

Minutes of the July 29 meeting of the Southeast Regional Council held in Price

Attending: Ken Davey, Lou Sansevero, Jeff Horrocks, Mike McCandless, Pam Hanson, Charlie DeLorme, Sean Sasser, Colleen Cook, Tim Gwyther, Deb Dull, Edna Sipes, Peggy Golding, Alexandria Benaquisto, Shelly Ivie

Staff: Susan Etzel, Bob Gilbert, Kelly Thornton, Peggy Killian, Nicole Steele

Ken welcomed everyone. Introductions were made.

In reviewing the minutes, Shelly commented about the drug issue that was talked about last time. Nicole is a member of the local drug prevention and awareness, and the BEAR Committee has done significant outreach to local companies. Shelly noted we had decided to form a task force to look at some issues and ways to address them. We will be doing that in the near future. Lou moved the minutes be approved, Mike seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ken talked about the last State Council meeting. They talked about where the council system was going, and looked at ways to involve economic development more at the table. Also working at strengthening the ties with the private sector. There is always the goal for more economic diversity in the regions, and looking at strong and emerging industries. We also want to look at how workforce development fits into our communities in terms of education, transportation,. We have divided the southeast region into two service areas Castle Country and Southeast - and the Council can help with that process of developing some advisory panels in the two service areas.

Kelly Thornton gave the green energy grant update for Miles Nelson. She is a grants specialist for DWS. She indicated the grant is currently concentrating on CNG conversion, green construction and energy management. Eastern Utah will be training 230 people in those areas. We held a May kickoff at the SLCC campus. As part of the grant, we will have energy academies in Southeast and the Basin. We expect by the end of August to begin enrolling Navajo youth in the program, and CNG program enrollees by the end of September. DWS is sending the second compliance report to the DOL. We are being sure we are complying with the grant.

Ken asked if there is demand for the green jobs. Kelly said some are emerging. We hope to see some jobs developing in this sector. Those who want to build windmills may have to relocate. We also will focus on small businesses. The CNG conversion training will be in Price. Mike said that recently a grant was awarded for the building and installation of 25 CNG stations. He said that most of the 19 around the state will be along the interstates. Six are to be built in the rural parts, but not sure where. Charlie said that the concession operator at Lake Powell is using CNG vehicles. Mike said there is some concern about the swing in prices. Ken said that a lot of the training may be for incumbent workers – how will it be delivered. Kelly said we may need to market some to small businesses and workers, and that we need to get services down to the level of those who can take advantage of it. Kelly and Shelly said there will be an energy specialist in the area to market the training services. The conversion of diesel vehicles to CNG would be hugely beneficial for fleets. Lou said we need to subsidize the installation of these CNG stations. And we should pressure the administration to

provide those subsidies. Ken suggested that federal parties could take the lead in converting to CNG stations. The US and our state, in particular, have CNG in abundance, and we need to get the distribution systems built. Tim said it must not make sense yet, as the auto companies are not offering it on a mass scale.

Nicole and Mike provided some information on the BEAR (Business Expansion and Recruitment) program. Mike said the sustainability of BEAR is the key issue, and have now developed a strategy for sustaining it. BEAR started in 2004, and was focused on retention and expansion of existing businesses. BEAR acquired Executive Pulse software, which lets us have a database for local business data and profiles. Now, we have a program where we visit every business every two years. Helps us know what issues the business is having: personnel, drugs in the workplace, revenue drops, marketing, etc. Once the information is entered into Executive Pulse, the software lets you send a referral to whomever can help solve the problem. Mike said the counties have put about \$34000 into it this year, and we are getting \$1.034 million back for 2009. And we are getting a lot of private investment, totaling \$3 million for the last calendar year. We have used the VISTA volunteer program to help us with the business contacting. Mike said there are a number of offices that are contacting businesses, and asking similar questions. There may be some efficiencies in having one person do all of that data collection. This year, we have met with DWS and Voc Rehab to explore the effort, and now we are looking at doing something statewide. The proposal is to do the work using surveys, paying on a post-survey basis, and looking at something in the range of \$100-160 per visit.

Last Tuesday, we talked with Spencer Eccles, GOED director, about buying into the program, and finding \$700,000 to pay for the program. At the end of the meeting, Spencer was very supportive. Mike felt they got a 99% buyin. In the past, the rural counties haven't had a strategy. Now we have one with the BEAR program, and an 8 page document that spells out the strategy. The model may not work everywhere. Some counties may have something that works differently. So make the money available, and let each county do what works for them in terms of contacting employers and collecting data. Needs must be met for each partner and program. Mike said the timing, where the economy is down, is good. Shelly said that she really likes the partnering, and the gardening concept. In the urban areas, they hunt for new businesses. In the rural area, jobs come from existing businesses, where you 'garden' existing businesses, and help them grow. Is a bottom-up approach, where local areas are doing what works for them, and working with businesses that want to grow.

