

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 24, 2020**

The September 24, 2020 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

Kevin Alexander, Chair, Hunter & Anglers- Western Colorado University
Christie Hicks, Vice-Chair, Crested Butte Nordic
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association
Scott Borden, WCU
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Roman Kolodziej, Mt. Crested Butte Town Council
Chris Parmeter, CPW
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison
Kristi Murphy, BLM
Mark Voegeli, CBMR
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic
Kimberly Shappert, At-Large Community Member
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates

Others in Audience:

Brian Lieberman, Crested Butte Land Trust
Hedda Peterson
Melanie Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Than Acuff, Crested Butte Avalanche Center
Dayle Funka
D. Greco
Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County Public Works
Lynell Stanford, Town of CB

Staff:

Cathie Pagano, Community Development Director
Joe Lavorini, Gunnison County Stewardship Coordinator-National Forest Foundation
Rachel Sabbato, Senior Planner, Community Development

CALL TO ORDER: Alexander called the September 24, 2020 meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 27, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Fonken and seconded by Logan to approve the August 27, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Alexander explained that the November and December meeting dates fall on holidays. Pagano suggested they meet on the third Thursday of those months instead. The group agreed. The next meetings will be November 19, 2020 and December 17, 2020.

Alexander reported that he and Lavorini met with a group out of Hinsdale County yesterday and had a conversation with them about developing something similar there to the Gunnison County STOR Committee and wanted information on their successes, struggles and what it has been like. Lavorini stated that this is the third time, since he started, that other communities have reached out to learn about the good work the STOR Committee has been doing.

GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES GRANT

Pagano reported that Gunnison County, on behalf of the STOR Committee, applied for the COVID related GOCO grant and were granted \$450,000. They received the largest award of all of the recipients. The Town of Marble received \$333,000 to purchase a parcel adjacent to their town park. Pagano stated that they have raised \$780,000 for the Shady Island project, just enough money to do phase 1. She believes it gives them more flexibility for winter funding opportunities for projects they see coming up locally. There will be a group meeting next week to go over how the summer went with the various conservation crews and how they evolve that for next year and how they can utilize those funds in the best way possible for the community. She stated that it would be good to talk more about it at the next meeting. GOCO has faith in them and really sees the value of the group, since they are submitting them in a collaborative nature with many different partners and is leading to great success.

Shappert asked if they received funding for bathrooms and Pagano stated that they received \$70,000 for bathrooms and that it would be good for the group to discuss where the priority sites would be and what type of facilities they would be, porta-potty or permanent. Alexander asked when the grant funding begins and Pagano stated that it is available right away. Fonken asked when they can talk about the winter STOR Corps and how they are going to disperse that effectiveness at trailheads for education. Pagano stated that letting them meet next week to have that discussion and believes it will help guide how they structure the STOR Corps next year. She doesn't want to make any commitments at this time until they have the discussion. Houck stated that he has had numerous conversations with Chris Castillion, executive director of GOCO, and he has repeatedly points out the amount of faith they have in the collaborative effort of Gunnison County and they have seen it pay out in different arenas of the County and Houck believes that it is good to keep in mind that the structure of the STOR Committee is really going to be a winning combination for other funding sources as well. Parmeter asked if all of the money was assigned or if it is flexible. Pagano stated that she isn't sure how flexible they are with this money but feels they are willing to be more flexible than they have been in the past. Alexander thanked Cathie for putting together the grants and working on getting funding.

STOR CORPS UPDATE

Lavorini reported they have a week and a half left, done October 2, 2020. They will be doing year end debrief internally with the crew and externally with their partners. Next month will be a good time to share year end accomplishments and statistics. The corps is out at Hartman Rocks constructing new trails. The program received recognition from the Colorado Tourism office and a governor award. Pagano stated that Lavorini and her are working on an end of the year summary of everything that has been accomplished since the start of the STOR Committee. Alexander asked if the report will be shared with the group and Pagano stated that yes, she will send it out to everyone.

CARE FOR COLORADO MEMBERSHIP

Lavorini reported that the Colorado Tourism office contacted him earlier this summer and asked if the group wanted to become members of Care for Colorado. They met with them and they decided to join the group. It opens up various resources for them. They have videos on the site and multiple resources the group can access. In the fall they will be working on customized graphics and brochures for the Gunnison Valley. The group's logo will be added to the website and they will also get a badge. The website for Care for Colorado is <https://www.colorado.com/CareForColorado>. Fonken asked that Lavorini find out who is using the site, who they are reaching.

COMMUNICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE AND WINTER PREPAREDNESS UPDATE

Pagano stated that the communications subcommittee met and was updated by Lavorini. The Crested Butte Avalanche Center is looking at some communication tools this winter and some programming opportunities to support avalanche awareness, education and outreach throughout the winter in various areas, trailheads and Western student, to get the message out. They have some signage needs associated with that. The subcommittee also talked about a campaign of "Don't be like Jerry, be like Steve". She reached out to Andrew Sandstrom and they have contracted with Buttery, a communications firm out of Crested Butte. Buttery is working on a winter COVID critter, specific to winter messaging and Sandstrom thought he could work with Than Acuff to come up with important messages to get across related to avalanche awareness as part of that campaign and he suggested an that an additional campaign of "Don't be like Jerry, be like Steve" might be duplicative at this time so they want to focus on having a consistent campaign and message across the valley that addresses winter stewardship and avalanche awareness. Would like to get the group's feedback. Funds would not need to come from the STOR Committee.

Norton stated that Christie Hicks made a pitch to the communications sub-committee that they not duplicate efforts and if someone else is doing the same thing that they work with them and not try to duplicate. Logan agrees that they don't want to duplicate and would be happy to look at the messaging that Buttery comes up with.

Fonken asked what happened at the subcommittee and that Lavorini go over the action items they came up with. Lavorini reported that the subcommittee talked about the river signs that the committee supported this year and it sounds like there is one outstanding at Garlic Mikes and they wanted to wait to install the sign until they could put it at Shady Island next year. He reported that the group talked about scholarships that support local residents that support avalanche awareness, discounted guided tours aired with demo day, avalanche courses by Zoom, CAIC promoting that you take a pledge to check the forecast before going out, encouraging and promoting groups that are already doing education on avalanches in the valley, STOR Corps helping with winter stewardship outreach, winter manners, not forget about recreation at the south end of the valley, updating the CBG trails app for winter, asking about the availability of STOR funds to potentially support programming of CBAC and Irwin Guides, and promoting responsible recreation at the airport and lodges.

Pagano stated that they are going to have signage at the airport. Sandstrom and Buttery are creating a pre-arrival postcard with COVID critters, setting expectations for guests related to COVID and winter messaging and stewardship. Those will be handed out to lodges and property management businesses. They will have them available for the Chamber. They are going to set up an email postcard so more people will have access, which will include a broader message on avalanche awareness and winter stewardship. She spoke with Norton about the app and he believes that TAPP can cover the update to the winter trails app and that they could cover the cost so that STOR could use the GOCO resilience funding for other needs, possibly related to avalanche awareness work.

Houck reported that he and Acuff have been having conversations about funding for the CBAC and CAIC. There has been a group of county commissioners from all of the ski counties and they have been working on plans with the State on skiing around the resorts. One thing they have been pushing on is the fact that it is very reasonable to expect summer to be mirrored in winter. There are going to be more people outside. They are looking to push the State to infuse some funding to CAIC and all the regional avalanche centers, including the CBAC. Pagano asked how long it will take for a response or action from the State. Houck wasn't sure but hoping that they can push the seasonality urgency and get it before the season starts. Shappert asked if there is any data on the increase from search and rescue from the summer going into the winter. Houck stated that he doesn't have the data but could get it and imagines they had an increase.

Pagano believes the next step would be to have Acuff meet with Sandstrom to explain what their needs are and to have a couple of people from the subcommittee also meet with Sandstrom for messaging. Pagano went over the Community Outreach Program that shows a proposal for an \$18,000 CB

avalanche center. She stated that the committee has \$4,000 that they can use part or all of it towards the CB Avalanche program and their work.

Peterson went over the Met Rec winter programming winter proposal. A few months ago, they met with CB Nordic and Gunnison Nordic looking at how they can help the entities locally with the end goal of getting more residents on the snow this winter. CBAC, Gunnison Nordic, CB Nordic and the City of Gunnison have come together to identify a few goals for the initiative and Met Rec has agreed to match every dollar contributed by a partner by \$2.

