



Board of Directors Meeting

Held by Zoom

December 9, 2020 – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. MT

- ATTENDANCE** Present via Zoom: Karen Appelgren, ID. Department of Commerce, Stephanie Bailey-White, ID. Commission for Libraries, Jon Barrett, Idaho Rural Partnership, Art Beal, Idaho Resource Conservation and Development Association, Trent Clark, Customalting, Stephanie Cook, James Curry, Bayer Crop Science, Kathy Dayley, Office of Senator James Risch, Brian Dale, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Ron Duran, ID. Transportation Department, Eric Forsch, ID. Department of Commerce, Eric Gilbert, Treefort, Cyndi Grafe, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Melissa Hamilton, UI Extension – Valley County, Carleen Herring, U.S. Economic Development Administration, Lorie Higgins, UI Extension, John Holman, USDA Rural Development, Will Jenson, Idaho National Laboratory, Tom Kealey, ID Department of Commerce; Erik Kingston, Idaho Housing and Finance Association; Kermit Mankiller, Nez Perce Tribe, Jeff Marker, Idaho Transportation Department, Jeff McCurdy, Region IV Development Association, Jerry Miller, ID Dept. of Commerce, Daryl Moser, USDA – Rural Development, Senator Mark Nye, Idaho Legislature, Kelley Packer, Association of Idaho Cities, Donna Pence, Gooding, Barbara Petty, University of Idaho Extension, Jani Revier, ID. Department of Labor, Tim Solomon, Rocky Mountain Power, Chanel Tewalt, Idaho Dept. of Agriculture, Rep. Sally Toone, Idaho Legislature, Rep. Caroline Nilsson Troy, Idaho Legislature, Amelia Valasek, ID. Commission on Libraries.
- CALL TO ORDER, APPROVE MINUTES** Co-Chair Art Beal CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 9:05 A.M. Mountain. Co-Chair Beal asked if there are any corrections to the minutes of the August 12, 2020 board meeting. No corrections were made the minutes were approved as submitted.
- CO-CHAIR REPORTS** Co-Chair Kealey encouraged everyone to continue to stay safe at this time. The state still seems to be in pretty good shape, commerce-wise, in both rural and urban areas. We have recently

had a lot of inquires from companies looking to expand here in the state. We have been very active with the allocation of CARES Act funding for expansion of broadband infrastructure around the state. The revenue numbers for recreation and tourism for October and November are surprisingly strong – above last year in many areas. Decreased numbers related to conventions and conferences in Region 3 is the one exception.

Art, Jon, and I have been spending some time on the business of IRP, looking at what services we offer relative to other offerings that are out there. We have also been looking at funding and potential funding sources. Also been talking about the structure (i.e., staff and board, etc.)

Co-Chair Beal welcomed people who are new to IRP, welcome back to everyone else. Special thanks to Jim Wertz, Darrell Bolz, and others who have served in the past who have decided to step out of the public eye. Special thanks to board members who contribute to IRP outside of the board meetings (e.g., by participating in community reviews). I also thank the Governor for is excellent leadership at this time and Director Kealey for stepping in as IRP co-chair. I appreciate Zoom but recognize we are missing out on some of the important face to face interactions.

As for resource conservation and development issues, the Idaho Association of RC & D Councils continues to support forest and landscape improvement projects.

ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

Melissa
Hamilton

Focusing on the advisory board for U of I Extension Valley County. I will be convening this group on Zoom to solicit their input on what we do in Valley Co. Doing features and storytelling about local businesses. Also working on enhanced STEM learning and youth development efforts in partnership with libraries.

Recently launched with IRP and Dr. Higgins the state-wide Peer Learning Network for rural Idaho leaders. If you would like to join this network please email me at mbhamilton@uidaho.edu.

I also work with a local food coalition to support resiliency of local agriculture and I have started a Diversity Learning Circle to work

with rural participants on embracing the diversity we have in our communities through leading dialogue and discussion groups.

Trent Clark

I am working on a workforce project for Sen. Risch. Many of you know I just finished serving as chair of the ID. Workforce Development Council. We started setting up a cybersecurity training program. We need to make sure our cybersecurity talent is available in both rural and urban areas. A network is only secure as its weakest point.

