



THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE

Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley

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Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

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Guest Editor: Bain Weinberger

LAST MEETING: October 24, 2019

President Coombe presided.

Visiting Rotarians: Jim Farmer – Delta (Today's Speaker)

Key Guest: none

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- We raised \$213 for polio plus at the last meeting thanks to the great generosity of three people plus a handful of others.
- Ulli won the football pool for the third time in a row. He got the tie breaker exactly correct and won a 3-way tie. He donated his winnings to the Club, as usual.

Shelter Boxes: The funds sent to Shelter Box will be returned since they have no active Bahamas project at the present time. The money will instead be sent to the Rotary District that includes the Bahamas for Hurricane Dorian relief. There were no objections from the membership to doing so.

Program: Love the Bus

The speaker today was Jim Farmer, Rotarian and President of the Delta Club as well as Director of Human Resources for Delta County Schools. His presentation was in support of Proposition 5A, a 1.5 mill levy override to replace aging school busses.

Jim graduated from High School in Hotchkiss and has been back in Delta for about 20 years.

Twenty-five busses in the current fleet are 17 years old or older. Forty-nine are 15 years old or older. A new bus costs around \$100K. Smaller activity busses have also been purchased since vans can no longer be used due to insurance restrictions. In 2003 and 2005 a total of 43 busses were purchased to replace older ones. No new busses were purchased for 10 years after that due to budget restrictions. The fleet is getting old and needs to be replaced.

Reliable busses are important because much of the current bus routes are outside of cell phone range, making it difficult to call for assistance. Also, maintenance costs have increased due to the age of the busses. Jim showed a photo of a deteriorating seat bolt that had almost worn through.

The School Board approved placing a mill levy increase on the November ballot. The levy is 1.5 and would sunset after 8 years. Property assessed at \$200K would pay an additional \$21.46/year. This would allow the district to get on a schedule of replacing the older busses with newer ones. Having the mil levy money would also allow the District to then use its other revenue in support of such things as increasing teachers' salaries and maintaining facilities.

Q&A

Q: Where can a voter find information about candidates for the School Board?

A: The Delta County Independent has published information on the candidates.

Q: What is Plan B if the measure fails?

A: The District is committed to transporting kids to school safely. Cuts in other areas would be made as necessary to ensure the busses are maintained safely and replaced as necessary.

Q: Is it difficult to find drivers?

A: It is a challenge to make sure all of the routes are covered by drivers. The pay is good but the schedule is a challenge and the jobs are part-time.

Q: How is the campaign focusing on the segment of the voters unlikely to approve a tax increase?

A: Concerned parents have been publicizing the campaign on social media. School employees have been talking to various organizations. There have also been articles in the paper.

Q: Have alternative-fuel busses been considered by the District?

A: Not really sure, but there may be some issues with operating alt-fuel busses in our hilly and mountainous terrain.

Q: What percentage of the people in the district ride busses?

A: Of 48,000 to 49,000 students, about 26,000 ride the bus. So, a little over half. This has been relatively stable over the years.

Q: What can you tell us in terms of the changing demographics of the district as regards the school-age population and how this information is used to maximize the efficiency of the bus routes?

A: Bus routes are examined every year with the goal of being as efficient as possible. With the rural nature of the district, some routes will not be full.

Q: Might it be cheaper to pay some parents to bring kids to a central location where the bus could pick them up?

A: In some of the remote areas, like Crawford, there is a central drop-off spot. They do that when they can.

Q: With several tax initiatives on the ballot this year, what is your strategy to be the one people vote for?

A: The communities have always done a great job supporting our schools. Had to put the measure out there.

Q: Is the Board looking at consolidating schools and how that would affect transportation?

A: The District is setting up a task force to look at educational opportunities in the North Fork, including consolidation and its impact on transportation.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Date	Speaker	Program	Member
11/7/2019			Mike Heck
11/14/2019			Ulli Lange
11/21/2019	Debra Bianchi	Alzheimer's Association	Bob Lario
11/28/2019		no meeting	
12/5/2019	Emily Wassell	Paonia Experiential Leadership Academy	Ed Bliss
12/12/2019			Jackie Parks
12/19/2019			Kevin Parks
1/2/2019			Karri Polson

