

Minutes
Joint Meeting of the Community & Infrastructure and
Growth & Development Solution Groups
January 24, 2005

Members of the Community & Infrastructure Solution Group Present: Kate Wilson, Jack Eakman, Bill Davis, Steve Johnson, Julie Pflingst, Dave Leverett, Erin Hayes, Dick Fast, Steve Johnson, Kay Reeves. Members of the Growth & Development Group Solution Group were also in attendance, including chair, Jon Holtzman, along with David O'Connor, chair of the Chamber's Strategic Plan process. About a dozen interested citizens attended also.

Invited speakers in attendance were, from Madison County, Doris Fischer, County Planner; Ted Coffman, Commissioner; and Bill Olson, Planning Commission. From Gallatin County, Bill Murdock, Commissioner; Jennifer Madgic, Planning Director; and Ed Blackman, Finance Director attended.

David O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and gave a brief overview of the Chamber's Strategic Plan process and the inception of the Solution Groups. He noted that tonight's meeting arose from an interview by Growth & Development Solution Group member, Katie Alvin, with Gallatin County Planner, Randy Johnson. During this meeting, the idea of a satellite county office in Big Sky was discussed. Since then, many common questions had arisen in both Solution Groups leading to contacts with officials from both counties who agreed to this joint session to help address them. David explained that chairs, Kate Wilson & Jon Holtzman, had prepared the questions (Attachment A,) provided them to the officials in advance, and that tonight's meeting, at 90 minutes, would be focused on their responses. If time permitted, public comment on the discussion would follow.

Ed Blackman opened the discussion with an overview of Gallatin County's budget (Attachment B.) He provided total budget numbers and broke revenues down for the Ophir School District, the most easily retrievable boundary set for the Big Sky area. Included was a comparison of the Ophir School District numbers to the city of Bozeman.

Discussion then moved to the prepared questions and Question #1 was posed regarding each speaker's perception of what comprised "Big Sky". Each official's response corresponded, generally, to their specific areas of interest:

Murdock: the area south of Karst, north of the Cinnamon Lodge, and west to the county line; Coffman: the Resort Tax District; Madgic: the Big Sky Gallatin Canyon Zoning District boundary; Blackman: depends on the nature of the issue...e.g. school issues are defined by the Ophir boundaries, fire questions are defined by the Fire District boundaries. Fischer: bounded by Mountain Village, Yellowstone Club, Beehive Basin, Summit View, Timber Ridge, Ulrey's Lakes, and Moonlight Basin. Olson: the areas on the Madison County side, from a planning point of view.

Question #2 regarding each county's master plan documents came next.

Mr. Murdock explained that the Gallatin side was governed by the Zoning District's master plan dating to 1996-1997. Madgic added that there were no immediate plans for revision to this document. On the Madison side, Fischer stated there was no comparable document. The "thin, general" county master plan incorporated the Mountain Village development plan, and those of the Madison County subdivisions within Big Sky. A follow-up question was asked, "Are there joint meetings between the counties to consider issues that cross county boundaries?" Murdock stated that there is a past history inter-county discussion on certain issues, but no formal activity in recent times. Fischer noted joint action on a recent Bureau of Mines water issue that successfully moved the issue up the state's priority list. She also said that she and the Gallatin planners have discussed developments on the boundaries, such as Spanish Peaks. She added

that additional opportunities for increased communication between the two Planning departments existed. Coffman mentioned the public safety agreement in place for two Gallatin County deputies funded by Madison County. Murdock explained that formal action by both counties on a common issue requires an intergovernmental agreement. He noted that the Fire District, Water & Sewer District, and Transportation District within the Big Sky area were the result of such agreements.

Question #3 seeking comment on the perception of lack of regulatory enforcement came next. Madgic indicated that the Gallatin Planning Dept. was doing a better job than in the past as demonstrated by the addition of a full-time compliance specialist and the recent significant fine for a violation in Big Sky, but admitted staffing constraints remained. Murdock went on to explain that some issues, such as sewer/septic issues were outside of the Commission's domain. A follow-up question regarding the role of the Zoning Advisory Board in Big Sky was posed. Murdock replied there were inherent conflicts present based on individual member's interests but that the Board's advice was always considered seriously, and most frequently followed. Madgic indicated that the Planning Dept. relies on them to help bring compliance issues to her attention. The question was raised as to whether the BSOA might play a role in compliance efforts. Both Murdock and Madgic thought such joint effort presented an opportunity.

