



**To:** Honorable Mayor Clark and Ridgway Town Council  
**From:** Preston Neill, Town Manager  
**Date:** September 8, 2024  
**RE: Town Manager's Report**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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

### **A MESSAGE ABOUT WANDA TAYLOR**

**From John I. Clark, Ridgway Mayor:**

We are deeply saddened by the sudden loss of longtime Town employee and social anchor of our community, Wanda Taylor. Wanda was a jewel in Ridgway's crown, and she will be sorely missed. During her many years at Town Hall, she was a constant ray of sunshine; forever positive and upbeat. She could always be counted on for a kind word, and yet was as humble as could be when it came to anyone singing her praises. Her love of music was paramount. Many of us will always treasure the CDs she would share every year at Christmas, when she'd put together another masterful playlist of carols and holiday tunes from all genres. She truly was Ridgway's ambassador to the world.



Her daughters have shared that there will be a celebration of her life at a later date. In the meantime, if you'd like to donate to help with medical expenses as well as the formation of a small fund to benefit her grandkids, please visit this link: <https://gofund.me/eb24a2d6>

### **PAT O'LEARY'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE**

Come one and all!

Celebrate the legacy and life of Pat O'Leary

September 14, 2024

- 4pm – 6pm: Clinton Street block party & pot luck





- 6pm – 8pm: Live Irish music with Socks in the Frying Pan in The Sherbino

If you can't join but would like to donate in Pat's memory, visit the "contribute" page at [sherbino.org](http://sherbino.org).

### **LOSS AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**From Susan Lacy, Ridgway School District Superintendent (9/3/2024):**

I'm writing this evening to share sad news. Our beloved elementary principal, Ms. Heidi Hanssen, passed away yesterday morning after a long illness with cancer. She was surrounded by the love of friends and family in her final moments. We are deeply grateful for the three years of dedicated leadership, courage, and compassion that Ms. Hanssen brought to our school. We will miss her dearly. As we come to terms with this loss, our thoughts are with her family and loved ones.



This loss is sure to raise many emotions, concerns, and questions for our entire school community, especially our students. We are working closely with HopeWest and support services. The elementary schedule will be adjusted throughout the day tomorrow to best support our elementary students and staff. Our secondary school Week Without Walls will continue as scheduled tomorrow morning. Our school start and end times and bus services remain the same as always.

We will send home some simple resources on supporting children and grief tomorrow. Part of what makes our community special is the support that we provide for each other in times like this. Please care for yourselves and each other.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely,  
Susan Lacy, Superintendent

### **UPDATE ON BEAVER CREEK DIVERSION FAILURE**

On the morning of 8/12/24, Town staff made a routine check of the Beaver Creek diversion and found that a rain event over the weekend, likely on Sunday afternoon had severely impacted Beaver Creek above the Town's diversion point. In a normal rain event, the increased flows in Beaver Creek washes out the Town's push up diversion of the creek and the high flows remain in Beaver Creek. For the first time in the 40 plus years current town staff has observed, the Creek



was significantly altered by the weather event washing out the land between the two braids of the Creek, eroded the side banks and undercut the river so that the river at the diversion location appears to be below the elevation of grizzly that screens the water from the diversion before it goes into the Ridgway Ditch. In addition, the event filled the Ridgway Ditch with a mud slurry from bank to bank to the top of the Ditch for 100's of feet. The grizzly, diversion trough and the Ridgway Ditch are filled with mud, rocks and gravel.

Part of the Town's diversion system includes a pipe that catches the flow from some springs on the opposite side of Beaver Creek. It has been transported to the Ridgway Ditch via a pipe suspended over Beaver Creek and into the Ridgway Ditch. It was found in pieces on the morning of 8/13/2024.

In looking upstream, it appears that something created a dam in the Creek and the Creek backed up for a period of time and then broke through causing an extraordinary slug of water and mud to be released to the Creek eroding the banks and widening the Creek as well as cutting the Creek and modifying the configuration/how the Creek flows. The river channel had previously been held in place in a relatively narrow channel in part by vegetation along the stream banks that washes away during the event over the weekend.

Restoring the diversion for long-term performance will be a very difficult and expensive task. The Creek is no longer aligned with the Ridgway Ditch. The Creek is undercut and at a lower elevation. The Creek is also much wider than it was previously. In addition, the new stream banks are unstable. The trees at the top edge of the bank in many cases have parts of their root systems exposed. Simply placing material to put the Creek back as it was would take years to stabilize. It is likely that the long-term fix for diversion will need to be something that takes into account extreme weather events and that can handle the normal fluctuations, flow, and gravel loads.