There's effort underway to develop cybersecurity capacity through collaboration – regional and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Funding proposal now working its way through Congress to support cybersecurity skills. We in Idaho should be set up these collaborations where we need them.

More info at <https://www.nist.gov/publications/roadmap-successful-regional-alliances-and-multistakeholder-partnerships-build>.

Stephanie Cook

If you have not heard, my family and I are leaving Idaho. I anticipate being back to visit. I have appreciated being part of IRP. I have worked on 5 community reviews, allowing me to get to know the people of Idaho.

Today I have brought two guests: (1) Eric Gilbert from Treefort and (2) Greg Burroughs. The arts are critical to our state and communities.

Please welcome my two guests to IRP Eric Gilbert and Greg Burroughs. Greg hales from California and is in the entertainment industry helping artists booking and marketing agent. He values the environment and loves getting out into the forests to explore and is launching a new brand. Eric Gilbert is co-founder of Treefort, Idaho's top artist event and organization. He's interested in connecting to IRP potentially to learn how to collaborate and build the growing art ecosystem which is important to retain and attract talent to Idaho.

I launched Boise Startup Week new Arts Media and Design Track and it was one of the most successful tracks.

I've loved working with the Idaho Rural Partnership and encourage each of you to participate in a community review and consider

helping our rural communities create capture teams to capitalize on grants. Thankyou!

Eric Gilbert

Thanks for inviting me. Long-time Idahoan; went to U of I. Want to develop interconnectivity within the state in the context of the arts.

I have been involved in relief efforts for the live entertainment sector both nationally and locally. A few of us in the Treasure Valley have formed an advocacy group we're calling Idaho Independent Venue Coalition. I have been representing us with the National Independent Venue Association and the national advocacy around covid-relief efforts for our sector - most visibly being the bi-partisan Save Our Stages Act currently in play in congress. We are working on a full database of performance venues throughout Idaho so that we can make sure to connect all of the independent, for-profit, and non-profit venues and events in our state that have been so heavily impacted this year with any aid that comes through.

Senator Nye

Focus is on the upcoming legislative session. Not just the issues themselves, but COVID and security issues we are going to be facing in the statehouse.

Karen Appelgren

I am the new program manager for Business Retention and Expansion for Idaho Commerce. We are focused on outreach to visits to businesses. We have done visits with 600 businesses to date this year. We have also surveyed businesses re: impact of COVID.

Chanel Tewalt

Ag. markets have been difficult and uncertain. We saw double-digit declines across most sectors early in pandemic. We have seen some rebounding in beef, dairy. Wheat remains pretty strong. Lamb is not seeing the rebound at this time. Ag. land value has remained strong, which is helpful with finances. Exports will be critically important in 2021 for stabilization.

Everybody is talking about meat processing this year. Will impact rural communities. Please contact ISDA if you are getting questions about this issue and you want help.

Ag. labor remains a big challenge across the industry.

Barbara Petty

We have done very well during the COVID situation this year. We have moved a lot of our programming on-line. We have developed

over 100 different courses on our website. Governor's emergency education relief fund has been a big help in a number of ways. We have an active state advisory board. We used their input to prioritize suicide awareness and prevention.

In the past year we have offered OPR training for our volunteers, have trained 16 educators in Mental Health First Aid Training and will be working with selected communities. We are leaders in building a thriving, prosperous, healthy Idaho.

Daryl Moser

RD's investment in Idaho last year was almost \$400 million – up from the previous year. The entrepreneurial spirit has been amazing and inspirational to see.

Our program highlights: FY20 Total RD Investment in rural Idaho: \$396MM (by comparison, FY18: \$342MM). Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) program: Purpose: grants to public bodies & non-profits to facilitate the development of small private business. Application deadline: February 26, 2021. FY2020 Project: ECIPDA/Economic Development Districts of Idaho (EDDI) CARES Act Recovery. Rural Energy for America (REAP) Program: Provides support for energy efficiency and renewable energy systems in rural areas. Eligible applicants include agricultural producers and rural small businesses. Next application deadline: March 31, 2021. Intermediary Relending Program (IRP): Provides a loan to private nonprofit organizations to establish or fund a revolving loan fund (RLF) program to provide loans to rural businesses in rural areas. An IRP loan of \$400,000 to CEDA was closed in November. Broadband Programs-new contact (replaces Joe Bradley): John Holman - will report later.

