



Board of Directors Meeting

Held by Zoom

Wednesday, August 11, 2021

9:00 am – 12:00 p.m. MT

ATTENDANCE

Present via Zoom: Karen Appelgren, ID. Department of Commerce, Amelia Valasek, ID. Commission for Libraries, Jon Barrett, Idaho Rural Partnership, Art Beal, Idaho Resource Conservation and Development Association, Jess Byrne, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Jani Revier, ID. Department of Labor, Trent Clark, Customalting, James Curry, Bayer Crop Science, Brian Dale, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Matt Szelag, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, John Holman, USDA Rural Development, Daryl Moser, USDA Rural Development, Tom Kealey, ID Department of Commerce; Shannon Madsen, U.S. Small Business Administration; Kermit Mankiller, Nez Perce Tribe, Ron Durand, Idaho Transportation Department, Jeff McCurdy, Region IV Development Association, Marsha McDaniel, Idaho National Laboratory, Jerry Miller, ID Dept. of Commerce, Donna Pence, Gooding, Colleen Rosson, Silver Valley Economic Development Corporation, Chanel Tewalt, Idaho Dept. of Agriculture, Rep. Sally Toone, Idaho Legislature, Lorie Higgins, University of Idaho Extension, Barbara Petty, University of Idaho Extension, Peter Hawkes, USDA Rural Development, Sen. David Nelson, Idaho Legislature, Jenna Simonson, Bureau of Land Management.

CALL TO ORDER, APPROVE MINUTES

Co-Chair Art Beal CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 9:00 A.M. Mountain. Co-Chair Beal asked if there are any corrections to the April 14, 2021 board meeting minutes sent prior to the meeting. No corrections were identified and the minutes were approved as read.

CO-CHAIR REPORTS

Despite the recent hot and dry summer, the RC & D Associations have been continuing their programs.

Co-Chair Kealey thanked everyone for attending and acknowledged it's a busy time for all of us with pandemic-related issues. Businesses in several sectors are working to find people to fill open positions. This challenge is across the state. Idaho is ranked very high in terms of the economic rebound, business expansion, tourism, etc.

Overall business across the state, including tourism, is strong. We wrapped up the numbers for the state at the end of this last fiscal year (June 30) and we are ahead of where we were in 2019 (before the pandemic); about 12% up. We've set new records for revenue tied to lodging tax receipts. A lot of people discovered Idaho during the pandemic, boosting our economy. Our forecast for the next 12 months is pretty strong as well.

The Governor reported a surplus of almost \$900 million. This means the potential for new infrastructure for rural Idaho and other places, e.g., water, highways, roads, broadband – along with education. These are the Governor's top priorities. The upcoming legislative session will have a focus on how to allocate this surplus and how to allocate the ARPA funding we have and the new funding from the proposed (federal) infrastructure bill.

Director Kealey has recently been to Mountain Home, American Falls, and Salmon. The In the Ditch project in Mountain Home just opened – a major expansion of this business. In American Falls, a major expansion of Lamb Weston was recently announced – an investment of over \$400 million that will increase the # of jobs at that facility from 400 to 600. A mining project in Salmon will provide 100-150 new jobs. In Moscow, the expansion of Schweitzer Engineering Lab was recently announced. Around the state there are a lot of activities in rural communities with respect to growth in businesses and employment.

Capital for a Day continues to bring cabinet members to rural communities. Recent Capital for a Day communities include Driggs, Troy, and Rexburg.

We significantly expanded broadband infrastructure last year. The legislature created the Idaho Broadband Advisory Board along with an Idaho Broadband Fund. The board held its first meeting in June. \$45 million in broadband projects was approved (\$35 million in state funds, \$10 million in Cares Act rollover funds). Last week the board approved the first \$10 million using the Cares Act funding to fund 13 projects around the state. ARPA funds and pending infrastructure bill will include money to support more and bigger broadband projects, which will help rural Idaho. The broadband advisory board will continue working with the Legislature and Governor's office.

We recently had the Acting Chief of the FCC recently visit projects in Rathdrum, Kellogg, Plummer. The FCC Chief was impressed with what we had done with some of the Cares Act funds re: broadband.

