

**Agricultural Committee Meeting #1**  
**Tuesday, January 5, 2010**  
**Durango Public Library**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

---

**Actions and Next Meeting:**

- January Meeting Schedule:
  - Tuesday, Jan. 12 at 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., County Courthouse, Anasazi Room
  - Tuesday, Jan. 26 at 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., **Durango Public Library, Program room # 1**
- Jason will distribute the handouts to accompany the workbook.
- General focus will be on land uses.
- Schedule the Tax Assessor to come to meeting in the future.

**Meeting Summary**

---

**I. Meeting Participants**

- a. **Subcommittee Members:** Rich Hoehlein, Kelly Sutherlin, Matt Isgar, Beth LaShell, Barbara Jefferies, Christina Tate, Mae Morley, Denise Bohemier, Jennifer Burbey, Brian Kimmel, Dick Norton, Roy Horvath, Lonnie and Dena Malouff, Tom Compton
- b. **Staff/Consultants:** Marjo Curgus, Jason Meininger, Tracie Hughes, Julia Stantic, Courtney Kruger

**II. Welcome and Introductions**

*Jason Meininger welcomed everyone and thanked them for their willingness to participate.*

**III. Update on the Comprehensive Planning Process and Reason for the Formation of Committee.**

*Jason provided a brief review of the comprehensive plan. He also reviewed the Agricultural Summit and that this committee was a direct result of people suggesting the formation of a group from the agricultural community to work with the County on the comprehensive plan.*

**IV. Committee Formalization**

*Marjo Curgus provided an overview of the group structure as a subcommittee authorized under the Working Group. She passed out the Groundrules used by the Working Group. She also stated the committee's purpose and scope as:*

***Develop agricultural policy recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan related to:  
land use, agricultural incentives, agricultural business development, and land  
stewardship.***

Meetings:

- There was recognition that this committee has a limited time frame to get work done during the winter.
- Meeting dates:

- Not 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday
- Not 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Monday
- Meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday starting in February
- Meet 3 times in January to prepare for the Ideas Forum in February

Committee Participation and Membership

- There was a discussion about who could participate. Facilitators encouraged increasing participation if people wanted to invite others.
- *Comment:* We should try to get more long term agriculturalist on committee.
- *Comment:* As this groups works together, need to keep in mind while there are a small number of people who own a lot of land, but there are also a large number of people who have smaller farms. Should we be fair to all? Or is this group only care about the few landowners who own a lot of land? Who does this group try to help? Small agriculture needs a break too.
- Marjo Curgus discussed ways to increase the participation by the agricultural community in the process. The committee could, for example, draft ideas, and then individual on the committee having roundtable meeting in their homes with neighbors/colleagues/friends to discuss the draft recommendations. This way we can increase the voice, but without having everyone have to attend all meetings. Also using email distribution lists and mail as way to get out ideas for review and comment.

V. Getting to work

First, Marjo reviewed the barriers and ideas that resulted from the agricultural summit summarized in the document **Summary of Agricultural Barriers and Strategies Jan 01 10**. Next the group began to review and discussed the first three topics until running out of time. The group will pick up the discussion at the next meeting.

	Barriers	Strategies
Economic Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to continue the work of CSU agricultural extension and Jim Dyer.</li> <li>• May need better education about programs that Jim Dyer is doing.</li> <li>• How can schools become community schools? Example: ability to access the commercial kitchen.</li> <li>• What are the opportunities for carbon sequestration programs? How do we benefit in La Plata County?</li> <li>• Need a marketing program in La Plata County. Have Buy Local Colorado. Need Buy Local La Plata. Need a marketing plan. If one exists, we need to know how to get in.</li> <li>• What can we do locally to add value to our farm/agricultural products?</li> <li>• What about growing medical marijuana? What are supplier regulations?</li> <li>• For local foods, if we want to become truly sustainable, need storage, need greenhouses, etc.</li> <li>• CSU is doing a lot in the county on season extension, but still only have it to about 6 months.</li> <li>• Need a distribution center! Question has always been</li> </ul>

