

**DRAFT**  
**MINUTES**

**REAP Business Meeting**

January 14, 2021

11:45 a.m.

Zoom Meeting ID#761-014-5598

The monthly meeting of the I-70 Regional Economic Advancement Partnership was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Chair Kirk Howell, who welcomed the attendees and called for introductions.

**The following Board Members were present:**

Lynn Baca	Jeff Baker	Wil Chase	Ivy Craig
Michelle Gayeski	Mark Harding	Kirk Howell	Kevin Hougen
Glenn Rotkovich	Tom Turrell		

**Guests attending were:**

Nicci	Beauprez	Adams County
Patt	Bisant	
Sarah	Brown	Early Childhood Council
Marilyn	Cross	CDOT
Nick	Engleson	Adams County
Julio	Iturreria	Reap
Jack	Keever	Retired Reap
Cynthia	Kiyotake	Arapahoe County Libraries
Kathy	Mahan	Reap
Pergot		
Justin	Reyher	Beacon Real Estate
Cooper	Raines	Colorado Home Realty
Tyler	Shetterly	EIS Solutions
Lynette	White	Bennett
Eric	Zacharias	

### Approval of November 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Minutes were approved as submitted.

### Chairman Report:

#### Executive Director Report:

Julio Iturreria welcomed Lynn Baca and Jeff Baker, newly sworn in as County Commissioners for Adams and Arapahoe Counties.

“As we get information about COVID, we will continue to pass that onto our membership.

Reap has recently updated our website, brochure, and letterhead.”

Julio thanked Kevin for joining us as the guest speaker.

### Guest Speakers:

#### **Kevin Hougen, President and CEO, Aurora Chamber of Commerce**

“I am going to touch on four issues that I know Reap has been working on for so many years. I thought I would share with you today some of these things such as: aviation, energy, infrastructure ideas, health care and education. This COVID 19 has been a lifetime event it has really changed the consumers psychology and I believe it will have effects on us for the next generation. Things we use to see commuting, 50 story buildings downtown and share riding, I think we are going to see some extreme shifts in human behavior. I am going to talk about the good, bad and ugly of COVID. We used to do a lot of purchasing on main street, in the late 60’s they started with malls and now we are mail order. Shopping online has dramatically changed in the percentage of numbers. Shop local and support the brick and mortars, this will help out our local communities. In Colorado alone we have lost 160,000 jobs, we have seen an unbelievable amount of stress with our unemployment and seen some fraud in some cases. The number of employees returning to the office in the future will be definitely down. Right now, 49% of downtown Denver is unoccupied. I believe we will be seeing some shifts from downtown to our urban community. Where we are hurting in our rural community is access to the internet. We need to continue to work with our Governor and Assembly about access to expanded broadband to our rural communities because I think we will see that grow. We have seen a massive infrastructure development into RTD, yet nobody is riding RTD today. We see automation replacing a lot of low skill jobs, we see it in the restaurant industry and that is one that is seeing severe challenges. I work with Sonya Rakes from the Restaurant Association almost every day. We have seen 1,250 restaurants in Colorado, almost 800 could be in jeopardy of closing. What is hurting our eastern part of the community is tourism, so our hotels are barely surviving. The huge Gaylord is only at about 19% capacity so the success of these hotels will be a challenging time for them. The other industry that has suffered is the oil and gas industry, we have lost about 70,000 jobs throughout the industry. We are driving about 70% less right now. We have noticed the air quality around the United States getting better as a result of us not commuting. I see the US Government, State and Counties are going to be putting more money into our infrastructure. That is why it is important to see Adams County Open Space taxation continue this past

year. I know in Arapahoe County it is important for open space and also transportation money, I think that is a job recovery opportunity. Many of our roads and bridges have been neglected as you know. In Colorado we have had a hard time passing funding for our construction needs. Some of the areas we have seen suffer so much is our hospitals. There have not been as many accidents on the highways and the ambulances are really in trouble because they are not doing the carries to the hospitals. Many of the trips are Medicaid or Medicare and they are substantially underfunded. Many of the hospitals are challenged right now because of the low numbers of elective surgeries. The industry devastated the most is the airline industry. At one point the airline was down by 90% in traffic. They hit 69 million passengers last year, this year hopefully they hit 30 million and that possesses problems funding those large expansions right now. One of the airports successes right now is air freight. An opportunity in the future for the Colorado Air and Space Port in Adams County are our distributions, and our logistics industries are exploding, we see those landings and cargo operations expanding. Airports around the country are expanding because of the direct deliveries we are seeing from Amazon, Fed Ex, Federal Express, and the Postal delivery service. Some of the things we were surprised of were tax revenues. We seen sales tax down over 30% in some communities. In Aurora, March and April were historic lows. In May through October, we are \$6 million dollars higher in retail tax than we were in 2019 and that was a record year. People are shopping local. Before the pandemic we were at about 12% of us were shopping online, today 35% of us are shopping online. Some of the businesses that are doing very well are the Sam's, Lowe's and Home Depot for home improvements. Bike sales are up 600% in Colorado. In the Denver and Aurora area we have 100 people moving here a day and that has put a huge problem on housing. Years ago, we had about 17,000 homes for sale, today only 500. If we didn't add more homes to the market, we would have no homes for sale in this region. Areas that were thought of as rural areas are now becoming bedroom communities. The I-70 Corridor is the fastest growing area in the state. The number one job in the state right now is nursing and the second is truck drivers. We did have a big defeat today in Colorado, we lost the opportunity for the Space Command. We were at Buckley a few months ago when Buckley was on the list and what really hurt us was our K12 education and that is what really hurt Colorado Springs. We have heard how we have underfunded K12 over the past years and I think this is a good wake up call when we want to attract large corporations like aerospace. Colorado Springs was crippled by a half billion to their economy. "

**Cynthia Kiyotake:** "Is there anyway to get the eastern plains on faster internet service that is closer to what you can get in the Metro Area?"

