

## **Commissioner M. Whitfield Meeting Reports, 09-10-24 to 10-16-24**

### **Wed. 09/11 Teton County Fair Board**

Post Fair 101 Feedback/Reports: Fair Board/Committees Budget Exp/Rev  
Livestock Committee 4-H Sta FFA B.

Fair Dates 2025 (August 3rd-9th Sunday-Saturday, prep/set up July 27th-Aug  
2nd)

Building/Grounds: A. Pavilion expansion B. Donation of steel picnic tables,  
bench C. Fall Tasks: Arena speakers, banners, etc.

### **Wed. 09/18 Flood Risk Town Hall**

### **Thu. 09/26 Teton Valley Collaborative for Early Learning**

New Learning Center is operational, a huge accomplishment. Review of finances  
and funding needs. Updates on operations, outreach, training, planning.

### **Mon. 09/23 Idaho Association of Counties Elected Officials Meeting Intergovernmental Affairs Committee**

Secretary of State Phil McGrane gave a remarkably transparent presentation. He  
highlighted research and outreach done by his department, including analysis of  
the origins and demographics of in-migration of people from other states. By wide  
margins, most move-ins are conservative Republicans from blue states like  
California. Teton County, Idaho was a bit of an exception in that our new  
residents are nearly equal in political persuasion. We also heard from some  
representatives of the Governor's office.

### **Tools and Practices for Preserving Agricultural Land**

Mary Huff, Planning Director for Owyhee County, and Jennifer Riebe, Payette  
County Commissioner. In Owyhee County, over 20 years many CUPs were  
granted in the agriculture zone. Huff said, "development by application is really  
not planning at all." In a 2017 survey conducted by the County, 93% of  
respondents said do development closer to towns and services with stricter zoning  
in the ag zone and more streamlined development processes to encourage  
development near the cities. In the agricultural zone, the County viewed the entire  
zone as a place for preservation rather than just the areas with the best soils to  
preserve the compatibility of agriculture. Primarily, the County does not want low  
density residential in the agricultural zone. As a result, the County saw a big  
reduction in conversion of agricultural land. Huff said, "If you don't consider  
allowing a feedlot in your residential zone, why would you consider allowing  
subdivisions in your agricultural zone?" The County must grow at the limits of  
public services. Commissioner Riebe of Payette County said that 96% of

respondents to a 2019 survey in Payette County said they should preserve agriculture. Commissioner Riebe's general points were: 1) Agriculture and residential development are incompatible with one another. (Golf balls that caused the shutdown of potato growing). 2) Protect by zone, not by parcel. 3) Growth from the cities outward. 4) Agriculture Protection Areas show farmer commitment. Commissioner Riebe suggested use of the following potential tools: 1) Allow accessory dwellings in agricultural zone. 2) TDRs in three counties, Payette, Latah and Blaine. Use market to send development to designated residential areas. This is a financial transaction between landowners without involvement of local government. It works in Payette due to their limit on all splits to 2/parcel. The sending parcel is prohibited from further subdivision for 50 years. A more robust TDR program could allow for transfers in bulk, a TDR bank. Density, clustering. Puts growth where it is wanted. Landowners are compensated with no public investment. The program is durable, but it is voluntary so uncertain and unpredictable. 3.) Subdivision design/modifications. 4.) Infrastructure. Water requirements influence growth patterns. Payette County requires community wells for a threshold of greater than 8 lots with 4-acre minimum lot size; can go to 3 acre minimum with community wells.

### **Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**

We heard from the LTAC Director about available grants for roads with proposals due in January (see website), a transportation workshop in Sugar City on October 24, and the abandoned truss bridges that are available to counties for pedestrian and bicycle bridges. The committee passed one proposed legislative resolution designed to affirm county authority and responsibility for solid waste disposal. Apparently some private solid waste companies are trying to pass legislation to give them more authority. Counties need to protect public investments in existing solid waste facilities, safeguard public health and safety, limit counties' exposure to liabilities related to existing solid waste facilities and regulatory obligations.

### **Tue. 09/24 Idaho Association of Counties Elected Officials Meeting**

#### **Justice and Public Safety Committee**

Presentation from Director of Idaho Prisons.

Four resolutions reviewed (3 approved for general consideration): **1)** 911 Grant Fee Adjustment & Inclusion of FCC Guidance on Expenditures Sponsor. Increasing cost and changes in technology require fee adjustment to deal with implementation of next generation 911 systems. **2)** Coroner Powers/Duties, Definition, Education/Standards Correcting Idaho's inconsistent death system across the state. **3)** EMS Identified as Essential by State Legislature. The demand for EMS services in Idaho is increasing as the population continues to expand and the number of visitors increases. recreationists increase. These factors combine to make the continuation of EMS services unsustainable under the current system.

