



THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE

Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: www.rotary.org www.rotary5470.org www.paoniarotary.org

Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180

Vol 54 Issue 16 May 5, 2016

LAST MEETING: April 28, 2016

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The Hwy 133 cleanup will be May 6, 9am. Meet at the storage units.

The pancake breakfast will be held June 25, for which we will all sell tickets.

District Assembly on April 30 will be held in Grand Junction. Let Greg Thompson know if you would like to attend.

Bill Barton reminded us of the circumstances of the writing of "God Bless America." Katharine Lee Bates [distant relative of your editor] came from CT to teach English at Colorado College. She traveled to the top of Pikes Peak, was impressed with the view and wrote the lyrics to the song. The organist at her father's church wrote the music. Some said it ought to be our national anthem.

PROGRAM: Betsy Marston introduced Mark Roeber, County Commissioner from the 3rd district to talk about county finances. Roeber's family came to the area 125 years ago.

He announced that 68 miners were being let go from the Bowie coal mine. In two months, 35 more will be gone. Since Roeber became a commissioner, coal mining jobs have shrunk from 1000 to 350, which is a payroll loss of about \$80,000 per job. There is a further loss to the county of \$1 million in taxes. Starting in 2017, the county will have to absorb a 12% budget cut because of the loss of mining jobs. At the same time, state DOLA funds to the county will be reduced by 73%. Thus, there will be no big road and bridge projects until county funds increase.

In the past, the ups and downs of the coal mines were expected. Now their closing seems to be a finality. Facing a new normal without coal mines, the county is encouraging new business, and, in particular, supporting DMEA's broadband initiative, which ought to be well under way a year from now. The commissioners are looking for ways to diversify the economy. They are also talking about land use planning to give business a sense of certainty. After 5 years of lawsuits concerning the chicken farms, it is time for zoning. [NOTE: This would be a first for Delta County. As Marston said, "Zoning? You heard it here first folks!"]

Roeber then entertained questions:

Q. Can anything be done about the burdensome yearly commercial tax rate of 29% on B and Bs?

A: This is a state law, but perhaps something could be started locally based on occupancy.

Q. What resources are available for out of work miners? **A.** Not much. Younger people with families will be moving, thus the school district will take a hit. Enrollment is down 1000 since 2008.

Regarding a question about the Road and Bridge department, Roeber noted it was cooperating with the entire commission, not just a particular district commissioner. R & B takes care of 750 miles of

roads in the county.

On a positive note, Roeber thought the county could be an energy producer through hydro power, coalbed methane, and other renewables. There is also a major hotel and conference center being planned for the City of Delta.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL: The April Rotary theme [there is no May theme] is The Rotarian Magazine. Below are excerpts from a lengthy essay Paul Harris wrote for the first issue of The National Rotarian.

Vol. I. January, 1911. No. 1. "RATIONAL ROTARIANISM", by Paul P. Harris, National President.

[Part 4]"The way for a person or a club to be well thought of in its community is to do something for the community. The American people have been educated up to the point where they make insistent demand for a certain measure of civic activities on the part of a club. If you have never done anything in that line before it is time that you began. The opportunities to do things are simply legion and becoming more numerous as civilization advances. It is marvelous how easy it is when once you have started.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

May 5: Kathy Welt, on West Elk Mine and the coal industry

May 12: Brian Wegner, on his time as a nuclear sub commander