**Kevin Hougen:** "I know this has been a problem for years. I think it is important to reach out to some leaders, we have Ronda Fields that represents us at the Senate, and she has always been very helpful in getting things carried. It is Ronda Fields and Nancy Todd's last year and they are huge supporters of education. I believe Governor Polis is working really hard on that. I think we could reach out to Rod Bockenfeld in the House. Rod has been a real champion of internet connections to our rural communities. I think we should have him visit with Reap."

**Glenn Rotkovich:** "Cynthia, I do not think that is as big of a problem in Byers anymore. Bijou has put in fiber. I have fiber out here and I am running strong. I do not know how far they are to getting to finish but they got it home out here. Byers should have it at the library."

**Tom Turrell:** “We have seen the same opportunity out here in Byers for kids that can’t afford the internet, or the speeds are too low for them to complete lessons. In a partnership with Bijou, we have been able to utilize different grant funds from the state or the feds to get those families the internet that they need. We have also used T Mobile for hot spots.”

**Kevin Hougen:** “I believe Comcast and Century Link have programs to get those needs into the homes at a low cost.”

**Jeff Baker:** “When we participated through Colorado Counties Incorporated with the National Association of Counties and go to Washington and that is a big topic nationally for rural communities to increase broadband. We lobby the Federal Government to increase grant funding for increasing that capacity as well.”

### **Development Update:**

Julio called upon Adams County to comment on development.

**Lynn Baca:** “I was just sworn in on Tuesday, so I don’t have specifics on new development, we have a study session coming up at the end of January. It will be a sub-plan overlay for the Colorado Space Port area so you might want to tune into that. The other thing we have going is Adams County Rising for Advancement, we have a survey out there asking what we want the County to look like in the next 20 – 30 years. Eastern Colorado, Eastern Adams is slated to do really big things. I look forward to working with you and meeting you in person. So hopefully by February I will have a better idea of upcoming developments.”

**Kevin Hougen:** Thanked both counties for the work they have been doing to save small businesses.

**Jeff Baker:** “We have been working with Cares Funding and COVID 19, it is like 24/7. The Department of Treasury extended the deadline for spending the 2020 funds to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. We did not know they were going to do that, so we have been hustling to spend the money. We had an agreement with our municipalities where that money would be distributed, we received \$114.5 million direct recipient Arapahoe County. That was divided up among our 13 incorporated towns and cities. Because we were under a deadline to spend it or turn it back in by December 31<sup>st</sup> we did take advantage of a process to reimburse Arapahoe County for first responder, these were folks dedicated to COVID 19 first response and that ended up being about \$18 million dollars. As far as new developments we have Sky Ranch, the Prosper Development and that is all I am aware of on the south side of the I-70 Corridor.”

**Justin Reyher:** “Do we have an update on Prosper Farms and where they are in the process?”

**Jeff Baker:** “I have not seen anything come forward lately with the Planning Department or the Commissioners. I was asked about a Charter school out in the Bennett/Watkins area and I signed on the letter of support. Other than that, I am not sure where they are in the process.”

**Mark Harding:** “That was our ask on the charter application and Reap as well and we got very broad support for that application. We were pleased to partner with the Bennett School District on that application. Sky Ranch is going very well. Trends were to move to the urban centers this trend is reversed significantly. We are working with CDOT with the infrastructure requirement for major scale developments, working with interchange improvements and working on funding.”

**Lynette White:** “I will tell you all about the growth we are experiencing here in Bennett. In addition to the residential developments, we have LGI homes that is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase and that is with Bennett Crossing which has some commercial aspects to it. IREA recently opened their regional facility. We also have DR Horton with houses that are ready. We have Muegge Farms which is partnered with Oakland Homes. We recently updated our economic development website it is called Why Bennett Colorado it gives a lot of information about the community, our partners and Reap.”

**Nick Engleson:**“ I am the senior county planner and I’m heading up the Colorado Air and Space Port sub-area plan. We plan to update the Commissioners January 26<sup>th</sup> , we plan to wrap up that plan by March. We are seeing conceptual plans in the works north of the airport and of course transport in Aurora is getting a lot of steam. The Rocky Mountain Rail Park is working on a development on the south side of Colfax Road.”

**Cynthia Kiyotake:** “Cynthia invited everyone to visit the new library in Byers located at 585 So. Main Street.”

**Kevin Hougen:** “The DIA noise mitigation fines up to \$30 million and possibly \$50 million, how could that money be used for communities effected like Commerce City, Brighton and Aurora and how could we partner with the Airport for economic development? Thanks just an idea.”

**Other Business:**

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.