

**HIGHWAY ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
June 21, 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Vierzba, Ed Dills, Cheryl Everitt, Jean Meinzer, Brian Galpin, Michael James, Ed Houle, Jim Mesite, Brian Wess, Larry Tobias

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Rosario

OTHERS PRESENT: Scot Cuthbertson (EPC DPW), Jennifer Irvine (EPC DPW), Troy Wiitala (EPC DPW), Ellen Heaverlo (EPC DPW), Matt Steiner (EPC PIO)

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Vierzba called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM

2. ABSENCES

Mr. Rosario was not present and this was his fourth unexcused absence. Dismissal from the commission is pending. The HAC is awaiting decision by the Board of County Commissioners and County Administrator.

3. MEETING MINUTES

MOTION (Ms. Everitt/Mr. Dills) to approve minutes of the May 17, 2017 meeting.
MOTION TO APPROVE CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. COMMISSIONER/CITIZEN COMMENTS

- None

5. STAFF REPORTS

A. ADMINISTRATION

Scot Cuthbertson (Deputy Director, Department of Public Works)

- The department received quite a bit of new equipment this month, and Fleet is busy getting everything in-processed.

- New lighting has been installed on the mowers to make them more visible and therefore safer.
- During the last couple of weeks a new piece of equipment has been tested to determine if it would improve the process of rebuilding gravel roads.
- DPW is moving to a municipal lease program for the heavy equipment as opposed to buying equipment outright. This system will allow the department to triple its buying power. Mr. Tobias asked Mr. Cuthbertson to clarify the term 'lease' as it pertains to this program. Mr. Cuthbertson explained that this program will allow us to own the equipment after making payments with extremely low interest for 3 years.

B. ENGINEERING DIVISION

Jennifer Irvine (County Engineer, Department of Public Works)

- Ms. Irvine thanked the HAC members who attended the Marksheffel South Ribbon Cutting event on May 31st.
- She updated the Commission on all El Paso County PPRTA Capital Projects (2005-2014 & 2015-2024) and the status of each project. All projects on the 2005-2014 list are potentially complete with the exception of the Meridian Road Extension. This is due to the need to coordinate with the RTA. An in depth briefing of the 2015-2024 projects followed, and questions asked by several commissioners were answered.
- Mr. Vierzba asked if the multitudes of projects in the County and City have raised prices contractors charge, and if enough contractors are available for all the jobs. Ms. Irvine replied that a bump in prices has occurred as a result of the passing of the 2C Road Improvement Tax in the City of Colorado Springs but that it has actually levelled out. The economy is also doing better so there are many factors that contribute to the price increases. It has been a bit of a challenge to contract for all the projects due to the fact that contractors now are able to choose which jobs they want to bid on. This is one of the reasons why the County has been staggering these projects. It also depends on the type of work that is needed.
- An update on the I-25 PEL was provided. The project team has collected a lot of data and is evaluating it. They have begun the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process. The next set of public meetings will be held at the end of September. The exact dates have not been set yet. Comments can be posted on the project's website <https://www.codot.gov/projects/I25COSDEN>.
- Mr. Tobias asked for an update on the Hwy 24 PEL and if there were any upcoming meetings. Ms. Irvine has asked CDOT for an update and will share the information as soon as she receives it.
- Ms. Everitt asked for an update on CDOT's Tier I funding list. Ms. Irvine informed the Commission that the current list came in at \$3.5B and needs to be pared down to \$1.8B. This is still being worked on. A CDOT briefing regarding this list to be presented at PPACG is being coordinated. The list will then have to be approved by the Transportation Commission.
- Ms. Irvine provided an update on Engineering staffing. By July 3rd all 6 vacant positions will be filled. Ms. Irvine always praised her staff and specifically Mr. Kyle Burtis for the great work that they are doing. Mr. Burtis was instrumental in designing the Tanager Way retaining wall.

C. HIGHWAY DIVISION

Troy Wiitala (Highway Division Manager, Department of Public Works)

- The Highway Division has been busy with graveling, chip sealing and dust abatement. Mr. Wiitala provided the Commission with an updated list for these programs. The hot weather has slowed down the crack sealing process.
- Work will be done on two bridges on S Peyton Highway just north of Hwy 94. There will be detours in place. The detour map should be published soon.
- Replacement of vehicles was briefed.
- A Highway Division staffing update was provided.
- Mr. Tobias had a question about the dust abatement work on Eastonville Rd due to the increase in traffic. How often will the mag chloride be applied? Mr. Wiitala stated that this stretch of Eastonville Rd is usually treated twice a year depending on how well the treatment holds up. Treatment usually last 3 - 4 months.