Right now, the Town is unable to divert water from Beaver Creek, the Town's primary water source, into the Ridgway Ditch. Given the gravity of the situation, the Town is in need of assistance with the following items:

- Engineering and hydrological support for the development of a resilient design for long-term diversion from Beaver Creek.
- Construction of the identified solution.
- Project inspection and management.

Over the last several weeks, staff has given about a dozen tours of the Beaver Creek diversion. Representatives of the following agencies have visited the site:

- Ouray County Emergency Management
- Ouray County Public Health Agency
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment



- Colorado Department of Local Affairs
- Colorado Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Wright Water Engineers, Inc.

The Town's needs related to this issue have been divided into the three following categories:

**1. Short-term Needs: Goal – Reestablish Spring flow into Ridgway Ditch**

- Land surveyor – Define the current topography and land ownership.
- Legal and technical – Obtain any permits needed for the work
- Earth moving contractor (or town staff and equipment) – Clean mud from the grizzly to where it thins out in Ridgway Ditch and/or installation of HDPE pipe on the ground to get spring flow into Ridgway Ditch.
- Trucking Contractor – Disposal of the mud.

**2. Mid-Term Needs: Goal Obtain some flow from Beaver Creek**

- Engineering – Define a route and develop design documents to pipe some of Beaver Creek back into the Ridgway Ditch.
- Engineering and legal assistance – Obtain required permits and easements.
- Engineering – Project inspection and management.
- Construction contractor – Constructing restrained joint pipeline mostly on the surface from upstream of the old diversion to the grizzly.

**3. Long-Term Needs: Goal – Restore full flow from Beaver Creek**

- Engineering and Hydrological support for resilient design for long term diversion from Beaver Creek.
- Legal and Engineering – Secure permanent legal access along all the ditch pipe, and access routes.
- Construction contractor – Construction of identified solution.
- Engineering – Project inspection and management.

Town staff has begun working towards meeting the identified short-term items. The aim is to reestablish the spring flow into the Ridgway Ditch within the next week to 10 days.

Town staff is working with the CWCB to learn more about their Emergency Loan Program and the NRCS to learn more about the assistance they can provide through their Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The Town has already formally requested assistance through the EWP Program.



Over the next few weeks, it will be imperative for us to develop a concept/preliminary design for a long-term diversion from Beaver Creek. From there, we will need a construction cost estimate to inform any loans or grants we may be eligible for. Then we can proceed with a competitive solicitation process to secure a contractor to complete the scope of work next spring.

### **UPDATE ON ARTSPACE RIDGWAY SPACE TO CREATE BUILDING PUBLIC ART COMPONENT**

Back in June, the Town of Ridgway issued a Request for Proposal (“RFP”) seeking proposals from experienced artists for design and implementation services for a mural on an exterior wall of the Space to Create Building. The large exterior wall on the east side of the Space to Create Building has been left blank so that public art can be installed. In a community engagement scope of work that took place a few years ago, Artspace partnered with Ridgway FUSE to present the Artspace Ridgway Space to Create Public Art Component and seek public input. Artspace and FUSE staff heard from community members that it will be the largest piece of public art in Ouray County, and the art installation should reflect Ridgway’s shared community values and identity.

Earlier this year, Town staff worked closely with Artspace staff to develop a process to bring this project to fruition and to develop the RFP. Proposals were due by 10:00 a.m. on Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, all submitted proposals were shared with members of an Ad Hoc Committee for individual review. A meeting for the Ad Hoc Committee to collectively review proposals and pick artists to interview is scheduled for Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. Interviews of artists are tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **OURAY COUNTY DRAFT MASTER PLAN**

The draft Ouray County Master Plan has been released to the public for a 30-day review and comment period preceding a September 24 BOCC/ Planning Commission work session (1:30pm, 4-H Event Center). Following the work session the Planning Commission will conduct at least three additional work sessions in October and November with a planned public hearing and final adoption in January of 2025. Public comment is welcome throughout the entire process, up to and including the final public hearing. The draft Ouray County Master Plan can be viewed [HERE](#).

### **US550 PACOCHUPUK SOUTH MOBILITY AND BILLY CREEK SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**

- Budget: \$14 million
- Funding Type: SUR/SB-267
- Awarded: FNF Construction, Inc.