Jeff Marker

We have been fortunate that road and bridge projects have been able to continue throughout the pandemic. The revenues from recreation and so on has stayed pretty steady, which is helpful. Public transportation office continues to distribute the \$27 million in CARES Act funding to transit providers around the state. In aeronautics we just completed our 10-year system plan update. Rural community airports have contributed \$405 million and 47 jobs to the state's economy. We are part of legislature-led committee to re-establish commercial air service between some of our communities. A contractor is currently researching travel patterns in rural to urban areas and modeling potential passenger demand.

Stephanie
Bailey-White

I am Director of Idaho Commission for Libraries. Grew up in Buhl and have a passion for rural communities. Our staff shifted during pandemic to focus on keeping students learning and adults earning. Our use of CARES Act funds were in these areas. Our CARES Act funding is extending broadband to 49 rural libraries. Also launched a statewide e-book program that will help students have access to books in their homes and schools. Working with Dept. of Education on workforce development.

Amelia Valasek

Lived in rural Idaho last 6 years. I am past Director at Cascade Public Library. Looking forward to developing partnerships with IRP partners to support rural communities. I also worked at Dept. of Education in adult education program, so I have some background in workforce development.

Jani Revier

Idaho is one of the least impacted states in terms of unemployment due to the pandemic. That said, our unemployment rate is higher than it was last year. Supplemental benefit programs are set to expire; extensions are being considered at this time.

Businesses are having a hard time finding workers, so we are helping connect workers with employers to fill those gaps.

We have a new federal grant, the National Dislocated Worker Grant. This grant allows us to pay a portion of a person's salary. So far, we have placed 46 participants in workplace learning opportunities under this program. We are also working with our Job Corps grant. This program is moving forward. It involves developing partnerships with community colleges across the state. Our residential program is on pause due to the pandemic.

Rep. Sally
Toone

Like everybody else, broadband is a challenge in my rural area. As Sen. Nye has said, it has been a challenge preparing for the upcoming session. Citizen safety is #1 priority.

In my district, we have some businesses doing things differently. In Sun Valley, they do not have a full ski season; they are down, but they are getting reservations. Lots of "grab and go" services. South Central Idaho Economic Development is helping some businesses come into the area.

Again, broadband has been probably our biggest issue for schools, business, residents, etc. Some of our communities (and libraries)

have received broadband funding from the state; others have not. We still need to keep making these investments going forward.

Rep. Caroline
Troy

I would like to thank everyone for these reports. As I listen, I have been reflecting on where rural Idaho is. I am concerned about the number of small businesses that will go under once we reach the end of the COVID crisis. I have heard over 40% of small business across the country will close and I am concerned about what that means for Idaho, what that means for main street in our rural communities. I heard from a FedEx driver they deliver over 2000 packages a day in Moscow. What does that mean for rural Idaho? Rather than report on things I am working on, I want to express the importance of planning and having a shared vision. I would like to find a way for this organization to do some planning for rural Idaho. I think we can make a difference and have an impact, but I think we all need to be moving in the same direction.

Tim Solomon

I want to represent the utilities as a whole relative to the impact of the pandemic. Transmission and generation, especially on the renewable side, are continuing. We are really not seeing a drop off. In some ways, we might be seeing an increase as utilities continue developing a long-term base of renewable energy. As many of you know, Rocky Mountain Power and Pacific Corp. are Berkshire-Hathaway companies. Warren Buffet is committed to investing in renewable energy. In next 10 years, we plan to add 43% of wind in Wyoming; about 37% wind in Idaho. With solar, our goal is 32.5% in Utah and about 28% capacity factor in Idaho. Progress in this area will impact rural customers significantly. We are seeing the pricing factors drop as more renewables come online.

We have been working with customers during the pandemic to make sure we are not disconnecting people. Small businesses need to keep the power on, even if they get behind on payments or have to close their business temporarily (e.g., heating, refrigeration). We work to find solutions with them. That said, we are impacted when revenue drops.