Last week the Governor announced the formation of the Cybersecurity Task Force. This is a new topic. We're looking at consolidating related assets around the state: INL, education, FBI, small and large business, and local government to leverage and combat cybersecurity attacks. The task force hopes to have recommendations in early 2022.

Commerce was pleased to contribute some one-time funds to IRP in June.

**UPCOMING ELECTION
OF NEW BOARD CO-
CHAIR AND WELCOME
NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

Art informed the board he has served two 2-year terms as Co-Chair and state statute does not allow him to serve a third term. A new co-chair will be elected by the board in December. Jon thanked Art for his service as Co-Chair.

Jon welcomed new board members to the board: Marsha McDaniel (INL), Matt Szelag (EPA), and Sen. David Nelson. Each new board member took a minute to introduce themselves. Jon identified currently open seats on the board, which include federal positions not yet filled via

appointments by the Biden Administration and Tribal representatives from three of the Idaho Tribes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
REPORT

We've been working hard on the Partners for Rural America (PRA) national conference which is taking place in Twin Falls August 29-September 1.

Jon thanked the board for approving a contact with Julia Oxrango-Ingram to help with conference coordination and planning. She's been extremely helpful.

Jon summarized major conference topics and opportunities for the board to participate in the conference. There is a bus tour of the eastern Magic Valley planned for Mon., August 30. IRP board members can pre-register to attend bus tour, though seating will be limited.

A one-day summit is planned for Tuesday, August 31 at the Herrett Center on CSI campus. We're working with Red Shoe Solutions to set up the conference registration process and manage the Zoom call during the Summit. Jon will share the link to the conference registration page as soon as it's available.

We are expecting 10-12 people from other states attending in person. Another group of people from other states (i.e. other PRA members) will be participating virtually.

Jon summarized the five major topics to be addressed during the conference. A survey of PRA board members was used to identify these topics. About 2/3rds of conference presenters are confirmed at this time.

The Hilton Garden Inn in Twin will be used as the official conference hotel. A discounted room rate is available to board members. Jon will resend the conference flyer, which contains a hotel booking link. This will be the first PRA conference that will be conducted with a virtual option.

Jon thanked the conference planning committee: Tom Kealey, Art Beal, Donna Pence, Jerry Miller, Brian Dale, Erik Kingston, Trent Clark, and Rep. Sally Toone. Jon also thanks Jeff McCurdy, Shawn Barager, Connie Stopher, and

Melissa Barry – all based in the Magic Valley – for their assistance with conference planning.

Jon summarized other program activities, including the completion of Phase II of the Blackfoot Community Review, Phase II of Harrison Community Review, the Voice of the Community rural health project in the Pierce-Weippe communities.

Jon also summarized the ongoing effort to develop a new rapid rural response rural recovery process. This is a streamlined community review process we will be talking about later today.

We've completed two IRP e-bulletins since the April board meeting. We've also provided in-kind support for IHFA's fair housing education project.

Jon then summarized the financial report. A year-to-date report of expenses and income was provided to the board prior to the meeting. On the income side, we received \$5,000 from the USDA grant received by the U of I in the last 6 months. We will be receiving up to \$7,000 from PRA to help with conference expenses. Since April, we've received \$2,500 from Bayer Crop Science, \$500 from Idaho Central Credit Union, \$2,500 challenge grant from Rocky Mountain Power, \$20,000 from Dept. of Commerce, and \$10,000 from Idaho DEQ. Jon thanked Director's Byrne and Kealey for this one-time support from both agencies.

Our expenses have been, year to date, just over \$25,000. We have about \$40,000 in the bank at this time, not including an additional \$7,000 at Idaho Community Foundation. This means total cash on hand is now \$45,000-\$50,000.

Jon asked for questions about the financial information.

Jon made the board aware of our incoming BSU intern for the fall semester. His name is Dylan Ray. He is from Coeur d'Alene.

ROUNDTABLE REPORTS

Marsha McDaniel, INL

We're still under travel restrictions at INL, limiting ability to attend conferences, etc. Day trips are possible and I intend to attend the conference in Twin Falls. We're still doing virtual tours of INL and I'm happy to arrange that for anyone interested. Our in-person tours are on hold.

Karen Applegren, ID.
Department of
Commerce

I'm helping plan the ID Economic Development Assoc. Conference October Oct. 19-21 in Boise. Plans at this time are for an in-person event. We're watching CDC guidelines and the pandemic closely. We've got some great presentations and tours planned. Please mark your calendars.