Acuff stated that he believes it's a good opportunity since Met Rec will match the amount funded. Any funding goes into keeping people safe and thinks that it makes for a great opportunity for CB Avalanche to reach out to the community and people visiting. They want to cooperate with Sandstrom with signage that gets the message across. It's really about keeping communication open with back country users to keep them safe. Acuff stated that they are a small center but unique and they have professional forecasters. Alexander asked if there are any updates from the ski area that would help think about this as well, with their preparedness coming along there is an assumption that more people will go to the backcountry due to adjustments as the ski area, as far as reservations etc. Voegeli stated that he doesn't have the numbers to share and doesn't believe the capacity piece is going to affect them at the resort, believes people won't want to go through the reservation system so they will skip using the resort and then will head into the backcountry. The availability will be there for people if they want to come onto the resort. Acuff stated that he doesn't know if the resort numbers will directly affect the resort and that people will be spending money on backcountry gear. There is a good chance that the resorts on the I-70 corridor will fill up quickly and then the spill over will come to Gunnison County and so they are preparing for an onslaught.

Shappert asked if they are going to have any information on the kiosks about carrying out their dog poop. Hicks stated that she suggested in the communications group that there needs to be a bigger stewardship message gong out, in addition to the avalanche education, and no bag left behind was an important piece. Hicks believes that all the trailheads need to be addressed. Logan stated that she saw random stations of wag bags in Red Rocks with a donation box. Stanford stated that the CB Council is also in favor of giving money to Met Rec.

Murphy asked if they could try an education campaign about different activities and entice people who don't know about back country skiing to try a different sport in the front country zone. That way they do something else instead of going to the back country, a different message. Push cross country skiing, ice fishing etc. Norton said that is a tough one but that he will think about it. Shappert stated that it would be geared towards people who aren't set on what they want to do, more for people who need ideas. Stanford doesn't know if there is any way you can encourage a different sport when there isn't any kind of compensation that doesn't make them want to go. Fonken stated that she believes that CB Nordic has done a great job in the past with encouraging people not on the mountain to go snowshoeing, take a ski tour, and they are talking about doing more of that. Perhaps Gunnison Nordic, Gunnison Trials and SIMBA could add more options to their websites and maybe some of the local businesses could come forward to work with TAPP to offer more.

Moved by: Shappert to allocate the full \$4,000, as requested by CBAC to be matched by Met Rec, seconded by Ochs. The motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL UPDATES FROM COMMITTEE

Borden asked if anyone wanted to talk about put ins in dangerous areas in Almont, they will need Matt McCombs would like to talk about it more when he is there. The forest service has Where to put signs and does it make sense to put them in both areas. Parmeter reported that there are some other places around the valley with increased traffic, big trailers, more bikes and believes it is important that the STOR Committee look at the issue and see how they can make those areas safer. Shappert asked that it be an agenda item in December or January. Alexander encouraged everyone to consider areas they think are unsafe that they could talk about.

Kugler reported that Duane's World has been open for a couple of months. They have been getting a lot of good feedback for it. They have been working on doing a new motorized trail at McCabes with the STOR Corps.

Fonken reported that they are having the groomers ball at the I Bar Ranch next week, on Thursday. They will also be talking about their programming for the next year.

Murphy asked Ochs on where they are on the big bridge on the Coal Train Trail. Ochs reported that it is going well, will be amazing and they are looking forward to it.

Logan reported that the City of Gunnison finished their safe routes to school project from the South side of Gunnison to the elementary and lake schools

Parmeter reported that it has been pretty slow this hunting season. They sold more licenses this year than in the years past but their draw numbers haven't gone up. A lot more people are interested in hunting but he hasn't seen them out there on the ground. Rifle season starts October 12, 2020 and they should see it then. Alexander stated that Blue Mesa has been quiet but the rivers have been busy.

Norton reported that he was in front of the CB Council last week and was asked what outreach that they have for razors etc. and stated that they have none for the motorized communities. Ochs agrees and that it is tough to do that study. Mountain bikers seem to be more engaged and more understanding of the work behind trails. There are a lot of new users who don't know the rules and etiquette. Believes the utv issue has been out of control this year and would like to have more conversations.

Murphy reported that they are seeing a huge uptick in roof top tents and they are trying to decide if they are parking or camping. They are trying to figure out what are they going to do; design facilities for the roof top tents possibly and they are looking at what it looks like for walk-in campsites. Alexander stated that it would be good to add the camping and utv issues to the future winter agendas.

ADJOURN: The September 24, 2020 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 3:28 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III