We have replaced 67,000 miles of conductor this last year due to fire and wind.

Electric vehicles are becoming a hallmark of utilities. We are working to make sure folks in rural areas can have electric vehicles (e.g., investing in charging facilities).

- Lorie Higgins I was on a regional conference call yesterday with north central Idaho stakeholders and was glad to learn about the broadband investments being made in our region. I think it is a huge need.
- I have been working on updating Artisan Trail Guide which focuses on art, food, and heritage opportunities in the 13 counties in north central ID and SE Washington. Two Degrees Northwest (2dnw.org).
- There are two versions of the guide. One is an interactive website map and the book version is being printed this week. The print guide is in book format and orders of one - 50 guides can be purchased from University of Idaho via the website and 50 or more guides can be purchased from the publisher.
- Donna Pence I am adhoc participant in IRP. Former legislator. I am associated with some of the health care facilities in Gooding. Our small North Canyon Medical Center has been really affected, as have other small rural hospitals. We do have a high infection rate. We have capacity issues in the region in terms of being able to take Covid patients. And we do not get a lot of testing materials. I would like to see us getting those out to everybody.
- I was glad to hear about the transportation projects. We need these improvements in our area.
- Greg Burroughs Just moved to the area from CA. Grew up in a part of rural Ohio that grew rapidly. My background is in music. I have new brand I am launching focusing on the outdoors. Looking for opportunities to showcase our rural communities.
- Kelley Packer Regarding our rural communities, we are focused on broadband. Not just service, but also affordability. Many of our service providers will say that our broadband infrastructure is 90% built out in the state. But most people cannot access it or if they can, it is out of their price range.
- Policy and funding needs (related to broadband) will be a heavy push during legislative session. We will also be working closely with legislature on some concerns we have about some of the property tax legislation that has been proposed. The solutions that have been proposed will actually do more harm than good in our rural communities and cities statewide. Services will be drastically reduced. We have already had one city – Atomic City – disincorporate in 2020. People need to be aware that the concerns

area real. Revenues streams, especially for rural cities, are in jeopardy.

AIC is also supporting the Support Local Gems initiative for December;
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aTLk4P6kwMfCO3SmzpLabuJN7dk6fRsN?usp=sharing>

Brian Dale HUD CARES Act funding allocated to State of Idaho has totaled just over \$40 million. In rural Idaho, that is primarily going through Commerce, IHFA, and housing authorities, and tribes. There is also a large chunk of that going to urban areas.

We have two new envision centers in Idaho. Newest one is on Sandpoint. The other one is in CdA. We pulled together the opportunity zones team in Idaho; will reconvene in January.

Erik Kingston IHFA has the HOME Preservation Program which is the CARES Act funds to provide assistance to folks who have lost income due to the pandemic. To date, we have distributed \$11,785,000 to assist 4,600 households and 14,000 people. The application for this assistance closes this Friday at 5 pm. I will include link to application in the chat. Please share with folks as quickly as possible. We are anticipating spending down \$15 million by the end of December.

I am coordinating a fair housing innovative partnerships grant from HUD. This is an education outreach program. We will be sending out information to many IRP partners.

I am now serving on the board of the Idaho Access Project and will put a link in Chat. This project focuses on accessibility and visitability of housing. Ramp Up Idaho is a related project focused on small businesses.

Avenues for Hope campaign is our annual effort to raise money for homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transitional housing providers around the state. This campaign starts tomorrow, Dec. 10.; ends on the 31st. Donations can be leveraged by our big partners.

We are working with Dept. of Commerce to gear up to complete our next 5-year analysis of impediments to fair housing. This analysis will be completed in early 2022.

The housing shortage is one of the biggest things that has our attention. Shifts from local ownership (of housing) to outside private equity/large corporate entities buying up housing units and converting them to high-cost rental investment property is having a huge impact. Employers are starting to be concerned about the impact of housing shortages on recruitment and retention of employees. Also hearing this from economic development organizations, communities, Dept. of Commerce, etc. Also hearing about related increased displacement and homelessness. I am providing to you all our December housing market report, which will give you more information, including info. about the impact of local housing affordability on local government finance through "foregone spending." This is money lost from the local tax base as people spend more of their money on housing relative to other taxable goods and services.