Trailmix is a food startup competition that's part of Boise Entrepreneurship Week. Applications are now being accepted by Trailmix. Please encourage food entrepreneurs in your area to apply. Winners end up with shelf space at Albertson's and get funding and mentorship. It's a great opportunity.

The Business Retention and Expansion Team has been out in the state doing business visits where we can do so safely. Our international team has some STEP grants available for financial assistance awards. Keep this in mind for businesses who want to do international trade. Our BRE team is also seeing increased interest from companies that want to relocate to Idaho.

Sen. David Nelson,
Idaho Senate

I don't have a lot to report, being new to the board. On broadband, we've allocated the Cares Act funding as Director Kealey said. We're now turning attention toward the \$35 million in state funding. I encourage people to reach out with ideas about how we should use this funding. My emphasis remains on extending broadband to our rural citizens.

Jenna Simonson, BLM

We have recent leadership changes. John Ruhs retired at the end of July. Peter Ditton is stepping in as the State Director. June is now the Deputy State Director. We have a lot of concerns with drought. We are in stage 1 fire restrictions. We have good cooperation with our livestock grazing permittees in response to drought conditions to

protect the range. We are predicting potential for above normal wildfires through September. Most fires so far this year have been in north central region.

We've been doing a lot in the area of fuel management to reduce hazardous fuels. Last year we treated over 140,000 acres of public lands in Idaho, which is 112% of our goal, representing 1/5th of BLM's accomplishments in this area.

We're seeing increased recreational use, partially in response to COVID and a desire to get outside more. We're responding to these evolving needs.

We have two wind projects – Lave Ridge and Salmon Falls. Many new turbines going in. We also have a phosphate mine going in NE of Soda Springs.

A horse gather is coming up in September in the Fourmile Horse Management Area. We expect to receive funding from the Great American Outdoors Act to help make repairs at recreation sites.

Barbara Petty, U of I
Extension

U of I Extension is being discovered as a result of Covid. Our county offices have been inundated all summer and we're happy to serve Idahoans face to face.

In May we launched Think, Make, Create mobile maker spaces. These are 15 trailers being dispersed throughout the state. Available to school districts, libraries, clubs. In June, we had a ribbon cutting ceremony for our headquarters at the Nancy Cummings Research and Education Center. Please stop by and visit. In July, we had a ribbon cutting in Parma for the Idaho Center for Plant and Soil Health. We're excited about the opportunities we have going forward.

This is fair season, so we've been very busy. We've been submitted proposals to receive ARPA funding to expand our 4H programs.

Daryl Moser, USDA
Rural Development

I'll be handing my time over to John Holman, USDA Rural Development's general broadband field representative for the NW region. We've recently brought on Peter Hawkes, who will be USDA's broadband person for Idaho.

John Holman, USDA
Rural Development

I'm with the Rural Utility Service. We focus on rural infrastructure related to broadband. You've probably heard of our ReConnect program. We expect to make a final announcement of funding and related rules in September. We have a good amount of funding to build out broadband in rural and other underserved areas. We've been using 10 mb downstream and 1 mb upstream as our definition of broadband. This might be changed to the FCC limit of 25 mb and 3 mb, which will open up more areas to be eligible for project funding.

We also have the Community Connect grant program for small projects of \$3 million or less. We have a Distance Learning Telemedicine grant. Applications for this program are now under review. This program provides grants up to \$1 million/project.

We have an infrastructure loan program – up to \$690 million every fiscal year. We are actively seeking applicants looking for such loans at the cost of money. Interest rates are determined by the federal financing bank or the rural telephone bank. They are below 2%. You'll be meeting Peter Hawks as Idaho's new rep. but I'll remain involved.

Peter Hawkes, USDA
Rural

I come from the private sector and am looking forward to working with you all. I'll put my contact info. in the chat.

Colleen Rossen, Silver
Valley Economic
Development Corp.

We have initiated a placemaking project in Kellogg. We completed 10 listening sessions with the community and businesses. The Kellogg effort is a pilot project to demonstrate how this can work in other communities in the county. We're fortunate to have Blair Williams contribute as a volunteer as a professional placemaker. We've identified some great projects that have gotten the community involved. Parking constraints and opportunities are a big topic of conversation, given the growth we're experiencing.

