



To: Honorable Mayor Clark and Ridgway Town Council
From: Preston Neill, Town Manager
Date: February 3, 2025
RE: Town Manager’s Report

INTRODUCTION

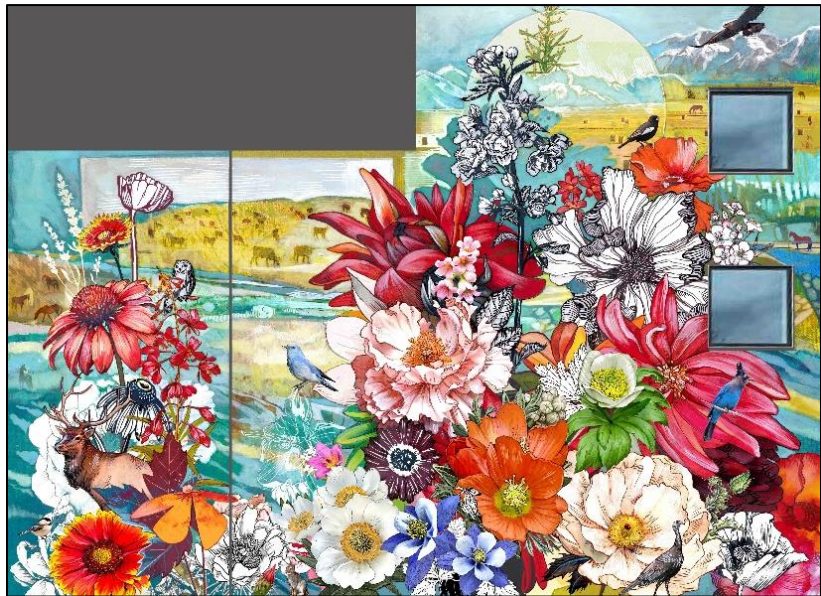
This monthly report serves as an update to the Town Council and community members on key projects, activities, and community issues.

GRANULAR ACTIVATED CARBON PROJECT UPDATE

Filter Tech Systems will be on site at the Water Treatment Plant in the next few days for the final system start up. Once the system comes online, the chlorine dioxide machine (color, taste, and odor pretreatment) will be removed from our water treatment process. We will also put out information through the Town’s communication channels about this change in the water treatment process.

RIDGWAY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH MURAL ON ARTSPACE RIDGWAY SPACE TO CREATE BUILDING

The Town of Ridgway is thrilled to announce an exciting new addition to its cultural landscape: a vibrant mural by professional muralist Yulia Avgustinovich. This public art piece, set to adorn the southeast corner walls of the Artspace Ridgway Space to Create Building, reflects the town's unique history, natural beauty, and creative spirit.



Avgustinovich, whose work transforms spaces and fosters community connections, spent six years in Colorado and drew inspiration from Ridgway’s rich heritage and stunning surroundings. The mural features a dynamic composition of blooming flowers—symbolizing hope and renewal—alongside depictions of grazing cattle and horses as well as local wildlife, such as wild turkeys, elk, and an eagle soaring above. Avgustinovich describes the mural this way, “The primary theme of the mural is the symbolism of blooming flowers—representing hope, renewal,



and the vibrancy of life. Flowers such as peonies, dahlias, blue Columbine flowers, White Crested Prickly poppy, Cutleaf Anemone, Echinocereus, Globe flower, Spreading Dogbane, Cowboy's delight reflect the beauty and seasonal life found in Ridgway's gardens and natural environment. These floral elements are interwoven with local livestock like grazing cattle and horses, along with wild turkeys, elk, a playful bunny, and an eagle soaring above. The mural's collage-like style brings these pieces together into a cohesive and harmonious composition that tells a story of nature's resilience and the deep connection between the land and its people."

The artist's design was selected through a rigorous and competitive process, following a formal Request for Proposals seeking submissions from experienced artists both local and nationwide. Through the proposal requirements, interested artists were asked to submit a rough draft of the intended artwork. An ad hoc committee was assembled, made up of local artists and Town and Artspace representatives. The committee collectively and collaboratively reviewed all 17 submitted proposals and interviewed the final candidates. Ultimately, the committee was unanimously impressed with Yulia's proposal, the artistic quality of her previous work and her demonstrated success executing murals of similar size and scope across Colorado and beyond.

Throughout the process, the committee was focused on having a final selection with strong visual impact, representing the rich natural beauty that surrounds and encompasses the Town of Ridgway. Subsequent to the committee's selection, Artspace and the Ridgway Town Council gave their thumbs up to proceed with Avgustinovich's design.