The estimate in Idaho is that we lost \$617 million in 2017 in foregone spending because of housing cost burden alone. Imagine how much more it is now.

Ron Duran Here from ITD. I manage public transportation. I would add to Jeff's report that we are helping Twin Falls region transfer from rural to small urban transit funding. As we move through that transition, we may see changes in service levels. The same transition is happening in the Idaho Falls area.

Cyndi Grafe I am passionate about rural interests and needs and am excited to be here. We are teleworking like many other agencies. We have still continued to provide funding for infrastructure projects in Idaho and infrastructure funding to DEQ. We recently had a reorganization at national level to increase emphasis on water infrastructure funding. This will be the final year of transition for EPA to transition the Clean Water Act permitting (NPDES) to DEQ. After this coming year, Idaho will completely have this permitting program.

Kermit Mankiller I put some information in Zoom chat about what we are doing. We continue pursuing our business park at Spaulding. It looks positive at this point.

The Tribe has secured CARES Act funding it is putting into the community to deal with pandemic. One of the encouraging things is – through the Nimiipu Fund, our CDFI we have been able to make

small business grants, many of which are businesses many people were not aware of.

We were able to get MOU in place between Tribe and Port of Lewiston to get broadband in place to better serve the Nez Perce Nation, particularly the business centers.

The Tribe is pursuing regulations to bring industrial hemp onto the Reservation as an ag. crop. We are doing much related planning regarding, e.g., manufacturing input, etc. Otherwise, we are pushing forward to keep our businesses open and trying to keep our customers and employees safe.

James Curry

It has been a tough year in ag., including in our crop science division. The good news in Idaho is that our Soda Springs plant was able to operate at or near capacity for most of the year throughout pandemic with safety measures. Unfortunate that we were not able to have the big groundbreaking at our Caldwell Canyon mine that will supply 35-40 years of phosphorous. This will be great for ag. and for the company. Round-up litigation will not have an impact on any of our operations in Idaho.

We are part of a national group called the American Connections Broadband Coalition led by the Land O'Lakes company. We are hoping to get significant funding package from COVID relief. I am happy to share information from this group with IRP going forward.

Will Jenson

We received and closed all our applications for tech-based economic development grants. Announcements will be coming out soon after the new year.

We have a new director starting December 11. He is being promoted from within INL. Idaho has been announced as preferred site for a new test reactor. There are a few other things that need to happen in order to lock in Idaho as the location. Construction anticipated 2022-2023. It is a big job with 1300 construction workers.

We have really great webinar series happening about, e.g., supplier engagement, future opportunities, etc. You will find these through our procurement website. The National Reactor Innovation Center is also doing webinars that explain a lot about what has been happening at the site.

Here is a link to the Supplier Webinar Series.
<https://procurement.inl.gov/SitePages/WebinarSeries.aspx>.

Kathy Dayley

I want to let everyone know that with the holiday season coming up, Idaho businesses are facing a critical next three weeks. Some many of them rely on the holiday revenue to keep the doors open. Sen. Risch is supporting the Idaho Gems All Year Long program. This is a reboot of an effort last spring. Commerce, AIC, other partners are involved. I will provide a press release to IRP for forwarding.

EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT

Program-wise, we have completed the report on the COVID survey we conducted this summer. Also completed post-review coaching in Emmett, Plummer, Cascade, which allowed us to close out the applicable grant with USDA Rural Development.

In August we re-started planning for Phase II of Blackfoot Community Review. That process became delayed when the home team coordinator got COVID. She was not able to work for 9 weeks. That planning has now re-started and we have a Blackfoot Phase II meeting today, with additional Phase II meetings happening after the new year.

We have been working to launch the Rural Peer Learning Network. First meeting was on Dec. 9.

In October I submitted an intern opportunity description to BSU WorkU program. We will know if we are going to get an intern in the next month. I have updated IRP website recently. Recently completed next edition of Idaho Ruralist to be distributed in near future. We submitted a proposal to INL's tech-based economic development grant program.