Charlie said we get these top down mandates, which aren't usually successful, but the BEAR program has spread into San Juan County, and we have had some successes. The proof is in the pudding. Now we are getting buy-in from the SBDCs and DWS. It can save money and get successful results. Fast track and enterprise zones are being audited, which has been something of a detriment. Lt Gov Bell said he has offered to be the point man for this initiative. Mike is real pleased with the results so far. Next step is getting support of the Governor's Rural Partnership Board, after which we will be meeting with the upper management of DWS and Voc Rehab. Mike emphasized that you have to not worry about 'Turf' in order for this to be successful. DWS is a key to this. Need to have DWS support this from an 'employer visit' concept. Will help them with their role in meeting and knowing what employers are doing. Executive Pulse is very flexible and responsive, and can be adapted for individual needs. Mike indicated that about 1/3 of the businesses in Carbon/Emery Counties don't play so much with us, but the other 2/3's are very cooperative. You build a relationship. Also is able to reach those businesses that are not on DWS system, which are those that are home-based or self-

employed. Ken said that the value he sees is that you are getting real data from businesses, not perceived data. Charlie suggested the Council send a letter expressing support as the 'gardening' and BEAR being the main strategy for rural Utah. Mike said we need to fill the rooms when these proposals are heard during the legislature.

Lou motioned that we draft up a letter for BEAR and gardening and send it to Spencer Eccles, GOED. Charlie seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Also, we need to have the dates sent out for the hearings to allow for scheduling and attendance.

Shelly gave the director's report. She reviewed the economic data for Castle Country and Southeast. Richard that an associate told him there is a movement to have some call centers that are overseas come back to US. Shelly said we want to be working with economic development and targeted industry sectors. We want to be listening and aware. We are concerned about the UI trust fund, paying \$13 million per week, and want to have it stay solvent. DWS has some programs to give incentives to employers to hire workers that are out of work.

Shelly talked about Industry Advisory Groups, saying that we have four counties now, but each has distinct economic situations. We are trying to get back to the demand-driven concept, and have divided the four into two service areas, and are moving to have an advisory-type board in each area that can bring things to the front and focus on real issues. It could be called a Task force: one for Emery-Carbon and one for Grand-San Juan counties. Deb said need to get more private sector types at the table. Deb asked if you have seen same issue in the Basin? Shelly responded saying that we have not tried to fill vacancies over the past year or so as we knew changes were coming. Tim said that events in the Basin don't concern us much here. But separating the four southeast counties may not be good, you might lose some synergy. Lou said he is also worried about that. The region has a large voting bloc, so we can be better heard if we do things together. Charlie said we should get the group together at least once a year. We are stronger together. Shelly suggested keeping the advisory board on a four-county basis, and have two two-county advisory boards. Mike, too, felt there was value in having a four county meeting. Our BEAR group already meets every two weeks and it is a combined group of Carbon/Emery counties. It would be a good foundation upon which to build an advisory board. Charlie said we need to have more private enterprise at the table. It was suggested to utilize Chamber Directors for referrals. Mike said that another reality is the census redistricting, and we will have less rural representatives. Ken said that as a region, it is important to have as much of an impact as possible. On the other hand, in terms of on the ground, working with businesses, focus has to be local. We need to merge the two. It is hard to get private enterprise to participate, so I do think one of the things is to focus on these task forces and have them be effective. Task forces need to be fluid as possible, should be a focused group. Lou said that the BEAR program was once 4 people sitting around a table talking about ideas.

Shelly said that an example of a task force might be mining, and we need to learn what drives mining, and what the career ladders are. We need to learn from the industry. She thought we could maintain a Region Council-type group for the four counties, and have task forces and advisory groups for the service areas. We also want to have a vote and a chair for each ESA.

Mike noted that a Carbon-Emery-based call center is going to expand significantly. Will go from 20 to 70. Conductive Composites in Green River got a contract, and will be expanding to meet the

government contract. Also, the nuclear project did receive \$30 million in funding. Water situation is expected to be resolved within next 4 months.

Under Other, Edna reported that the Shriner Club in Price will be sponsoring a screening session at the Price hospital. Will screen for disabilities, orthopedic-type surgery on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>. Any surgeries would be done at a Shriner's hospital. Steve Wilkinson, DWS vet rep, will forward out the information.

Next meeting was set for Oct 28<sup>th</sup>.