The Kellogg Library is developing a Makerspace. I'm excited about Extension's mobile makerspaces. Restaurants and grocery stores are having a hard time finding employees.

In broadband, our ISP is moving forward with improvements even though we haven't received broadband funding. Geography and isolated communities are a big challenge here.

Trent Clark,
Customalting

July was our best month in our business. Not optimistic this will continue because malt barley planting was very limited this year. Almost none grown in Idaho because of the drought.

The local emergency planning committees I'm involved in in SE Idaho have found that the area just doesn't have the stored forage to winter as many cows as we normally do. We're looking at 3,000-8,000 head that will likely need to be culled this winter as a result. The problem is all of our rendering facilities are maxed out.

I'm also involved in Untied Families Idaho representing many rural families. We've run into a problem in the legislature. An organization called the Freedom Foundation has adopted a "Ed Exit" plan to take kids out of public schools and enroll them in private schools. This might be an option in Boise, but not in rural areas because private ed. options are slim. Idaho Families believes we need to make public schools meet our needs and we need to support public education. Last session, Idaho public television programming that is important to public schools received funding by just one vote.

Our organization is mobilizing to make the case to support public schools and related education programs that are important to rural areas.

Jess Byrne, Idaho DEQ

Director Kealey mentioned ARPA funding for infrastructure. Two of the primary eligible uses for this funding are water and sewer. We're getting a lot of questions about this funding. The legislature will receive recommendations from the Governor and will ultimately decide how it will be

used. There's a high likelihood a big amount of it will go to water and sewer.

The timeline for awarding and spending this money is tight. This is important for smaller jurisdictions. We have to award the money by the end of 2024 and it must be spent by the end of 2026. This is a tight turnaround for larger infrastructure projects. Projects will have to have engineering completed to know what upgrades are needed. We expect increased funding for planning grants to communities to help them identify their capital improvement needs. In the recent past, the need has far outweighed the available planning grant funds. In October, we'll be sending out requests for letters of interest for these planning funds.

On the workforce front, we're seeing problems in the industry attracting and retaining engineers. We're doing what we can to address this need. These engineering services are critical to communities.

We're also involved in wildfire challenges, e.g., air quality impacts and mitigating health impacts. We work closely with health districts and others on this issue. We're spending quite a bit of time on a number of small drinking water systems that are running dry. Drought conditions are a big contributor factor.

We have two rural areas in Idaho not meeting national air quality standards – Franklin County and west Silver Valley area. We've been working with entities in these areas. Our request for re-designation was recently accepted and approved by EPA for Franklin County. We've submitted a similar request for west Silver Valley area.

Donna Pence

In the Magic Valley, our major concerns include fire, especially in the Wood River Valley. The drought situation is also a major, related concern. The carryover reserves being our dams is very low right now. I've been involved in PRA conference planning.

Shannon Madsen, U.S.
Small Business
Administration

I'll give a report on SBA funding (pandemic-related). These are national numbers; I'm sure I can get Idaho numbers. Restaurant revitalization: \$28.5 billion,

Shuttered venues: \$8.4 billion, Paycheck protection: \$791 billion, Economic injury disaster loan: \$244 billion, Target advances: \$2 billion. Most of these programs have ended. The Shuttered venue/Save the stages program and the Economic Injury Disaster loans are two exceptions; they remain open. All of our regular programs are still open. I'll put my contact information in the chat.

Representative Sally Toone, Idaho House

I've also been working on the PRA conference planning committee. The Magic Dam was turned off very early this year. A big challenge is resolving needs between groundwater and surface water users. The solution is due to come out by Dec. 1. Stay tuned. I look forward to the PRA conference.

We'll see what happens in the legislature; we'll be working on legislation over the next month.

Brian Dale, U.S. HUD

We've provided more emergency housing vouchers to Section 8 voucher organizations around the state. We're also keeping an eye on the eviction moratorium and foreclosure assistance work that's going on. We continue to be aware this is a critical problem for many people. We're also involved in vaccination efforts, mostly partnering with residents in multi-family housing (e.g. being a partner conducting vaccination clinics, some of them in rural areas).