Partners for Rural America is developing a proposal for federal funding through USDA. Would allow PRA to hire an executive director and provide some funding to state rural development councils (i.e., IRP). I will stay in touch with you all as this proposal moves forward.

Just recently, we have been working with the Governor's office on appointments to the IRP board. I will keep the board apprised of appointments as they are made.

The spreadsheet I have provided to the board shows income anticipated, expenses anticipated, income raised, and actual expenses for 2020. We have brought in, as of November 30, \$57,000+ for 2020 and we have spent about \$38,000, meaning there is a \$20,000 difference. Between our three accounts, we have about \$20,000.

Happy to report that in the seven-month period from January thru July, our expenses were \$17,000. In the last four months, our expenses were \$20,000.

Status of our accounts (projected for Dec. 31):
General fund: \$8,900
Blue Cross of Idaho: \$8,700
Fund for Rural Idaho: \$5,000

BREAK

COMMUNITY
REVIEW
PROGRAM/WES
TERN
COMMUNITY
ASSESSMENT
NETWORK
UPDATE (DR.
LORIE
HIGGINS)

The CR program is in the process of transitioning to a virtual process. This is requiring all parties to be flexible.

The first grant we received from USDA ends on May 1. Lorie reviewed the three phases of the community review process. Phase I is easier to do virtually; Phase II more difficult to do virtually. Youth really take to the virtual model, in particular.

As Jon said, we are working with Blackfoot to conduct a virtual Phase II, possibly using the library. We might take an in-person/virtual hybrid approach.

Because we have not been traveling for community reviews, we have some extra grant funds available. We got permission to provide support to IRP (\$5,000) and to communities who have completed community reviews.

We have continued to do ripple effects mapping virtually. We plan to do ripple effects mapping in McCammon early next year. We have been able to document the many positive impacts of their community review and completing ripple effects mapping will add to that information.

We will be compiling everything we have learned about the new community review process relative to the old process this spring. The new process is more action and implementation oriented.

USDA AFRI program did award us a second grant. Announcement is not official yet. Wrote grant at the beginning of the pandemic. It focuses on developing the capacity and process to complete up to 12 community reviews per year (as opposed to the 2-4 Reviews per year we have completed historically). The new grant also provides funding for training on, e.g., financing community projects.

The new grant also provides \$15,000 in support to IRP as well as funds for a half-time person to help coordinate community reviews and write reports. Details of how this position will be structured are to be determined.

Jon summarized Rural Peer Learning Network. The network responds to people in rural communities who want to see more people involved in community improvement efforts. Our intent is to nurture new leaders. It will be a virtual network meeting by Zoom. In early November, we invited about 75 rural folks across the state who participated in past community reviews. Response has been very positive. About a dozen people have signed on. The topics for discussion will be identified by the participants. IRP will bring people to the network; U of I Extension will facilitate the network meetings, with support from Jon.

PIERCE-
WEIPPE RURAL
HEALTH
PROJECT

Laurel York Odell is not able to join us today. The rural health project is funding by a grant from Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation. Idaho Community Foundation also an important partner. Laurel and I met with stakeholders in August and have continued meeting monthly. The stakeholders include economic development, senior center, recreation district, education, churches, hospital, EMS services, etc. Chris St. Germaine is playing an important local leadership role. Opportunities and challenges identified by communities being addressed include: (1) Access to medical care, including via telehealth, (2) Transportation, (3) Substance abuse treatment and prevention, (4) EMS services, (4) Health promotion, prevention, and education, and (5) Dental.

Accomplishments to date: (1) setting up telehealth access from the clinic in Pierce, (2) completing research about transportation services – existing and potential, (3) supporting efforts to improve EMS services, (4) assisting with establishing an AmeriCorps position to work on health promotion and education.

PROPOSED
2021 IRP
WORKPLAN
AND BUDGET

The 2021 workplan and budget were provided by email on Monday. Workplan focuses on completing Blackfoot and Harrison Community Reviews, and then complete two additional community reviews in second half of 2021. Also includes providing community coaching in two communities and continuation of ripple effects mapping to document community review outcomes.

