

Summary of Bobby Lieb's Remarks
65th Annual Meeting of LWV of La Plata County
May 10, 2011

Keynote speaker County Commissioner Bobby Lieb, in office for four months at this point, gave us a generous amount of time during our annual meeting to share his philosophy and observations on county government answering many questions. He billed his remarks as a report on the 'state of the county'.

Prior to the start of his term he and incumbent commissioners Kellie Hotter and Wally White participated in professionally facilitated executive team building sessions. His personal goal is to maintain his core values while concurrently getting the business of the county conducted. He views the county as a business and the county's citizens as customers, although the county remains basically an agent of the state with many functions prescribed by state law.

The current Board of Commissioners has five basic strategic initiatives:

1. Deliver services in an ethical, environmental, efficient, etc., way in a climate where there are no longer budget surpluses. The county and its departments must refocus on core services and develop performance-based goals around those services.
2. Improve the county's economic vitality. The county currently has 8.3% unemployment; no new gas/oil drilling is being undertaken, signs of tourism are slowly improving but real estate and associated development are stagnant. He mentioned two specific projects: a new road in Grandview, which will hopefully attract large commercial interests and development of La Posta Road area for non-retail commercial. He brings many years in local economic development to his current position, citing how far the community has come in recent decades toward becoming more competitive for non-manufacturing commercial development (fiber-optic cable and more flights at Durango Airport). He noted that essentially all businesses contacting him about locating in La Plata County were choosing a life-style change first, business opportunity second.
3. Construct a multi-event center in Grandview on the site of two gravel pits across from Farmington Hill. An MOU was recently signed with the BLM to allow the county to move forward on an environmental assessment of the site, which includes 42 acres of county-owned land and 56 acres of BLM land.
4. Develop/maintain a safe accessible public infrastructure. New jail is coming along. Fed court is likely to come to Durango but not definite yet, decision is in hands of the federal General Services Administration. Parking and disability accessibility are ongoing primary issues. Maintenance and improvement of county roads are ongoing.

Other issues:

Revenue-stressed special districts such as the county school districts, Durango Fire and Rescue Authority, are problematic. Some special districts are likely to fold or consolidate. County human services are stressed by 7% reduction in regional, state and federal funding despite increasing caseloads. Many local non-profits receive revenue from the county.

The Board of Commissioners, and Lieb in particular, are determined to reduce the tumultuousness of county government functioning while staying focused and improving consistency in decisions.

Questions:

The practice of appointing alternates to planning commission seems reduce continuity needed for work on long term issues. Lieb will consider.

County home rule: not being discussed right now by BOCC. Home rule as applied to counties is not equal to flexibility of municipal home rule due to counties being arm of state government. Lieb hasn't seen need.

Green business, northern extension of bike trail were other topics brought up.

Marilyn Brown
May 11, 2011