		<p>where to put it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jason Meininger noted that the BLM has 60 acres where the County is planning for a multi-events center. This would include the fairgrounds. Good for distribution center?</li> <li>• There is an egg coop at the fairgrounds, for example.</li> <li>• There is a Be Local Coupon Book. A lot more local food production is in it.</li> <li>• Need to tap into existing programs.</li> <li>• How to market and educate consumers about what their choices mean. How to really support local agriculture.</li> </ul>
Federal and State Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal policy impacts us. Example: loss of ag exemptions. State eliminated exemption. County could take a bigger role in stepping up the fight. For example, the raw milk bill. That happened because communities pushed it. Used fairgrounds to participate through the web in State Board of Health meeting. Got supportive legislation.</li> <li>• Lost egg and chicken slaughter exemptions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need better communication with the extension office (or other agencies) on policies affecting agriculture and agriculture activities.</li> <li>• Groups need to better communicate on farming issues that acts like Cattlemen’s. There is not a vehicle outside of the farmer’s market.</li> <li>• County commissioners could be more supportive. Is the county willing to be positive advocates for changes we recommend?</li> </ul>
County Tax Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who use agricultural tax assessment undercut the market since they are not dependent upon sales for income. We should determine the size of the issue, whether it is growing. How many agricultural owners lease from those using land for tax purposes? How many out of state landowners are getting tax breaks?</li> </ul>	
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subdivision next to you should not be able to tell you what to do.</li> <li>• Permitting process a problem. For example, barns require a building permit. Then property taxes increase as improved value.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to allow agriculture to use renewable energy that will allow agriculture to go green even if people think it is aesthetically unpleasing (e.g. wind turbines, micro-hydro, etc.)</li> <li>• Need to review land use permits and uses that currently exist to develop better definitions/uses supporting economic development.</li> </ul>
Communication and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does information get out? Seems it is not effective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could the county designate a planning staff person that is responsible for helping to coordinate agricultural organizations across the county?</li> <li>• Need a summary of what programs do and do not exist along with contact information and web links. (Example: Jim Dyer, Extension Office, Farm to School, etc.)</li> <li>• An agricultural resource guide of programs and assistance?</li> </ul>

**VI. Next steps**

- Based on the above conversation Marjo will create a summary of draft strategies. (see drafts next page)

---

## **Draft Strategies Developed from January 6, 2010 Meeting**

### ***Economic Development***

1. Support farm and agricultural organizations in the county that provide assistance to local ranchers and growers.
2. Support education and assistance to the local agricultural community for value added production.
3. Work with the agricultural community to determine the best outreach and communication strategies for agricultural programs.
4. Develop a Buy Local La Plata marketing campaign that brands and promotes local agricultural products.
  - a. Develop cooperation between local agriculture producers and economic development organizations on local purchasing and product promotion.
  - b. Develop an education campaign to inform consumers about the significance of their purchasing choices on local farmers and businesses.
5. Research and assess potential of new crops, markets, and opportunities for local producers including carbon sequestration, medical marijuana, etc.....
6. Support the development of agricultural infrastructure, such as greenhouses and a distribution center, which supports and increases the capacity of local food supply.

### ***State and Federal Policy***

7. Promote coordination amongst agricultural organizations to assess federal and state policy impacts on La Plata County agriculture.
8. Assess the need for a coordinating agency for farming interests regarding federal and state policy.
9. Ensure La Plata County Commissioners advocate for agricultural policy reforms at the state and federal level that benefit local producers.

### ***County Tax Policy***

10. Review La Plata County agricultural tax policy to determine possible tax reforms that would support agricultural viability.

***Land Use Policy***

11. Review La Plata County agricultural uses in current zoning and develop a list of more appropriate uses that support agricultural viability.
12. Develop regulations that support the use of localized renewable energy in agricultural production including wind, solar, and micro-hydrological power.

***Communication and Coordination***

13. Develop a resource guide which summarizes existing agricultural organizations and programs available in La Plata County.
14. Designate a county planner or staff person in an organization responsible for promoting coordination across agricultural programs, organizations, and the County.