Workplan also includes completion of rural health project, development of the new peer learning network, and hosting PRA annual conference.

Workplan includes IRP strategic planning process. There are important questions we need to ask ourselves as an organization and I look forward to exploring them with the board.

The proposed budget shows carryover balances from 2020 and pledged income or in grant agreements. Total budgeted income is \$97,000; the propose expenses are \$77,000.

Co-Chair Beal: Any questions from the board?

Erik Kingston: I want to support the hosting of the PRA conference.

Co-chair Kealey: The proposed plan is a challenge for IRP and Jon. He is our fundraiser and our promoter. It is a big challenge. Hopefully, this is a good plan for this coming year. The process of strategic planning is important. Thanks to Jon and Art for their work putting the workplan and budget together.

Co-Chair Beal: I would ask for unanimous consent that we approve the workplan and budget. Hearing no objection, the workplan and budget are approved.

PROPOSED
CONTRACT
WITH JON
BARRETT

Summary by Jon: Current contract expires December 31. Important to note the term of the proposed contract ends on June 30, 2021. This is being proposed because of the half-time position that will be funded by U of I using USDA grant funds. For work related to specific community reviews, the contract continues to use a fixed price structure that is tied to deliverables. For all other work, the contract specifies an hourly rate of \$37.67, a 2% increase over existing contract.

Co-Chair Beal: Questions or contracts.

Co-Chair Kealey: I will make a motion to approve the contract.

Erik Kingston: I will second that.

Contract approved by unanimous consent.

RENEWAL OF
CO-LOCATION
AGREEMENT
WITH
DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE

Co-Chair Beal summarized the agreement which provides office space at no cost for 2021. Co-Chair Kealey commented that we are trying to reduce the IT cost charged to IRP, which seems high. Kelley Packer moved to approve the agreement by unanimous consent. Hearing no objections, the motion was approved.

INCREASING
BROADBAND
ACCESS IN
RURAL IDAHO
CO-CHAIR
KEALEY AND
ERIC FORSCH,
DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE
AND JOHN
HOLMAN, USDA
RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

Co-Chair Kealey provided background information, describing broadband taskforce and related plan, which was submitted to the Governor about a year ago. When the Governor came into office, broadband was a big priority.

The Legislature approved the Office of Broadband within the Dept. of Commerce. They also provided some funding to help close the broadband gaps in mainly rural Idaho.

The pandemic hit, magnifying the issue and need for connectivity. We worked with the Governor's office and Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee to allocate \$50 million in CARES Act funding to improving broadband. There was a really short timeframe for funding to be deployed and projects completed (12/31/20).

We received 137 applicants with \$83 million demand for grants. The broadband grants committee reviewed the applications and made recommendations to the Dept. of Commerce.

Eric Forsch stepped in to work with cities, counties, legislators, and other stakeholders to work with communities to help them submit applications. It has gone amazingly well.

The new stimulus package being kicked around at the federal level will likely have large amounts of money for broadband. This will allow us to continue making progress going forward.

Other broadband funding opportunities: (1) USDA Reconnect Grants -- \$43 million to internet service providers, mostly for rural

areas, (2) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund -- \$112 million for Idaho, 10-year program, a large portion of these funds are going to SpaceX/Starlink.

ERIC FORSCH,
ID. Department
of Commerce

I am sharing my screen so you can see the impacts we are having across the state.

There is definitely a need for more investment in broadband. Everyone appreciates that. If you look at the data, FCC says 24.7 million people in U.S. do not have access to broadband. Microsoft says 162.8 million people do not use internet at broadband speeds. "Broadband" = 25 mbps download, 3 mbps upload. This difference highlights some of the challenges. As a state, we have been fortunate to have access to the funding and to see the recent investments in different areas.

We awarded grants to 102 projects; we eventually signed contracts with 89. Most of the projects are in very rural parts of the state, as you can see from map. There is a need to continue making these investments as there are still underserved areas. A lot of communities did not have access to 10/1 mbps. The newer 25/3 standard is needed to support remote working and Zoom calls, for example.

There is also a need to have more computer devices into the hands of students and families to improve access for the purpose of remote learning.