This project is located on US 550 in Ouray County, between approximately MP 103.8 and 117, just north of the Ridgway State Park entrance. The scope of work includes limited shoulder widening, repairing existing deer fencing and connecting new deer fencing to the existing at MP 212.5. A large animal underpass is being constructed at Billy Creek, between MP 114 and 115. HMA patching is taking place between Pacochupuk campground and the CR 8 intersection and passing lanes are being added. **This project began on March 25, 2024, and has an estimated completion date in November 2024.**





### **BUILDING AN AFFORDABLE FUTURE**

The Office of Economic Development and International Trade recently published an impact story about Space to Create Colorado that highlighted Ridgway Space to Create. Check it out [HERE!](#)

### **APPLICATION MATERIALS AVAILABLE FOR 2025 TOWN OF RIDGWAY COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM**

The Town of Ridgway is now accepting applications for the 2025 Town of Ridgway Community Grant Program. The Town welcomes applications from non-profit organizations seeking funding for programs, projects, services or activities that support the Town’s community values and goals found within the Town of Ridgway Master Plan. The application materials, which include application submission requirements, review criteria and the application schedule, are available at <https://townofridgway.colorado.gov/town-of-ridgway-community-grant-program>. Applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, contact Preston Neill, Town Manager, at 970-626-5308, ext. 212 or [pneill@town.ridgway.co.us](mailto:pneill@town.ridgway.co.us).

### **CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR 2024-2025 YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The Town of Ridgway is accepting applications from area youth for appointment to the 2024-2025 Town of Ridgway Youth Advisory Council. The application materials, which include application submittal requirements and eligibility criteria, are available [HERE](#). Applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>.

For questions, contact Preston Neill, Town Manager, at 970-318-0081 or [pneill@town.ridgway.co.us](mailto:pneill@town.ridgway.co.us).

### **COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT 2024 ANNUAL WATER SEMINAR**

As temperatures rise and populations grow, the strain on our water systems becomes more pronounced. Nowhere is this more evident than in the communities of the West Slope, the headwaters of the Colorado River. Since the early 2000’s, unpredictable snowpack and

earlier, hotter summers have stressed water supplies, diminished environmental water quality, and impacted local economies that depend on healthy rivers for agriculture and recreation.





While the threats are real and immediate, there are also tremendous opportunities. We have knowledge, tools, and funding available today that no other generation has seen. However, these incredible resources still require innovative solutions and decisive leadership to make a significant impact.

Today's decision-makers will answer to all future generations who depend on the Colorado River and its tributaries.

Join us on September 20 for the Colorado River District's Annual Water Seminar in Grand Junction to learn what is being done to meet this historic moment and leverage resources at the local, state, and regional levels to secure our water future.

Expert speakers and panelists will bring their unique perspectives to help answer questions like:

- How can protecting the historic Shoshone water rights preserve the long-term health of the Colorado River?
- How are decision-makers today taking responsibility for the needs of the next generation?
- What can we learn from past mistakes when it comes to managing this precious resource?
- How are agricultural producers facing the reality of a hotter drier future?
- What role does state and federal funding play in realizing these solutions and helping water users throughout the state and the basin?
- How can small, local, projects make a big difference?

To check out the agenda or to register, click [HERE](#).

### **RIDGWAY FILM CLUB IS BACK**

2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays, 8pm, The Decker Room,  
675 Clinton St.

*Unless otherwise advertised, Film Club meets at 8pm.*

Dates & Themes:

- September 13th & 27th – Which side are you on?
- October 11th & 25th – Experiments in horror
- November 8th – Post-Western  
Dec. TBA

\$10 for drop-in, \$50 for a season pass.

Sign up for our email list! Movie titles

announced Monday before each screening: <https://forms.gle/TXrbCjtyL2RimhB8A>





Can't wait to see you there :)

<https://ridgwayfilmclub.wordpress.com/>

## **SEPTEMBER 6, 2024, STATEHOUSE REPORT**

**From Kevin Bommer, CML Executive Director:**

### **Special session results in a property tax deal**

The special session ended on Aug. 29 with the passage of HB24B-1001, which establishes additional cuts in property taxes beyond those provided by SB24-233. CML's position was "amend." In particular, CML testified that the decoupling of school property taxes from all other local governments should be reversed, as well as to amendments that would make the required form of the question for a local government to exceed the cap described below more transparent. The bill was signed by the Governor on Sept. 4, following the withdrawal of Initiatives 50 and 108 earlier in the day. The proponents of Initiatives 50 and 108 have promised that so long as the terms of the bill remain in place, neither they nor their donors will pursue any ballot measures to reduce assessment rates or further cap revenue growth for six years. However, there is no such restriction on other groups.

