway right-of-way from Redstone to Hayes Creek Falls. There will be a viewing spot and interpretive signage.

Update on the Redstone General Store. Lisa Matson has been working with the people involved with the General Store. Exciting news – ten days ago they got approval for expansion. A tree fell on the store, but they stayed open until they could begin working on it. Pitkin County has approved adding on 800 sq ft. The existing building will stay as is. The storage area will become retail and an addition on the back will allow for a commercial kitchen, catering, and community needs. The front will stay the same except the area on the side that was ugly will become more aesthetically pleasing with a new door. No more deliveries through the historic porch. Trash will all be enclosed and bear proof. Existing and new construction will be obvious to accentuate the historical details. Also, floors will be highlighted to show old from new. Cosmetic repairs will be taking place inside, including painting, repairing, refinishing, rodent repairs, better shelving, etc. Lisa Dupre asked who is doing the construction. Forest Jacober. Main store will open for the community by summer – Memorial Day weekend. Ice cream cart will be relocated into the little building – Lady Bountiful Ice Cream. Coffee will expand to Wild Horse - Coal Miner's Daughter. Real estate will be moving to the back: they have internet services.

John asks if Andy is here. He was supposed to update on Swiss Village culvert situation. He lives there and it went through his property, and he is an engineer, but he is not here tonight.

New Cell Tower: The last item is Ryan Kenney to talk about the new tower at the water plant near East Creek trailhead. Ryan is the manager of Redstone Water and Sanitation. A cell phone company approached Redstone Water and Sanitation. They put out a public notice to see if there is support for the tower. They received over 40 responses, and the community was divided 50/50. The board decided to hire a third party to assess the site. They helped them to decide the value, listed competitors, and gave them a path for the project. The board voted favorably to move forward with negotiations, and just this week they reached a final agreement. Next week the company comes back before the board. It is an options contract. The cell phone carrier can back out within two years. The board is looking to lease 2500 sq ft on the north side of the wastewater parcel. The tower will be up to 100 feet tall but must meet code. The tower will resemble a fake pine tree. The contract stipulates that the water board would bring in \$900,000 per year and could go for 35 years. The board is reviewing the contract. The tower will be leased to cell phone providers. DJ was wondering if it is worth it to the customer and asked why there wasn't a vote. The response was that voting is expensive. Is there liability for the tower? The company is insured and will be responsible for their own losses. Maciej asks would the tower interfere with firehouse communication. Ryan assumes not. The range would be from Penny Hot springs to Placita. Won't go up high. Bob Dupre would like to suggest an adjustment: the caucus board does not do things without input from the general caucus. Ryan says this is the system of government we are all familiar with. Will there be studies to see if cell towers would make car accidents more likely, or any studies done on birds or people living close to towers? The board did discuss these topics but did no studies. Comments can be sent to Ryan's email, and he will bring them before the board.

The meeting was adjourned.