6. BRIEFING ON SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

- Mr. Dills briefed the Commission on the sub-committee meeting that reviewed the possible changes in frequency and location of future HAC meetings. The following suggestions were made:
 - Meetings to take place every other month which would allow for current information without overloading the DPW staff. Meetings would take place in February, April, June, August, October and December. HAC members would have the opportunity to meet and greet citizens in July at the El Paso County Fair where the DPW Highway Division will have an exhibit.
 - Ride-alongs with Highway personnel is being considered as a tool to better familiarize HAC members with the roads in their districts. Deputy Director Cuthbertson is in favor of the ride-alongs.
 - The sub-committee agreed that the HAC members are partially at fault for the lack of information reaching the citizens, and agreed that the County's Public Information Office has an important role. Each Highway Advisory Commissioner should be actively engaged with the best forms of communication for the districts they represent, such as neighborhood apps like Nextdoor, Facebook and CONO to name a few, and to report back to the Department of Public Works Executive Director or designee.
 - Town hall type meetings are encouraged. Due to the fact that County staff would not be able to support those after hours or on weekends it was suggested to join the County Commissioner town hall meetings. Town Hall meetings should be led by the appropriate HAC Commissioner for the specific district and supported by At-Large members and either the Chair or Vice Chair. The proposed schedule for town hall meetings is:
 - January – District 1
 - March – District 2
 - May – District 3
 - September – District 4
 - November – District 5

- The El Paso County Public Information Office with the help of Information Technologies is in the process of improving the EPC website. A new customer service application and website are in development as well.
- Another suggestion was for HAC members to visit with Engineering to get a better understanding of the planning that goes into a project to include the budgetary process.
- A discussion commenced.
 - Mr. Tobias would like to see more information on the County's website that he can share with citizens in his district and make the website more user friendly, requiring less 'clicks' to find information.
 - Mr. Galpin feels that it is the Commission's responsibility to take the information received during the monthly HAC meetings and get it out to the citizens.
 - Mr. Vierzba explained the position of a commissioner on the HAC is not just an honorary position but one that requires effort and everyone is expected to bring something to the table, not just DPW staff.
 - Mr. Wess pointed out that the HAC commissioners are not public information officers. The commission was originally designed for oversight and advice, and to provide information to the Board of County Commissioners. The other concern is that this is a volunteer position and it would not be advantageous to overburden the HAC members. Mr. Wess also shared his concerns about the changing role of the HAC and suggested to speak with County Commissioner to determine what their expectations of the HAC is.
 - Ms. Everitt asked what the real purpose of this committee should be, public involvement or advisors to DPW without overburdening DPW staff? Also there is the question of what and how much can be shared with the public.
 - Mr. Cuthbertson feels that due to the HAC members' knowledge of DPW's workflow and challenges, they are qualified to share appropriate information with the citizens and at the same time educate the public.
 - Ms. Irvine brought up an example of how the HAC provided great advice and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners pertaining to the Black Forest Rd/Burgess Rd Intersection project which was a somewhat controversial project. The HAC was able to provide the County Commissioners and DPW staff with some real understanding of the citizens' perspective.
 - Mr. Wiitala stated that live updates on the County website are next to impossible due to the limitations that personnel experience in the field, as well as time restrictions. Mr. Wiitala emails a weekly list of projects to the County Commissioner and the PIO with the understanding that this schedule can change at any time due to weather, personnel or equipment issues. Mr. Wess asked if the HAC could receive a copy of that email. Mr. Cuthbertson stated it would be appropriate to share the list with the HAC.
 - Mr. Steiner was asked about distribution of the press releases. He will check with Mr. Rose, the Chief Public Information Officer, to see if the HAC members could be added to the media release list.
 - Mr. Dills suggested waiting on updating the current by-laws until the commission has voted on any changes resulting from the sub-committee's suggestions.

- Mr. Mesite expressed his concerns about trying to give constituents up to date project information. He feels that it is more important to let the citizens know who and what the HAC is and what it does, which in his opinion is more of a conduit.
- Mr. Vierzba concluded by stating that he, Mr. Dills and Ms. Everitt will compile all the information that came out of this discussion, and bring it forward for a vote at the July 2017 meeting.

7. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS STAFF WORKLOAD

- Mr. Vierzba stated that the HAC recognizes the large workload that DPW's Engineering Division has, and asked Ms. Irvine if there is something the HAC could advocate to the PPRTA CAC for help in that process. Would it be helpful to ask the PPRTA for funding of additional staff?
- Ms. Irvine spoke to the perception of the issues which are not necessarily the true issues as it pertains to the life of a projects and all the behind the scenes work. She feels that Engineering is on track with their projects. The office is working well with the resources it has.
- Mr. Cuthbertson pointed out that, although the offer is appreciated, the office has been given a specific budget and must work within its restraints.

8. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 10:42 AM.

Copies of the presentations are attached to the minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Heaverlo
Office Manager/Board Liaison – Department of Public Works