This project is funded with a grant from the Department of Local Affairs/Colorado Main Street Program via the Town of Ridgway's FUSE Creative Main Street Program, and a grant from the Western Colorado Community Foundation: Dave and Mary Wood Fund. It will be the largest public art installation in Ouray County. Painting is scheduled to begin approximately May 25, 2025, with an anticipated completion by mid-June 2025.

There will be opportunities for residents to participate in painting the mural with Yulia between May 28th and May 31st. A celebration is being planned for June 13th. The community is invited to celebrate this creative milestone, which will serve as a lasting testament to Ridgway's shared values and vibrant spirit.

WASTEWATER TESTING UPDATE

In coordination with Ouray County Public Health, the Town has resumed submitting wastewater samples to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The first lab results were available on January 28th and no significant amounts of COVID-19, Flu or RSV virus particles were detected. CDPHE has promised to have a shareable data dashboard for Ouray County available soon!



RETIREMENT PARTY!

A retirement party to thank and recognize Mike Gill and Karen Christian for their years of service to the Town of Ridgway will be held on Saturday, February 22nd at the Lazy Dog Saloon. Please reach out to Pam Kraft for more information.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT HIRED

I am happy to announce that the Town has hired Julie Huun to fill the role of administrative assistant. Julie comes to the Town with a plethora of administrative experience and will provide varying levels of administrative support and customer service to the Town Clerk's Office. Welcome, Julie!

TOWN HIRING FOR PUBLIC WORKS MAINTENANCE OPERATOR I, II, OR III POSITION

The Town of Ridgway is seeking to fill the position of Public Works Maintenance Operator I, II, or III. This is a full-time, non-exempt position with an excellent benefit package. For more information, or to apply, visit <https://townofridgway.colorado.gov/resources/job-opportunities>.

NOTICE AND CALL FOR CANDIDATES TO RIDGWAY TOWN COUNCIL

Notice is hereby given that the Town of Ridgway will hold a regular municipal election on Tuesday, April 1, 2025 at which time three Councilmember seats will become vacant for two year terms.

The nomination period began on Monday, January 27, 2025 and closes at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 14, 2025.

Candidates must be registered voters in the State of Colorado and have resided within the Town limits for twelve consecutive months immediately preceding the date of election, and on or before this date must be 18 years of age or older.

Please contact the Town Clerk with any questions, or to receive a nomination packet, email: pkraft@town.ridgway.co.us; or phone 626-5308, Ext. 211.

NOTICE OF VACANCY ON THE SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD

Notice is hereby given that an opening exists on the Town of Ridgway Sustainability Advisory Board. Members must be residents of Ouray County and be able to attend a night meeting once per month. To apply please, email a letter of interest to Preston Neill, Town Manager, at pneill@town.ridgway.co.us. The submittal deadline is 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 3, 2025.

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING DATE CHANGE

The Planning Commission will now meet on the third Wednesday of every month. Their next meeting will be on Wednesday, February 19th.



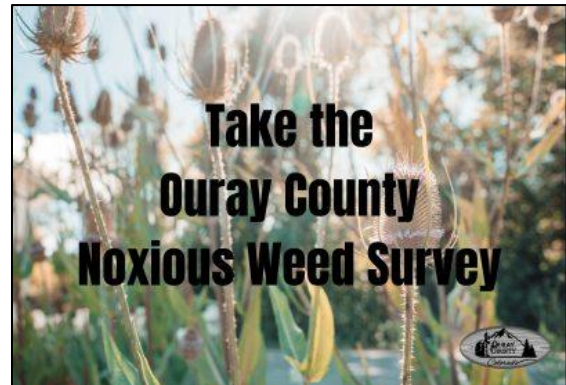
ANNUAL CLEANUP DAY EVENT

The Town will hold the annual Cleanup Day event on Saturday, April 26th in the lot behind the Ridgway Public Library on Railroad Street. The Town will provide dumpsters and residents are encouraged to bring their refuse to the site between 8:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

OURAY COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED SURVEY AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

Ouray County Vegetation Management is seeking community input regarding noxious weeds in Ouray County and mitigation services provided. Take a few minutes to complete the survey at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf9KIUqzA63maQ5MAbk9ki_hKKq7-yyeBPP_vYSC-09t5NI-w/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0.

