

RIDGWAY TOWN COUNCIL
& PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF JOINT WORKSHOP

AUGUST 29, 2017

The Town Council convened for a Joint Workshop at 5:35 p.m. in the Ridgway Community Center at 201 N. Railroad Street, Ridgway, Colorado. In attendance Councilors Hunter, Young and Mayor Clark. Mayor Pro Tem Johnson was not present for the roll call. Councilmembers Austin, Hawes and Williams were absent.

Present from the Planning Commission, Commissioners Emilson, Falke and Chairperson Canright.

Town Clerk's Notice of Joint Workshop Meeting dated July 18, 2017.

The Council and Commission met with Rural Planning Institute (RPI) to receive a business and property inventory and discuss economic opportunities.

Community Economic Development Coordinator Diedra Silbert reported the Town allocated 2016 and 2017 Main Street Technical Assistance Funding of \$22,000 in grant funds for preparation of an assessment of the business and commercial sector to assist in planning for the future.

Gabe Preston with RPI presented an overview of the Business and Building Inventory and Marketing Assessment for the Town. He explained RPI staff conducted a business survey, starting with data from the Ouray County Assessors records, and Town and Chamber of Commerce business listings. The business, building and property inventories were placed into a data base and then merged into an excel database "that can be easily updated".

The inventory, he explained, allowed RPI staff to identify the buildings and addresses for businesses by type. On May 8th and 9th they conducted on site surveys of 59 businesses, and followed up with phone conversations. He stated findings include ¾ of the business "started from scratch"; ¼ of the owners were interested in some type of training to further assist the business; items which would enhance the business included the need for growth in lodging and hospitality business services. He explained recommendations based on survey results identified 23% experience seasonal swings, 21% experience difficulty in employing and good employees, 29% need better offerings of quality internet service, 16% have underutilized building space.

Mr. Preston reported annual sales and lodging tax receipts indicate seasonal patterns for sales and lodging. Total supply and demand was determined, and the "leakage" in certain retail sectors with a revenue loss of approximately \$9,341,985. He noted the highest retail category was grocery stores with 71% leakage, due to purchasing out of the Town. Categories with surplus tend to be sectors related to visitor services such as restaurants, gasoline stations and marijuana dispensaries. The commercial land use inventory identifies merchandise/retail the highest at 95,400 square feet, and lodging at 41,412. He explained the total jobs in Town were shown to be located as 15% retail, 18% professional/technical; 20% public administration, 22% accommodations & food.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson entered the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Economic opportunities for the Town, Mr. Preston noted, are with the creative industries, professional services and grocery and food. Ways to accomplish this included encourage and support new business ventures, work with local businesses that wish to expand inventory or services, provide user friendly web information about starting a business in Ridgway, bolster the entertainment and performing arts and build this sector, promote the existing strength in restaurants as an asset to the community, continue in the current ways to support the creative industries, move forward with the Space to Create Project, promote Ridgway as a location for professional businesses currently operating in Telluride, monitor the supply and demand and quality of office space.

Visitor marketing recommendations included work with tourism partners to coordinate marketing and optimize costs, target marketing to creative industries.

Mr. Preston presented “the next steps” regarding the findings, which included prioritization, work on major gaps in services such as durable and personal goods, marketing to target industries related to creatives and tourism, land planning to supply light industrial, professional office space, lodging and address the grocery sector with “71% leakage its a huge market unmet” he noted.

Mr. Preston answered questions from the Council and audience. It was noted the data can be linked into the Town’s GIS program and overlay parcels with the information gathered in the study. He noted “the hardest part will be keeping the business listing up to date”.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pam Kraft, MMC
Town Clerk