

**Colorado House District 59 Candidate**

- Naomi Riess, a longtime community advocate and business professional, has announced her candidacy for Colorado House District 59 as a Republican in the 2026 election. The seat is currently held by Democrat Katie Stewart. Riess says her priorities include easing housing costs by cutting red tape, protecting water resources, keeping rural healthcare accessible, supporting small businesses and agriculture, and promoting policies that strengthen families and local economies. Former candidate and Ignacio Mayor Clark Craig has endorsed her campaign. Learn more at [riessforcolorado.com](https://riessforcolorado.com)

**La Plata County Budget Update**

- County staff has prepared a draft budget to address structural deficits. The draft budget assumes the worst case scenario - that is, if the proposed 1% sales tax increase on the ballot doesn't pass in November. The proposed budget trims spending from \$136 million this year to \$119 million, while projected revenue is up by less than 1%. Some revenue sources are showing decline, such as severance tax and highway user tax funds, while sales tax is projected to stay flat. Property tax is expected to rise slightly.
- To make ends meet, the county is looking at cuts across almost every department with staff reductions, deferred infrastructure projects, reduced discretionary services, etc., plus big reductions in public works and moderate cuts in health, human services, and general government.
- The draft is expected to be revised several times before it is adopted mid-December.

**La Plata County Finance Update**

- Sales tax collections for July showed an increase of \$112,247 or 4.35% in comparison to the same period in 2024. Year to date sales tax shows an increase of \$413,387 or 4.05% over 2024.
- Lodger's tax collections are earned Quarterly; Quarter 2 Lodgers tax increase of \$7,333 or 3.83% in comparison to Quarter 2, 2024. Year to date Lodgers tax shows an increase of \$23,348 or 5.16% over 2024.
- Highway User's tax payments for July 2025 have decreased by \$-4,224 or -1.52% compared to the same period in 2024. Year to date Highway User's tax shows an increase of \$75,404 or 4.11% over 2024.
- Revenues are currently 4.3% under budget and expenditures are 31.6% under budget as of July 2025.

**La Plata County Community Development Department Update**

- The Community Development Department gave a progress update to the Board of County Commissioners on September 3. They are finding that building permits with a certificate of occupancy are moving faster through the system - now down to about 51 days. Planning permits take quite a bit longer, but the department has cut down pre-application timelines and greatly improved the amount of time from complete application compliance to conclusion.

**LPC Building and Fire Codes**

- La Plata County is looking at adopting new building and fire codes. Current codes are from 2015 and the new ones would be 2024. No word yet on how this might affect the cost of building, but when this comes to the Board formally, that information will be included.

**Durango Land Use Code**

- Durango City Council approved updates to the Land Use & Development Code on September 16th.

- *Parking* - Updates to how many parking spaces new projects need. They expanded a rule that lets certain businesses change their use without adding more parking if they're in downtown, MidTown URA or Central Business District.
- *Electric Vehicles & Bike Parking* – In accordance with state law, new construction will need to be ready for electric car charging and rooftop solar. They improved bike parking.
- *Other* - The city also raised the required building height for homes in flood areas, clarified definitions and matched new state building codes.

### **Regional Housing Alliance (RHA) Update**

- La Plata County Commissioner Marsha Porter Norton said on September 10th that the RHA, which recently held a strategic retreat, is discerning its future. The RHA is currently made up of Ignacio, Bayfield, Durango and La Plata County. Porter Norton emphasized that the RHA is not falling apart, but Durango is considering leaving the organization and is expected to make a decision about that in October.

### **Teacher Housing Update**

- In a bold move to address the district's recruitment and housing challenges, Durango School District announced on Sept. 23rd that it plans to purchase the 35-unit Lightner Creek Apartments for \$10 million. The purchase aims to provide affordable rental housing for educators and staff as early as fall 2026. Low rental payments for educators will likely start in the \$700-800 per month range for a studio apartment.

### **Development Projects**

- The Durango Community Development Commission (CDC) approved a subdivision within Three Springs that will result in four parcels, including one for the future Durango School District's elementary school. The actual development for the school will be considered in the future. The other parcels in the subdivision are for open space and future residential development. The remainder of the property contains Three Springs Village Two along with a dedicated right-of-way for the Durango's north extension of Wilson Gulch Drive.
- The CDC also approved the conditional use permit for Coyote Park Self Storage on 1.7 acres along South Camino del Rio.
- The CDC approved the major site plan and recommended approval for the preliminary subdivision for the 32nd Street Collective. The Collective is proposing a mixed residential development with eight townhomes and multiplex with four apartments on 32nd Street east of Holly Ave. The preliminary subdivision for the project still requires City Council approval.

### **Meetings attended August 28 - September 25**

|                                             |                                              |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 8/28 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission         | 9/11 - 8 am Alliance Summit                  |
| 9/2 - 8 am Mornings at El Moro              | 9/16 - 1 pm BOCC Budget Presentation         |
| 9/3 - 8 am Forums for Progress              | 9/16 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting  |
| 9/3 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time          | 9/17 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time          |
| 9/3 - 2:45 pm Durango Council Study Session | 9/18 - 6 pm Joint Planning Commission        |
| 9/3 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting  | 9/20 - 5 pm Durango Community Dev Commission |
| 9/9 - 10 am BOCC Business Meeting           | 9/23 - 10 am BOCC Meeting                    |
| 9/9 - 6 pm State of the Town of Silverton   | 9/24 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time          |
| 9/10 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time         | 9/25 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission          |