Question #4 came next, seeking suggestions on how communication and involvement could be improved despite the physical distance between the two county seats. Fischer advised that Planning Board notices are sent to the Fire Station and BSOA but she felt communication could be improved. She thought it might be possible for the Planning Board to meet at least once annually in Big Sky. Coffman indicated that that Madison County Commission holds a few meetings each year in Big Sky. Murdock suggested reviving a past cooperative agreement that existed between the BSOA and Gallatin County and to holding a few public meetings each year in Big Sky. Blackman pointed to the Gallatin website as a source of considerable information and offered to come up at least annually for a county budget overview presentation.

Question #5 addressed the revenue and expenditures that come from Big Sky for both counties. Blackman's presentation indicated that the Ophir School District provides roughly 8% of the Gallatin's tax revenue. But he stated that it was not possible to accurately state what was expended in Big Sky because general overhead and administration wasn't allocated. He pointed to public safety, fire, and planning as areas where Big Sky receives significant Gallatin resources and pointed to roads as an area where little return is received. There are no roads or bridges in the Big Sky area maintained by the county. By longstanding agreement, the BSOA receives \$20,000 and West Fork, \$5,000, each year for snow removal. Murdock made the general statement that Big Sky receives proportionately less in services than it funds in taxes. Coffman distributed two documents (Attachments C & D) on Madison County finances but time did not permit a discussion related to Big Sky's share.

Question #6 addressed the subject of a Gallatin County satellite office in Big Sky for planning, inspection, and possibly, other services. Ms. Madgic stated that the Planning Dept. was close to being able to designate a full time planner to Big Sky and that she intended to pursue it in the upcoming budget process. Blackman stated that the budget review process began in mid-April so now is the time to prepare a proposal. He offered any assistance needed for a proposal but indicated that incremental additional funding would be difficult to come by, that locating low cost space was crucial, and financial support from Big Sky would likely be needed. As an adjunct to this question, the Madison County representatives pointed out that no zoning exists there, driven by an aversion top-down zoning. Citizen-initiated efforts will be considered however. They also pointed out that building inspection is legislated by the state and currently only covers electrical service.

Question #7 asked about development impact fees.

Murdock explained that Gallatin does have a legal mechanism for such fees specifically related to roads and fire. Big Sky's Fire District receives the applicable fees back related to fire, but since road fees are not assessed from developers in Big Sky, no revenues are returned. He stated that the County was reviewing their impact fee methodology and changes were likely.

Question # 12 regarding water availability, was posed next as time was running out.

Murdock stated that a Gallatin Valley water district doesn't extend as far south as Big Sky and that essentially water is a state of Montana issue. He also indicated that the cumulative effects of development was not a subject of state oversight and suggested that the last effort to address availability happened with the last building moratorium in the '90s. Fischer referred to her earlier comment regarding the joint Madison-Gallatin water issue brought to the Bureau of Mines. She stated that the cumulative effect of development was a key reason for the effort. Being granted priority status by the Bureau will result in an eventual groundwater characterization study for the area. There is a well being monitored by the Bureau in the Meadow Village.

Question # 11 was answered by Mr. Coffman who stated that aside from the Madison county subdivisions that were part of the Water & Sewer District, each developer was responsible for their own drainage systems.

Question # 10 regarding covenant and code differences among homeowner's associations was posed. Coffman advised that there were no county or state regulations governing this. Murdock stated that in Gallatin County each subdivision was required to have a homeowner's association to cover road, week, and park maintenance issues and that the county maintained a legal interest in these areas within the covenants.

In closing, the speakers were asked for advice or guidance they might provide to both Solution Groups as they proceeded in their missions.

Mr. Murdock's advice was to "tell our story." He said Big Sky gets bad rap because the rest of the county is not aware of the role Big Sky plays in Gallatin's economic engine. He urged us to find a way to communicate that 'we are a community' to the rest of the county. Ms. Fischer advised us that Madison County is beginning a public process to update its growth policy by 2006.

Recognizing the master plan is out of date, she encouraged us to provide input to this process and stated it would be highly useful to Madison County officials. Ms. Madgic encouraged us to pursue the satellite office and to provide the community support and assistance it will require. Mr. Blackman asked us to call or email with any questions he could answer and reiterated his interest in an annual county budget review meeting in Big Sky. Mr. Olson, a Big Sky resident, encouraged us to take the time to talk to county officials on both sides of the line, as we would find them to be interested and responsive in our concerns. He observed that we don't do enough to in this area and encouraged both Solution Groups to keep the conversation going.

The officials were thanked by all for their willing attendance and discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15pm.