



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 - Chartered 12/20/22

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This issue guest-edited by Bain Weinberger

LAST MEETING: November 30, 2017

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Ulli Lange reported that Salvation Army bell ringing for 6 hours last Saturday collected \$189. Francois Pretorius and Jim Cunningham have volunteered to ring the bell this coming Saturday.
- The Children's Christmas wrapping party will be held Saturday, December 2nd. at Noon at Hotchkiss Memorial Hall. There are about 170 bags to pack. Volunteers are needed.
- The Blue Sage Holiday Art Fair will be taking place December 1st and 2nd.
- Former member Bill Barton passed away last Friday.
- Solar Energy International is working toward being our club's first corporate member. They may be working with Rotary to help bring solar power to help out in Puerto Rico.
- Marsha Grant has offered to host the Rotary Christmas Party on December 14th.
- There will be no Rotary meeting on December 14th or 21st. There will be a meeting on December 28th.
- Ulli Lange won the football pool with 12 of 14 correct. He donated his winnings (\$13) to the scholarship fund. Mike Heck came in second with 10 correct.

David Wood from Salida was a Visiting Rotarian.

Francois Pretorius played piano for America the Beautiful. There was no other singing today in order to expedite the meeting.

Remember to feed the polio jar. Also, pay your dues.

PROGRAM: Elaine Brett (along with two others who were not introduced) made a presentation about Space to Create. Space to Create (S2C) is a state program looking to provide permanent affordable creative work and living space in rural towns. It was launched two years ago with the intent to extend to nine rural towns which would share a \$45 million fund. Paonia is the third town to be selected. Trinidad and Ridgeway are the other towns currently participating.

There has been a long legacy of community support for the arts and culture in Paonia, which has a vibrant artistic community. Although there were 22 mercantile stores in town by 1906, there has not been much growth since then. Creative energy fostered by programs such as S2C has been shown to help the entire business climate.

While agriculture and energy are still important, there is a need to diversify the economy. As with most small communities, much of the entrepreneurial spirit is volunteer powered. Paonia is currently undergoing a changing population. The goal is to promote economic vitality and strategically position Paonia for the future in a diversified economy with businesses and jobs to attract and retain new members of the community, including Generation Y and Millennials, as well as Baby Boomers. The overall goal is to make it friendly to start a business here while keeping this a wonderful place to live.

Real estate sales are currently booming with many owners of available property taking advantage of short term rental opportunities, causing a serious shortage of longer term rentals with year-long waiting lists. Investment in more available and affordable rental property is needed. Also, much of what is available is in need of renovation. While both financial and technical assistance is needed, small towns such as Paonia face ongoing financial challenges with limited financial streams. Infrastructure and public safety are priorities.

The S2C team consists of Ken Knight, Barry Pennell, Susie Lowe, Mary Bachran and Elaine Brett. They are also collaborating with the North Fork Valley Creative Coalition, the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, ArtSpace and The Boettcher Foundation (which provided a \$35K check as part of a larger grant, which will be matched) as well as others.

Of the current S2C participants, Trinidad has been in the program the longest. They have funds to renovate an entire block downtown that has been vacant since the 80's. There will be 42 live/work spaces. On the ground level will be retail, work and exhibit space. They have a VISTA volunteer working with the city to provide support and assistance. There is also a tax credit for affordable housing. There is great vitality in the community as well as support from resident creatives.

The Ridgeway S2C initiative has received "lots" of money from Colorado's Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for renovation.

In Ridgeway and Trinidad, the Creative Districts are managed by the town. In Paonia it is managed by a non-profit. Paonia became a state-designated Creative District in 2013.

In Paonia, S2C is gearing up and moving to get more activities going. E-mail will be going out in January, as well as web site and Facebook updates. Also, on Jan 16-18 there will be focus group meetings. A list of invitees is being created. There will also be a community meeting January 17th at the Paradise Theater. And a market survey will be undertaken in February and March as well as a ArtSpace/CCI report with recommendations. It is expected to be a 3-5 year process.

There is a great working team, including the Town of Paonia as well as the Paonia Creative Coalition. S2S is also working to establish agreements with ArtSpace. Other activities include defining the process and involving the community as well as building relationships at the state level and with DOLA representatives. Planning is a big part of the process. Paonia has a great deal of talent, but it needs to be directed and focused.

Available resources include Americorps VISTA, housing authority loan programs, USDA rural development loans and grants, Department of Commerce EDA grant funding, Downtown Colorado Inc. RBDG technical assistance, foundations that support economic development projects and capital campaigns as well as other regional economic development opportunities. In addition, individuals can take advantage of enterprise zone contribution tax credits and federal tax credits (170c1) for contributions made to the town for public purpose. Projects such as the Poulos park renovation could qualify.

Members wishing to get involved can get on the mailing list by sending a request to s2c@townofpaonia.com. Members are also encouraged to participate in focus groups and offer ideas as well as joining the S2C advisory team. Finally, everyone should make it a point to be positive about the future.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Dec. 7 - Jay Bagley and Julie Bennett, Rubicon Roasting and Root and Vine

Dec. 14 - Amy Williams, Ayurvedic Consultant and Yoga Instructor

