

### **La Plata County Budget and Ballot Question Update**

- During a work session on July 14th, Board of County Commissioners Chair Marsha Porter-Norton directed department heads to prepare their budgets with cuts in mind. She noted that while a reduction in workforce is expected, changes will be managed through each department. Finance Director Adam Rogers said departments must cut an additional 15% in expenditures. Despite previous efforts—including eliminating staff increases, reducing vehicle purchases, cutting vacant positions, and imposing a hiring freeze—Rogers said more reductions are needed. Staff clarified reductions in workforce will not include early retirements, furloughs, or mandatory hour reductions.
- Commissioner Matt Salka added that the county is planning on a ballot measure for a one-cent sales tax increase, which would cost residents about \$30 per month and generate an estimated \$18 million annually.

### **RHA Ballot Question Update**

- The [Regional Housing Alliance](#) (RHA) will *not* be putting on the November 2025 ballot a question about a new sales & use tax of .2%. The RHA may move in that direction in 2026, using the money as a funding source for RHA operations and the Catalyst Fund, Revolving loan fund, land acquisition, etc.

### **Durango Fire Protection District Ballot Question Update**

- Durango City Council voted on July 15th to notify the County Clerk that they will be participating in the November 2025 election. Durango Fire Protection District wants to put a question on the ballot, but the specifics of the ballot language will not be decided until August. The City Council will decide whether the question relates to a sales tax or a property tax which would potentially fund a new fire station at Three Springs.

### **La Plata County Land Use Code Update**

- The La Plata County Planning Commission approved amendments to its Land Use Code to address the issue of illegally created parcels. These are properties that were modified by deed rather than through the proper review process and they often lack verified access, water, or sewer service. In that case, they are ineligible for development or building permits. Many owners are unaware their property is illegal until they attempt to build or sell. The amendments aim to simplify the process for legalizing such parcels while ensuring basic standards are met. Key changes include allowing reversion to a prior legal state, clarifying requirements for boundary adjustments and consolidations, and easing criteria for demonstrating access, water, or sewer service.

### **New La Plata County Commissioner**

- The La Plata County Democrats appointed Elizabeth Philbrick on July 1st to fill the District 1 commissioner seat vacated by Clyde Church, who resigned. District 1 includes areas such as Redmesa, Kline, Marvel, Hesperus, Bondad, Hermosa, and Purgatory. Philbrick was sworn in by County Clerk Tiffany Lee on July 2nd. Philbrick has lived in Hesperus since 2017 and co-owns EsoTerra Ciderworks with her husband. She holds a master's degree in landscape architecture from Colorado State University. Her appointment extends through December 2026.

### **Durango Tourism Marketing Manager Update**

- The City of Durango has hired Sarah-Jane Johnson as its new Destination Marketing and Services Manager. She starts on Monday, August 4, and will be leading the city's tourism strategy as part of the Prosperity Office. She brings nearly 20 years of experience in sustainable tourism, economic development, and community engagement. She's worked with organizations like the Colorado Tourism Office, Snowmass Tourism, and the Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Board on strategic planning and destination management. Johnson will report to Prosperity

Officer Mike French and work closely with the newly formed Tourism Commission, as well as other Prosperity Office teams, to help align tourism efforts with housing, economic development, and community events.

**Durango / La Plata County Airport Update**

- Paving was completed in July for the next phase of parking lot expansion at the airport. Approximately 150 new parking spaces are now open in the main lot, along with upgraded ADA parking.

**Durango Affordable Housing Update**

- Residences at Durango officially opened this month, bringing 72 affordable housing units to the city for residents earning 30% to 60% of the area median income. Phase one includes 44 studio units, 27 one-bedrooms, and one two-bedroom. Phase two, expected to finish before the end of the year, will add 28 two-bedroom and 20 three-bedroom units. The project is Colorado's first hotel-to-housing conversion using low-income housing tax credits and is the largest tax credit project in Southwest Colorado.

**LPEA Update**

- La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) has signed a 10-year agreement with Ptarmigan Resources for hydropower generated at Vallecito Dam. Beginning April 2026, this partnership will supply LPEA with 5.8 megawatts of local, renewable energy, which is enough to power about 2,500 homes annually. The new agreement marks LPEA's first direct purchase of hydropower from Vallecito, made possible by greater flexibility in its power sourcing strategy.

**Meetings attended June 26 - July 24**

|                                                  |                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 7/1 - 2:45 pm Durango Council Study Session      | 7/15 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting |
| 7/1 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting       | 7/16 - 8:30 BOCC Discussion Time            |
| 7/3 - 1 pm Energy Council meeting with Lynn Hyde | 7/17 - 1:30 pm RHA Meeting                  |
| 7/8 - 8 am Alliance Investor Meeting             | 7/17 - 6 pm Joint Planning Commission       |
| 7/8 - 10 am BOCC Meeting                         | 7/22 - 10 am BOCC Meeting                   |
| 7/9 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time               | 7/22 - 5 pm Downtown Next Steps Meeting     |
| 7/10 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission              | 7/23 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time         |
| 7/14 - 12:30 pm BOCC Work Session                | 7/24 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission         |