A resolution to give coroners First Responder status did not pass (rule of 80 issues).

**General Session Keynote: You Say More Than You Think--Janine Driver**

Lip roll (don't like what we hear); Crossed arms (using both sides of brain); Train yourself to frame yourself, be in the middle; Eye touch to relieve stress; Slumped posture-stressed; Shrugging-uncertainty or humility; Mirroring to build rapport; Mouth tilt, sense of moral superiority, hatred; Fear. Eyeball flash=fear, distress; Hands on head or face, stress, concern and doubt.

How to deal with difficult people. Step 1: Here is what I know. Here is what we discussed. Step 2: Here is what I don't know. Step 3. This is what I am going to do to bridge the gap between 1 and 2. Then "I will call you back to let you know what I have learned. Respect is more important than love (or like).

**Environment, Development, and Energy: Working Toward Resilience in Idaho Counties**

Boise State University researchers are willing to assist counties in better understanding their current situation and future needs with regard to resilience.

**Protecting the Agriculture Economy—American Farmland Trust**

Agricultural economic impact model, proof-of-concept, Canyon County  
Many crops, mostly seed crops. 202,479 acres of crop area, 1400 acres per year converted. \$453 MM crop value of County. Over \$13 MM annual loss of farmgate value.

Teton County. Area of Impact, zoning at 5 and 20 acres. Lots of zombie subdivisions. Large percentages of cropland in AOIs is already in approved residential developments. Dial back the low density residential.

Magic Valley, Six county working area. Looked at things through acres rather than dollars. Contributes about 50% of regional economy. Food production industries are dependent on direct access to the crops in the region (i.e. dairy needs hay and grain, sugar plant needs beets).

Building as usual, no zoning versus Building Better Cities. If increase level of low density development in agricultural areas, greatly increases the likelihood of further development at greater densities. Many of Idaho's top 15 agricultural economies by County are also among those with the highest conversion rates. Analyses reported are baseline, conversion rates are likely higher. Model undermeasures low density residential development.

The APA. Draft Ordinance is bare bones, needs to be adapted to specific County needs. Farm Bureau has volunteered to sit on committees. Done on volunteer basis but without financial incentives.

**Idaho Office of Performance Evaluation County Studies**

February 2024 report titled, “County Coroner’s and Death Investigations,” the report advises “Idaho Code provides little direction for coroners on many of their duties, creating an inconsistent death system across the state.”

Many other interesting reports available on their website at <https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/>

**Wed. 09/25 Idaho Association of Counties Elected Officials Meeting  
Roundtable Discussion Counties 10,001 to 20,000 Population**

Some counties with joint, multi-county dispatch said it worked well for them. Several counties investigating potential for solid waste districts

**Fri. 09/27 Eastern Idaho Regional Solid Waste District.**

Monthly draw request: \$ 700,958.33. Forsgren, DeAtley, American Pump and Drilling. Approval of Minutes- June 11, June 27, July 25, August 22, August 23, September 10. Approval of Claims. Review and Sign Resolution 2024-11, Resolution 2024-12- Resolutions regarding interim loans.

Engineer Update on Winter Schedule. DeAtty wrapping up main cell by end of next week. Silty sand 18K cubic yards. Near 1 MM cu yards of silty sand and rock, have about 200K to go in total. Engineer will do drone survey to examine main cell when finished. Dig leachate pond as soon as done with cell. Did not need to do blasting on leachate pond, some savings. Digging foundation for maintenance building. Work on stormwater protections on site boundaries. Perimeter fence installation. Will work as long as weather allows. Erosion control for winter shutdown.

Clearwater Financial

Closing the Interim Financing

Discussion of Yearly Retainer. Agreed to retain for another year.

Training grant, training has started with Great West. Met with County Clerks to identify in-kind County match. nee

Truck Fleet Discussion

I asked for more information on potential County costs, with review of an updated proforma and method of billing. We agreed to begin drafting of contracts with each County to identify needs and costs. All semis in the hauling fleet are ready for pickup. Madison County had agreed to pay the bill until we could close out the interim financing so the timing works out really well.

Kenworth Trucks \$171,788.72 each x 9 = \$1,547,898.48

Discussion on Administrative Assistant

We received 119 applications and there are some really good potentials in there. I would like to move forward and discuss what this will look like and the process moving forward. Michael will assist.

**Tue. 10/01 Driggs City Council Meeting**

Two people at Open Mic asked Council to hear opposition of Recreation District given that Teton Valley Sports and Wellness (TVSW) was scheduled to speak in support.