Other things we are working include working with communities to help them understand their broadband needs and goals. We will continue this work to help them build broadband plans and match them with available resources.

We are close to having the 89 grant-funded projects completed and paid. Total of \$47.5 million in grant dollars benefitting 35,000 households. This is a huge impact to Idaho communities. Geographic coverage across the state is excellent. A lot of communities are getting fiber to the home.

It makes me happy to see hear these stories and see the impact. (Erik summarized projects in districts represented by legislators on the IRP board).

We are certainly looking forward to continue making investments if we are allowed additional funding.

JOHN HOLMAN,
USDA RD

I am the general field rep. for the rural utility service. I cover OR, WA, and ID. We have a suite of federal programs available to expand broadband in rural communities. We have been around since 1940s. I will touch briefly on a couple of our programs.

Infrastructure loan program – expansions or improvements to current infrastructure. Cost of funding is extremely low.

Reconnect – Has received significant funding for rural broadband.

Community Connect – true grant program that has gained a lot of interest.

Distance Learning and Tele-Medicine grants – Typically go to school districts, hospitals, or anyone else needing to do distance learning. Up to \$1 million per project. Happens every fiscal year.

We get good bi-partisan support for these programs. My job is to help navigate them. I provided a program matrix and my contact info. to Director Barrett.

REGIONAL
PERSPECTIVES
ON ECONOMIC
RECOVERY,
RESILIENCY,
AND
OPPORTUNITIE
S FOR
PARTNERSHIP,
JEFF
MCCURDY,
REGION IV
DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION

I appreciate the opportunity. I want to recognize Christine Frei with CEDA, who has joined the call today. I have been asked to represent the economic development districts and share some of our regional perspectives.

The US Dept. of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration described economic development districts as multi-county, multi-partner entities. Each district is responsible for creating regional plans called CEDS -Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The plan outlines regional actions we work on to drive economic development activities.

We have 5 economic development districts in Idaho – Panhandle Area Council, Clearwater Economic Development Association, Region IV Development Association, Southeast Idaho Council of Governments, and The Development Company. There is currently no economic development district covering region 3. We each were formed a little differently and operate a little different to best meet our needs. But we have common purposes. For example, we all foster regional and statewide collaboration, develop, and implement that regional blueprint (CEDS), and serve as a resource for community and business leaders. In recent years we have initiated work on a statewide CEDS.

Each district receives an annual planning grant from EDA to help support development and implementation of the CEDS. Some of us also operate loan programs. Some serve other needs like office on aging, workforce training, etc. We also partner a lot with USDA Rural Development.

OPPORTUNITIES AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC. The EDA received \$1.5 billion in CARES Act funding to help with economic development assistance programs and prevent and recover from the pandemic. In June 2020 each of the economic development districts received two special invitations from EDA: (1) supplemental planning grant and (2) funds for a new revolving loan fund. These grants were awarded in July 2020 – totaling \$13 million coming to the states. Each district received \$400,000 supplemental planning grant over the next two years (July 2020-July 2022) for disaster recovery and resiliency economic development planning. These funds will also be used to provide technical assistance, etc. We believe communities in need of this support; it's easy for them to become paralyzed by information overload.

A consultant has been hired to help the districts develop a framework for collaboration, consistency, sharing best practices re: recovery efforts.

Each district also received the EDA funding to establish a new revolving loan fund to help businesses recover from pandemic. This total is \$10.9 million across the five districts. Businesses need access to capital!

Other challenges we are seeing across the state:

- Business access to capital
- Childcare/daycare, esp. with remote education
- Broadband
- Workforce
- Housing
- Aging infrastructure

These challenges create opportunities:

- Fed. and state recovery resources, including CARES Act, part II.
- Improve collaboration
- Connecting resources to regional stakeholders

The economy does seem to be doing fairly well. We are seeing lots of interest in our loan programs due to low interest rates. People are pursuing their entrepreneurial and business expansion ideas. Businesses are adapting and they are seeking funding to do it.

Thank you. I am happy to respond to any questions.

ADJOURNMENT Co-Chair Beal adjourned the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

NEXT MEETING April 14, 2021