



## **THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE**

### **Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley**

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: [rotary.org](http://rotary.org) [rotary5470.org](http://rotary5470.org) [northforkrotary.org](http://northforkrotary.org)

Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

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**LAST MEETING: August 6, 2020 (Virtual Meeting held via Zoom)**

President Campbell presided.

Visiting Rotarians: none

Other Guests: none

Key Guest: No key guest

(Annette now has the key).

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- We had 62% turnout for the Zoom meeting today.
- Tribute to Felix in the Park for this coming Thursday's meeting.
  - Meet at the shelters near the bathrooms.
  - Bring your own seating and lunch.
  - Cupcakes will be provided.
  - Come ready to tell stories about Felix. A P.A. system will be available.
- Nice article in DCI about activities or various county Rotary Clubs. Not all of the information provided was accurate, but good publicity nonetheless.
- Mention in Governor Polis' July newsletter about grants given to various local food assistance providers by our Club Foundation.
- A nice bench has been added to the back of Poulos Park as part of the Ed Marston Conversation Nook. The wall behind has also been refurbished. A designer bike rack is also due to be installed. The Town has budgeted in 2021 to get the irrigation system running and to replace the locust tree.
- Slow Food Western Slope is having their annual fundraising dinner on September 13 at the Old Midway School House. Seating will be outdoors. North Fork Senior Connections will be the recipient of the funds raised.
- Anyone wishing to take over as Newsletter Editor is welcome to do so. Contact a Board Member.

#### **PROGRAM: Update on the West Elk Mine**

Betsy introduced John Poulos of Mountain Coal Company. He has been active in the area for many years and currently runs the last surviving mine.

Mr. Poulos gave a PowerPoint presentation with diagrams and photographs depicting the mine and its operation. He began with a geological diagram of the mine, showing the three mineable coal seams. Mining began in 1982 with room and pillar mining. The first Long Wall was installed in 1992. The panel is about

1,100 feet wide and varies in length from 3,000 to 14,000 feet.

Mining has been taking place in the valley for well over 100 years. There are currently just under 300 employees. The mine contributes in various ways to the local economy. Pay for a miner (with benefits) is just over \$100K. Every dollar spent in the county turns over about seven times before it leaves the area. The mine also pays taxes, based on production, and plays an active role in local schools and in the community.

Safety performance of the mine has been very good, operating well below the national average in terms of reportable injuries. The mine has also received a number of environmental awards over the years, including from the Colorado Health Dept. Land reclamation and water conservation and re-use are key elements of the mine's environmental plans. Contemporaneous reclamation is used and bonds are required to ensure funds are available for reclamation. Inspections are performed to make sure reclamation is done to required standards in order for the bonds to be released. It is an ongoing process taking about ten years. The entire mine site holds a \$15M bond.

Mr. Poulos then showed photographs and diagrams of the Long Wall mining operation itself. A shearing machine runs back and forth across the face of the mine, and the coal dislodged runs over seven miles of conveyor belts for transport out of the mine. It takes about six people to run the machine. Without the Long Wall equipment, it would not be cost effective to run the mine.

Great care is taken to provide fresh air into the mine and to mitigate hazardous dust and gasses. Two large fans ventilate the mine through two separate shafts. Explosion doors prevent damage to the fans in the case of an explosion in the mine. This allows the fans to keep providing ventilation in case of an emergency.

Vent holes are drilled down to the coal seams to allow methane to escape from the mine. These drill pads and associated roads are reclaimed to their approximate original contours and vegetation once the mining passes that area and the vents are no longer needed. The methane extracted from the mine is used to drive the large vacuum pump that extracts the methane. A new portable flaring unit was recently purchased to burn off the excess methane instead of releasing it into the atmosphere.

A new wash plant (coal preparation) was brought on-line in 2010. Reclaimed water is used for washing the coal. No waste water has been discharged from the mine site in the last 8 or 9 years. All has been recycled.

The mining company performed \$3M worth of work on Monument Dam (Minnesota Reservoir) to stabilize and improve it. Instrumentation was also installed to monitor the dam. This was a big benefit to local water users as the work allowed the dam to retain more than the 50% of capacity that was being allowed prior to the work.

Q and A:

Q: Are there plans to flare or use methane released from the mine?

A: The portable flare will be used to destroy methane coming out of the mine ventilation bore holes. This is the only place the concentration is great enough to capture and burn. Methane coming from the mine shaft itself is too dilute to burn or utilize. This will be the first time such a flare has been used on an active panel.

Q: Oxbow Mine used to send vented methane to Aspen Ski Resort. Will West Elk be doing anything like that?

A: No, there will not be an opportunity for that. Need to be very careful about getting oxygen back into sealed areas of the mine and making sure methane is removed. This was the cause of fires in 2000 and 2005.

**UPCOMING MEETING PROGRAMS:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Member</b>
8/13/20	Felix Belmont's Tribute	Honoring Felix's Service to Rotary	Jackie Parks
8/20/20	Judy Livingston	Paonia Historic Society	Kevin Parks
8/27/20			Karri Polson
9/3/20			James Schott
9/10/20			Peggy Szvetecz
9/17/20	Cassandra Shenk	Crow Tribe leadership and tribal council	Greg Thompson
9/24/20			Bain Weinberger
10/1/20			
10/8/20			Judy Beggs
10/15/20			
10/22/20			Bill Bishop
10/29/20		Fifth Thursday	
11/5/20			Sarah Bishop
11/12/20			Norm Lewark
11/19/20			Nick Lypps
11/26/20		Thanksgiving	
12/3/20			Randy Campbell
12/10/20			Annette Choszczyk
12/17/20			John Coombe
12/24/20		Christmas Eve	
12/31/20		New Years Eve	
1/7/21			Susie Coombe
1/14/21			Glenn Dahlgren
1/21/21			Marsha Grant