John Beller of TVSW spoke in support of the Recreation District now on the Fall ballot. Idaho Statute limits on levy, with budget restrictions. Costs for different kinds of property. Cannot take on debt. Subject to 3% cap on growth. County Commission would select first three District Commissioners. Funds to support ballfields, etc. Will need community input. Equity issues for use of City parks by County residents. Pool issue. Would take 16 years of District income to afford today's expected pool construction costs. Can't get there. Could support operation of a pool if built with other funds. Negotiations with cities for use of funds at city parks.

Update on Aviation, Runway Shift—Jeffrey Hogan. May, completed diversion structures for irrigation canal. August 1. Got grant for airport shift. Notice of Award out. Sept. 16 broke ground. Entrance road from Hasting's Lane and phase one of runway, grubbing out area. Close out soon. Re-start mid-May 2025, earth moving, aggregate base. Runway use restricted for 5000 feet. End of July, Runway closure for 30 days. Then runway will be 7600 feet, completed in Fall 2025 after weathering and application of coating and paint. Caldera sharing updates on runway progress.

LID assessment conversation. Setting of public hearing for Grant Pierre Ave. November 5, 2024. \$720,000 total project costs. Turn lanes on 5<sup>th</sup> and LeGrand. \$221,083.63 from LID assessment. Motion passed.

Agreement for airport snow removal with of \$15,000 by Teton AvJet LLC, dba Teton Aviation Center (TAC) agrees to provide auxiliary snow removal services with City equipment.

**Thu. 10/03 Teton River/Waterways Advisory Committee**

Further discussion of River Management Plan development  
Ideas for funding, ordinance enforcement

**Tue. 10/08 Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership**

Special meeting to approve FY2025 Budget.

**Tue. 10/15 Mountain Towns 2030 Climate Summit**

A highlight of the day was an interview with Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, climate activist from New York and author of “What if we Get It Right”. She spoke about our collective need to go to work and offered solutions. She was a very entertaining speaker in an interview format with the Summit host, a comedian and climate activist named Rollie Williams. She encouraged us to multi-solve the issue through both mitigation and adaptation. All participants received a copy of her book, which I am eager to read. She said bottom line, we need to work as community on a foundation of love for one another and the planet.

Director of the MIT Climate Policy Center, Bethany Patten, introduced a Climate Policy Simulator called En-Roads from developers at MIT. This program uses sliders to show the impact of a multitude of factors to climate mitigation. The final general session speaker was

KC Becker, Director of Region 8 of the EPA spoke of many ongoing efforts by the Biden Administration to deal with Climate Change, and grant opportunities that communities might be able to use in their local efforts.

A session on “How to Solarize Your Community” was presented by officials from Summit County, Colorado. This County provided funding to provide solar arrays for individual homeowners in affordable housing developments and other residential developments.

“Road mapping to Net Zero New Construction” was presented by an engineer from LOTUS and an elected official from Colorado about a three-county project to encourage climate friendly buildings.

“Energy Conservation Works: Local Government in Partnership with Local Utility”, was a presentation by Jackson Hole past and present officials about their energy conservation work in partnership with their utility.

**Wed. 10/16 Mountain Towns 2030 Climate Summit**

Mary Kate Buckley of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort in a talk about collaborative efforts to reduce carbon emissions through transportation solutions and other projects.

James Rattling Leaf, Global Indigenous Consultant and principal of the Wolakota Lab, spoke about efforts to bring indigenous knowledge to the forefront in dealing with Climate Change and other issues. A member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe, his presentation was captivating.

Benji Backer a conservative republican who is also a climate activist gave an interview style presentation titled “Making Environmentalism Nonpartisan Again”. The session was moderated by Anna Robertson of an organization called The Cool Down. Backer formed an organization to advance his thoughts while still a high school senior, and now is touring the country on a book tour (I bought his book) and recruiting conservatives to the cause. He meets regularly with elected officials in the federal legislature and had many compelling ideas.

Two officials spoke on the topic “The Evolution of the Grid in Mountain and Rural Communities”. A Park City official spoke about their efforts to get renewable energy into a large grid system that serves them and many other Utah cities through work with their utility which mostly derives energy from coal. Then an elected official from Ridgeway, Colorado spoke of development of a microgrid where the city and others developed a small solar farm and a battery system to power their area when the larger grid goes down.

City of Steamboat Springs and Routt County Colorado officials spoke about “A Mosaic Approach to Climate Action in the West: Advancing Collaborative Climate Solutions for Built and Natural Environments”. This discussion emphasized natural solutions to climate mitigation, such as tree planting on deforested lands, as a part of a broad collaboration to reduce climate impacts.

“Pursuing Climate Action in Red States”, featured a Wyoming legislator from Teton County, an elected official from Ketchum, Idaho, and an activist with Wyoming Outdoor Council. This session emphasized communication among all sectors of represented communities.