The mission of Ouray County Vegetation Management is to halt the degradation of our environment by implementing an Integrated Weed Management Plan with the goal of preventing the introduction of new invaders, early recognition of those plants that do arrive, and stopping the spread of common noxious weeds already present within Ouray County. The program aims to reduce the effects of noxious weeds throughout Ouray County, and to promote sustainable landscapes through long term weed management and control. Ouray County Vegetation Management provides educational and technical assistance to landowners and public agencies to assist in finding the best control methods at each site.



COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN MEETING

On Tuesday, February 18th, Ouray County Emergency Management will hold the next Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) meeting. As a reminder, the CWPP assists the county and local fire districts in gathering resources, evaluating wildfire risk, describing local capabilities, and identifying strategies and actions to reduce overall vulnerability to wildfire events. Fire districts that participate in the plan will be eligible to apply for federal and state cost-share funds for vegetative fuels reduction and other hazard mitigation strategies.

During this meeting, we will primarily discuss potential fuel projects and actions to address wildfire risk. We will also discuss fire district capabilities, goals and objectives, and the final WUI map. This meeting can be attended in person or virtually online.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan Meeting

Tuesday, February 18th from 10:00 am-Noon

Location: Ridgway Town Hall, 201 N Railroad St, Ridgway, CO 81432

Or join online at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81645821656>.



CHANGES AHEAD FOR BUSTANG OURTIDER’S WESTERN SLOPE ROUTES

The Colorado Department of Transportation's Bustang Outrider is updating its service schedule in February, including initiating a second daily round trip on its Crested Butte to Denver route. Adding another trip will provide passengers with another option on Outrider’s busiest route.

Beginning February 1, 2025 the Crested Butte to Denver schedule is as follows:

- Eastbound
Departs Crested Butte at 5:15 a.m. Arrives Denver Union Station at 11:10 a.m.
Departs Crested Butte at 1:15 p.m. Arrives Denver Union Station at 7 p.m.
- Westbound
Departs Denver Union Station at 6:30 a.m. Arrives Crested Butte at 12:30 p.m.
Departs Denver Union Station at 1:45 p.m. Arrives Crested Butte at 7:35 p.m.

Another service change is the discontinuation of the Telluride—Grand Junction route due to low passenger usage. However, daily service continues along the same route via the Durango—Grand Junction line, which stops in the same cities and towns previously served by the Telluride—Grand Junction route.

Additionally, the San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation is starting new transit service between Montrose and Telluride on February 17, 2025. SMART will be providing information on specific stops in the near future. The route will run Monday thru Friday.

For more information about these upcoming changes or other Bustang and Bustang Outrider routes, please visit www.ridebustang.org.

COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Colorado Municipal League (CML) is advocating for policies that directly impact local governments and address affordability, sustainability, taxation, and criminal justice. Recognizing the challenges ahead, CML has outlined the following legislative priorities:

HOUSING

- **Support:** State incentives for affordable housing development and strategic planning assistance.
- Reforms to construction defects litigation to increase housing availability.
- **Oppose:** State preemption of local zoning and land-use authority and interference with home rule powers.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- **Support:** Tools to address repeat offenders and ensure access to counsel for those facing jail sentences.
- **Oppose:** Mandates on police and court operations, expanded liability caps, and requirements aligning municipal sentencing with state court limits.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Support:** Intergovernmental cooperation on land use and policies promoting development within existing municipalities.
- **Oppose:** Restrictions on municipal annexation authority and the creation of new municipalities in service areas of existing ones.

TAXATION

- **Support:** Extending excise taxing authority to statutory municipalities and voter-approved vacancy taxes to address funding needs.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Support:** State investment in transportation infrastructure and improvements to public transit systems.
- **Oppose:** Diversions from the Highway Users Tax Fund and preemption of municipal authority over local transportation planning.

UNFUNDED MANDATES

- **Oppose:** Statutes that impose additional fiscal burdens on municipalities without adequate funding, violating the state's unfunded mandate statute and TABOR provisions.

STATE BUDGET

- **Monitor:** JBC's recommendations to ensure local funding is preserved and fiscal burdens are not shifted to municipalities.
- **Oppose:** Sweeping severance tax revenues into the state's general fund, threatening critical local services.

MUNICIPAL LIABILITY

- **Oppose:** Expanding liability for municipalities through increased private rights of action, removal of damage caps, or changes to remedies provisions.

As the session progresses, CML will actively engage with legislators, provide testimony on key bills, and advocate for policies that strengthen local governance and enhance community well-being. Visit cml.org to review all of [CML's 2025 Legislative Priorities](#).