Amelia Valasek, Idaho Commission on Libraries

We're distributing \$2.4 million in ARPA funding. Most of it is going to libraries in direct grants. We have 48 libraries who have received this funding. The big focus has been improving digital access available to library users. Several libraries are purchasing book mobiles that provide wireless access. Many of these will be in rural communities, including Tribal communities. Contact me if you want to know if a library in your area received a grant. Please look for opportunities to partner with local libraries.

We continue working on our Project Ideal, which is providing digital books to school kids and communities. Some areas of Idaho are not served by a library, meaning they don't have free access. Project Ideal fills this gap. Feel free to contact me with questions.

We're also partnering with the Blue Cross Foundation to set libraries up as tele-health facilities. I'll post my contact info. in chat.

Jani Revier, ID. Dept. of Labor

Things at the Department of Labor are going better than this time last year. Governor Little decided to end the additional federal unemployment benefits. As of June, we are no longer offering these benefits; just our normal unemployment insurance programs.

Businesses across the state are having workforce shortages. They are more openings than there are available workers. This continues to be a challenge.

The Workforce Development Council recently announced that Equis Workforce Solutions is going to provide the adult and dislocated worker program, rather than the Dept. of Labor. This transition is ongoing, including related staff adjustments.

We're going to expand our remote delivery of service model we started a few years ago. This means, e.g., Salmon and Orofino won't have brick and mortar Dept. of Labor offices, but service will still be provided by staff in those areas.

Our regional labor economist positions in our Idaho Falls and Lewiston offices are open and we will be filling them soon.

Ron Durand, Idaho Transportation Department

I'm sitting in for Jeff Marker today. I'm excited about the PRA conference, but we won't be able to attend because we have a public transportation summit happening at the same time.

We're paying attention to what the new infrastructure bill means for transportation. Estimates are that it will mean a 35%-37% increase in funding for public transportation. This is exciting, though we struggle with local match requirements. We're looking at capital improvements and new transit vehicles in various areas of the state and at re-establishing service in Idaho Falls.

Kermit Mankiller, Nez
Perce Tribes and Tribal
Enterprises

We're slowly getting back to a full opening at Tribal Enterprises and it's good to get back to face to face meetings. We're paying attention to the virus resurgence like everyone else.

The Tribe is involved in broadband development to increase access in rural areas. This involves collaboration with various entities.

The Recovery Plan Act and infrastructure bill are of interest. Like other parts of rural Idaho, we have some infrastructure deficiencies we hope to take care of. We'll be looking for opportunities to collaborate on such efforts locally, regionally, and statewide.

We've moving forward with our industrial hemp initiative. We have a USDA-approved hemp code in place. We're continuing to research opportunities. We're working with EDA on a business park in Spaulding. A USDA-inspected meat processing plant will be located at the business park.

We're collaborating with LCSC, CEDA, Valley Vision and others on workforce development and other issues. We see opportunities to develop tourism and cultural assets and there's funding available for this purpose.

Chanel Tewalt, ID
Department of
Agriculture

Speaking of hemp, Governor Little signed HB 126 into law, which requires the Dept. of Ag. to develop a state hemp plan and write administrative rules. The timeline is very ambitious. The rules address the production, processing, and handling of hemp. We expect to have hemp production to begin next spring.

Labor remains a big challenge. We simply cannot find the people, putting pressure on industry. Heat/drought has also caused big challenges. All 44 Idaho counties are considered a disaster area for drought. This is true across much of the west. Pest problems have also been bad this year.

ISDA has been building its new Animal Plant Health Lab next to our main building. It is opening in November. This will be Idaho's only large animal necropsy lab.

James Curry, Bayer Crop Science

This year looks better than last year for Bayer. We had hoped to start offering tours at Soda Springs, but it's looking like this will be put off until next year. I will not be available for the PRA conference, but will look for other company representatives to participate.

Jeff McCurdy, Region IV Development Assoc.

I'm here representing the economic development districts of Idaho. We've been working to support economic recovery from the pandemic. We've identified the five highest priorities needed for recovery: (1) business financing, (2) economic development planning assistance, (3) communication systems, (4) economic development centers, and (5) traditional infrastructure.

With finance, we find some businesses don't qualify for SBA programs. We're using \$10 million in EDA funding to create regional revolving loan programs. In 9 months, we've loaned out almost 90% of this amount. We're now working together to help establish a statewide revolving loan fund program for businesses that don't qualify for traditional lending or SBA programs.

