

Ouray County Study Group

Minutes

November 19, 2008

3:30 PM

Land Use Office

Those present included:

Ken Lipton, Heidi Albritton, Craig Fetterolf, Sara Coulter, Keith Meinert, John Clark and Lynn Padgett. Ted and Karen were not present.

1. Review final changes to Synopsis and implications of RPI Study

Ken went over his latest draft of the synopsis. The first change was on page 2, the 'housing stock' number appeared to be inconsistent, and the words "the entire County" were inserted after the number to clarify what the initial statement meant. This is an incorporated vs. unincorporated numbers issues. Down the same page under Road and Bridge, Ken added a sentence to clarify the definition of capital improvements.

Ken also inserted the phrase "in 2005 dollars" in several locations as requested by the group at the last meeting. Ken went through the rest of the synopsis, and noted where he made the changes that the group had discussed last meeting. Several other typos were pointed out, which Ken corrected.

Discussion ensued as to 'projected revenue' numbers, and whether or not these figures accounted for any sort of growth factor. Sara pointed out that this is one of the confusing elements of this study, RPI switches the units used, and does not use a clear growth or inflationary formula. You have to read the study very carefully as the unit terms change often, and each section requires a lot of focus to make sure you are still on the right topic. Ken and Lynn discussed the issue of the "2005 dollars" and what those dollars actually mean. Both had done research on what the standard practice was for both forecasting and projecting, and Ken found a NASA sight that has a procurement policy that went through 2015, which would allow for growth and inflation in financial calculations. \$100 in 2005 will cost you \$122.30 in 2015 according to this site's calculations. An analysis like this would impact both revenues and expenditures. Ken will attach this information to the synopsis,

2. review final changes to Theobald Study Report

Ken passed out a draft of the Theobald/RPI Study Group Report to the group. Lynn suggested a change pertaining to the "pinpoint accuracy", and stressing the limitations of input data and modeling. The data should not be utilized at the parcel level scale. Keith asked about the 3% margin of error, and Sara discussed an email that she had received from Theobald today, which would account for some of the discrepancies that the group has encountered. Keith thought that by listing the 3% margin of error in the synopsis that this may be implying a level of detail that does not exist within the reports themselves. Sara argued that this was actually a useful differentiation, as the sheer amount of information included into the studies resulting in a 3% margin of error is very impressive. Keith's concern is that the public will 'hang their hat' on the numbers contained within the report to a larger extent than they should. Ken argued that it is common practice in a scientific study to clearly state the margin of error used in the study.

Keith just felt that it implies a degree of precision that may or may not exist in the reports. It was agreed that the qualification of the notion of precision needed to be placed within the opening document, so that the public does not look for accuracies that do not exist to the extent that some might be looking for. That being said, every attempt has been made throughout each of these processes to ensure that the numbers are as accurate as possible, and that the methodology is also understood and explained. John suggested that the phrase regarding the margin of error should be deleted, as it might create more problems than it solves. Ken stated that Ted is

very concerned about having the margin of error in the synopsis, and wanted to make it clear to what level the figures can be relied upon. Lynn suggested some more general wording about modeling. Heidi and Keith are concerned about individuals taking the discrepancies as reason to discount the studies as a whole, and the work that the group has done has made every effort to account for the data, the discrepancies, and to best interpret what the data is saying. Some sort of qualification must be made in the forward to the reports to allow the public to understand that the level of detail may not be as high as some would like, and may in fact be impossible for studies like these.

Sara is concerned that we are not communicating the level of complexity that went into these studies, and that we may be taking a patronizing stance towards them, which is not helpful. Keith stressed that this is a very important discussion for the sake of the group's efforts thus far. Discussion ensued as to how much should be stated or not as to the data, the conclusions. Keith suggested that the statements be balanced. Heidi suggested that the group stress the efforts that were taken to communicate with the authors of the studies, as errors or omissions were encountered, and that many of these items were resolved thru that communication. Keith agreed that that is an important point, as is the fact that the group did its own work to verify the data and the numbers, as well as their implications. Sara was fine with that, and suggested some other fine-tuning to the paragraph. Lynn suggested a replacement paragraph.

The bottom line is that the group does not want to leave the readers with any doubt as to the validity of the studies' conclusions', and the fact that every attempt to verify the data and the conclusions, and feels comfortable with the general themes and conclusions of both reports.

The new paragraph will read:

“All study models tend to be generalizations. There are inherent inconsistencies due to differences in data sources, for example: County Assessor's data vs. State Demographer's data. In some cases, the study group was unable to ascertain the basis for some computations. When the Study Group found apparent inconsistencies they consulted with the authors to obtain clarification. The Study Group concluded that any errors, omissions or incomplete data contained in these reports do not substantially affect their validity. The Study Group is confident that these reports and the study group's findings constitute an important reference and data source for strategic land use and fiscal planning. The Study Group encourages the BOCC to utilize and build upon this report by initiating a long-range fiscal and land-use strategic plan for Ouray County”

Heidi suggested that the group place some sort of “Notes from the Study Group” at the beginning of each study in which the group could mention the specific items that were encountered during the analysis that caused us to pause and do some more legwork: but to keep things at a more general level in the preface.

Craig asked that some sort of consistency be utilized throughout the analysis when referring to the reports, so that the public does not get confused when the various reports are referred to. For example, refer to RPI and Theobald instead of Build out or Fiscal Impact analysis. On paragraph 5 it should read, “Also, for purposes of determining the impacts of growth on the County road system, the service center for Ouray County was changed from the Town of Ridgway to the City of Montrose.”

Lynn also clarified that Karen Risch was also a participant in the Study Group, and should be listed as such.

Sara handed out an email from Theobald explaining the methodology he and his team had utilized on the Table 10 in the report. Based on this new information she feels very confident in the figures provided in that table. Lynn suggested that the final numbers in Table 10 be utilized, based on this email and explanation. The group agreed.

3. Minutes from Prior meeting

Minutes were accepted unanimously.

4. Homework for Next meeting:

Please read the conclusions and Implications documents before the next meeting!

5. Public Comment

No members of the public attended the meeting.

6. Next Meeting will be Wednesday, December 3rd at 3:30pm