RED MOUNTAIN ELECTRICAL RELIABILITY AND BROADBAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

From Alex Shelley, SMPA Communications Executive:

As spring approaches, we anticipate favorable conditions for infrastructure maintenance on Red Mountain Pass. Last year, project phase 2, which was the re-construction of 4.5 miles of 44kV transmission line between the Idarado and Red Mountain electrical substations was completed. All original line / structures in this section were replaced with new, environmentally-tailored structures that are fewer in number. Thanks to PAR Electric and ESC Engineering for the work, and thank you—community stakeholders—for your partnership.

This coming spring, we are planning the reconstruction of the Red Mountain line from the Red Mountain substation to the Alpine Loop turnoff (South of Ruby Walls). This work will probably affect travel on Highway 550. There will likely be a need for traffic holds in early summer and tentative block closures in early fall, pending permit requirements.

The dates of this work remain subject to Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) approval, weather conditions, and emergencies. CDOT has not yet issued a permit, so the schedule is not yet set.

One major consideration is the tourist season and economic activity for communities connected by Highway 550. In the past, community stakeholders have expressed desire for the completion of full closures before Memorial Day (May 30) to minimize impacts on tourism and economic activity. As we progress with permitting talks, this remains a high priority.

Public and stakeholder communications about this work are also critical. We intend to follow this communication with updates as we progress in the planning process. When it comes time for public communications, SMPA will invite collaboration with Public Information Officers and local outlets to inform the public. We understand the importance of notifying stakeholders at least two weeks in advance of any closures and will share finalized dates once approved by CDOT.

It is important to remember the overriding purpose behind the temporary impacts of this work. The Red Mountain electrical transmission power line has reached its functional end-of-life and needs to be re-built in order to continue to serve as backup power source for consumers in the communities of Ouray County. A new line, engineered with current technologies and design practices will be safer and more practical to maintain in the difficult mountain terrain.

Additionally, the new structures are being strung with fiber optic cable, expanding the local fiber optic network and creating new options and pathways for local broadband expansion.

If you have any questions or feedback, please reply to this email or call me at 970-209-5593.



More information about the Red Mountain Electrical Reliability and Broadband Improvement Project is here. <https://www.smpa.com/red-mountain-electrical-reliability-and-broadband-improvement-project>

Together, we can build a safer and more resilient system for our members and communities.

OURAY COUNTY ALERTS

Ouray County Alerts is used to communicate critical public safety topics including evacuations, wildfire, flooding, and other emergency notifications. All residents, visitors, and family members living in Ouray County are encouraged to sign up for alerts. You can register through the [registration portal](#).

During the registration process, you can choose the types of alerts you receive and how to receive them, including landline phone, cell phone, text/SMS message, and email. Please be sure to enter your physical address so that you will receive geo-targeted (location based) messages. If you do not enter a physical address, you risk missing critical messages.



PLANNING UPDATE

From Angie Kemp, Senior Planner:

Ouray County Master Plan

On January 8th the Ouray County Planning Commission formally approved the revised 2025 Ouray County Master Plan. The Master Plan document is now going through final proofing and formatting by County staff and their consultant, KLJ Engineering. Once the document is complete and the final hearing minutes and resolution have been signed, the revised Plan will be posted and made available to the public. Project website: <https://klj.mysocialpinpoint.com/ouray-co>

Short Term Rentals

At the January 7th meeting of the Planning Commission, the administration of licenses for Short-term rentals and enforcement of unlicensed short-term rentals was discussed alongside proposed updates to the Ridgway Municipal Code Sections 7-4-6 (N) and 8-4 regarding short-term rental regulations and licensing. Subsequent research found that all of the active listings for Short-term rental within the Town of Ridgway were licensed. This review considered all listings on the known rental sites; Airbnb, VRBO, Hometogo, Evolve Rentals, and Vacation Rental Collective. The Town is working on reminding Short-term rental license holders that License numbers must be prominently displayed in any advertisement of the rental unit, which will make monitoring the listings more efficient for the Town.



UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- **Youth Advisory Council Meeting** – February 5, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. at Town Hall
- **Town Council Regular Meeting** – February 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **FUSE Creative Main Street Committee Meeting** – February 18, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Decker Community Room and virtually via Zoom
- **Planning Commission Meeting** – February 19, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting** – March 4, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Town Council Regular Meeting** – March 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom

JOKE OF THE DAY

My wife is mad at me because she said I never buy her flowers.

I honestly didn't even know she sold flowers.