Earlier this year, we contracted with TIP Strategies to help us develop a regional framework to help with recovery efforts. We hope to develop a state-regional resiliency recovery plan in coming months.

Broadband continues to be a priority in rural communities, as others have discussed today. Thanks to Commerce, USDA Rural Development, and EDA for their efforts in this area.

We continue to work to develop economic development centers. The Magic Valley Food Innovation Center is one example.

Sewer and water infrastructure continues to be a priority. Thanks to DEQ, Commerce, USDA Rural Development for their efforts.

EDA received \$3 billion to support recovery. Funds are to be distributed by September 2022. EDA has identified six program areas for funding: economic adjustment assistance, tourism and outdoor recreation, tribal

communities, build back better regional challenge to provide technical assistance for planning and project implementation (3-8 projects in a region). Additional funding for good jobs planning and state planning. EDA stresses these are once in 10 years or once in a lifetime opportunities to fund projects.

Please reach out to us with questions. We're here to help.

Matt Szelag, U.S. EPA

We've had several new hires in the last few months. We're still under mission critical travel restrictions. I don't have updates on appointment of regional administration for region 10 at this time.

The White House is setting up a working group to address climate-related threats from heat and wildfires. The EPA and the Army Corps have announced plans to revisit the definition of "waters of the U.S.", which has implications for permitting.

It's a good time for new funding for sewer and wastewater facilities for small communities. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act grant funding are some examples. Some of these programs include principle forgiveness for disadvantaged communities.

EPA recently issued about \$2 million to DEQ for nonpoint source pollution efforts. There is also a brownfields job training grant. Info. available at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

The Brownfields Assessment Revolving Loan Fund and Cleanup Grant Fund guidelines are coming out later this fall. Upcoming brownfields conferences are also on the horizon between now and the end of the year.

Art Beal, Idaho
Association of RC & D
Associations

The RC & D Associations are alive and well. We received funding from BLM to do a thinning project at Centerville. We completed a citizen's science project in the High Valley area. We monitor use of NRCS programs to track where we need to ask for additional funding through the conservation districts. The Forest Service has seen a change in their fire policy, which now takes a "put out the fire if you can catch it early" approach.

Tom Kealey, ID
Department of
Commerce

I want to thank the team here at the Dept. of Commerce. There are challenges, but things are generally strong in both rural and urban Idaho. We're blessed to be working on these infrastructure projects that are game changers for Idaho.

IRP STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Jon summarized results of the strategic planning survey completed by board members and other partners in April, focusing on survey results that have not yet been shared with the board.

The 28 survey respondents identified the following as IRP's five most important responsibilities (of the 11 responsibilities listed in Idaho Code 67-9005):

1. Advise the Governor and Legislature on public policy strategies to promote community and economic development in rural Idaho.
2. Assess community and economic conditions in rural Idaho.
3. Improve and seek coordination between local, regional, and statewide levels, public-private cooperation, and partnerships to achieve rural development goals.
4. Conduct outreach to rural communities and facilitate communication between the communities and agencies that provide services to them.
5. Seek solutions to unnecessary impediments to rural development in Idaho.

Respondents identified the following as IRP's most important audiences to be engaged with:

1. Governor's office and Legislature
2. Local and regional economic development organizations
3. Local elected officials in rural areas
4. Government agencies and organizations that support rural communities
5. Rural businesses/business owners

Survey respondents see the following funding sources as having greatest potential for IRP:

1. Grants from private foundations
2. Federal government funding
3. Private sector contributions
4. State funding

The survey results show little support for creating an annual membership/dues program.

Respondents see the following as being the most important roles for IRP board members:

1. Set vision and strategic direction
2. Exchange info. and build collaborations
3. Support rural communities

Survey respondents identified the following challenges to fulfilling their role as board members:

1. Time
2. Lack of stable funding for IRP

A large number of survey respondents indicated they might be able to increase their involvement in IRP, depending on the specifics of the activities.

People completing the survey responded with the following answers most frequently when asked to identify the key questions facing IRP as we look toward our future.

1. Establish clarity about strategic direction
2. Sustainable funding and staffing
3. Make community review program and other activities more impactful and streamlined.

When given an opportunity to express other issues or questions they'd like to see addresses as part of the strategic planning process, survey respondents offered the following most frequently:

1. Increase awareness of rural programs
2. Avoid duplication and clarify IRP's niche
3. Help solve rural challenges

Most survey respondents indicated they would be willing to serve on an IRP strategic planning committee; some said “maybe”, few said “no”.

Forming a strategic planning committee comprised of people representing IRP’s five partnership classes was discussed at a meeting of the IRP finance committee in May. These five classes are:

1. State agencies, legislature, Governor’s office, and U of I Extension
2. Federal agencies, including INL
3. Tribes
4. Local rural leaders, government and economic development organizations, and nonprofits
5. For profit/private sector

Jon will be contacting individuals to serve on the strategic planning committee in the near future. Jon briefly presented the proposed 4-month strategic planning process and an example of questions that will be addressed by the strategic planning committee.

RIPPLE EFFECTS MAPPING PRESENTATION

Dr. Lorie Higgins from U of I Extension defined ripple effects mapping as the main tool we are using to evaluate the impact of community reviews in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. It is similar to mind-mapping. The objective is to identify the “ripple effects” resulting from community reviews.

Dr. Higgins presented the primary ripple effects being identified by conducting ripple effects in communities in which community reviews have been conducted. The community capitals framework is used to categorize the ripple effects. Many of the ripple effects are interrelated. We also find that one ripple effect leads to other ripples (i.e. successful projects). Ripple effects mapping has been completed in the following communities in recent years: Cascade, Glens Ferry, Fairfield, American Falls, Ashton, and Emmett.

Examples of ripple effects we’re seeing in multiple communities include:

- Downtown improvements

- Improved relationships among community leaders and members
- Increased sharing of community information
- Development of cultural and heritage development opportunities

RAPID RURAL
RESPONSE AND
RECOVERY PROCESS
(R4)

Jon summarized the current status of the R4 community engagement process. The proposed process has been further developed since the April board meeting. It is a faster, less expensive community engagement process meant to develop local capacity while allowing IRP to serve more communities. The intent is to offer this process to communities in addition to the full, traditional community review process. It does not replace the community review process. It is a virtually facilitated four-week process that multiple communities will complete concurrently. It is possible that a community will choose to apply for a full community review after they have completed the R4 process.

The R4 process features a participating community's selection of one project it wants to work on. The facilitation and training is then provided to support the completion of that project. Example projects include community improvement projects, new events, beautification, etc. Jon summarized the proposed four-week R4 process.

Lorie added that we've learned from the revised community review process created in 2018 that it's difficult for community residents to become involved in community and economic development if they've not been involved previously. The R4 process intends to address this challenge by encouraging residents to become involved in their community.

Jon stated his interest in engaging more board members in this conversation going forward.

POSSIBLE FUNDING
AGREEMENT WITH
UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

Jon summarized a contract that will be presented to the board at the Dec. board meeting that would result in USDA research grants funds coming to IRP to allow us to contract with someone to coordinate our community engagement work (community reviews and R4).

EXTENSION OF
CONTRACT WITH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JON BARRETT

Jon's contract was previously extended to today's date. The proposal before the board is to extend Jon's existing contract to December 31, 2021. This will allow the time needed to develop a new proposed contract that recognizes changes in the executive director's role in early 2022 when it is proposed IRP will be contracting with someone to coordinate the community engagement work. The proposed extension to 12/31/21 keeps all of the terms of the original contract in place.

Jeff McCurdy made a motion to approve the extension of Jon's contract. Barbara Petty seconded the motion. Motion passed without opposition.

EXTENSION OF
CONTRACT WITH
LAUREL YORK ODELL

IRP has a contract with Laurel York Odell to coordinate phase II of the Voice of the Community project in the communities of Pierce and Weippe. The resurgence of the Covid pandemic this summer has prevented us from completing this project with an in-person celebration and community health fair. The proposal before the board is to extend Laurel's existing contract from 7/31/21 to 10/15/21. It is expected that the project will be completed by this date.

Following discussion and a proposal by Co-Chair Art Beal, the board unanimously passed a motion to extend Laurel's contract to 11/15/21. The motion was made by Jess Byrne. A second was made by Jeff McCurdy.

ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Beal adjourned the meeting at 12:12 p.m. Mountain.