HB24B-1001 establishes a new local government revenue limit, as well as new assessment rates and value reductions for both residential and non-residential property. Like SB24-233, schools are decoupled from all other local governments in that schools have a higher residential assessment rate than other local governments. Unlike SB24-233, schools will be subject to a new property tax revenue limit, however, it is more generous than the revenue limit for other local governments. The details provided below only address non-school local government changes.

The new local government revenue limit starts in the 2025 property tax year (PTY) and replaces the limit established in SB24-233. However, as in SB24-233, the limit does not apply to home rule municipalities or to municipalities with property tax revenue still subject to TABOR or the existing statutory 5.5% limit. Moreover, local governments that are subject to the limit can still ask voters to waive the limit for one year, multiple years, or all future years.

The new local government revenue limit is 10.5% for the two-year property tax reassessment cycle. The growth is calculated from whichever property tax year in a previous assessment cycle had the greatest revenue collection. If the local government does not utilize the full 10.5% increase for the reassessment cycle, it can be carried over for one reassessment period. The revenue limit excludes revenue from the following sources:

- New construction
- Changes in law for property tax classification
- Annexation or inclusion of additional land
- Revenue from the expiration of a TIF





- Previously omitted property
- Revenue abated or refunded
- Revenue attributable to previously exempt property that becomes taxable
- Revenue from oil and gas
- Revenue to provide for the payment of bonds or other contractual obligation approved by voters
- Revenue attributable to specific ownership tax
- Revenue expended for declared disasters
- Revenue from new mills approved by voters on or after Nov. 5, 2024

HB24B-1001, does not make any changes to the residential assessment rate for the 2024 PTY, which is 6.7% with a \$55,000 exemption from the actual value. Below are details showing the residential assessment rate for the 2025 PTY and beyond as compared to the rates in SB24-233.

#### Residential valuation:

- 2025 PTY
  - SB24-233: 6.4%
  - HB24B-1001: If statewide actual value change is more than 5%, the assessment rate is 6.15%; If statewide actual value change is less than or equal to 5%, the assessment rate is 6.25%
- 2026 PTY and beyond
  - SB24-233: 6.95% with a value reduction of the lesser of 10% of the actual value or \$70,000, indexed to inflation
  - HB24B-1001: If statewide actual value change is more than 5%, the assessment rate is 6.7%; If statewide actual value change is less than or equal to 5%, the assessment rate is 6.8%

HB24B-1001 made a slight modification to non-residential assessment rates for the 2024 PTY, which was simply to extend the 27.9% assessment rate and \$30,000 value reduction to lodging properties. Below are details showing the non-residential assessment rates for the 2025 PTY and beyond as compared to the rates in SB24-233.

#### Non-residential valuation:

- 2025 PTY
  - SB24-233: 27% for improved commercial & ag; 29% for all other
  - HB24B:1001 - 27%
- 2026 PTY
  - SB24-233: 25% for improved commercial & ag; 29% for all other
  - HB24B: 1001 - 25% for improved commercial & ag; 26% for all other



- 2027 PTY and beyond
  - SB24-233: 25% for improved commercial & ag; 29% for all other
  - HB24B-1001: 25%

HB24B-1001 provides limited backfill for non-school local governments for the 2025 PTY. The bill directs the state to reimburse local governments in an amount equal to the decrease, if any, in assessed value between the 2024 and 2025 PTYs due to this bill, multiplied by the local governments' mill levy rate from the 2024 PTY, excluding mills for bonds and contractual obligations. Most local governments are unlikely to receive significant, if any, backfill.

During the special session, Rep. Weissman and Sen. Hansen introduced HCR24B-1001, which required local approval for any statewide property tax initiative to go into effect locally. The concurrent resolution passed the House with the required two-thirds vote but was killed in the Senate due to lack of Republican support and because it would have killed "the deal." CML supported the concurrent resolution. Specifically, CML cited the nonbinding nature of statutory changes and that only the constitutional replacement for the voter-repealed Gallagher Amendment would provide any real certainty against further initiated or legislative tinkering with local property taxes.

### **ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY**

The Ridgway Town Council has committed to picking up trash and litter along Hwy 62 from milepost 20 to 22 through January of 2026. The commitment is to pick up litter a minimum of two times each year. The time has come to pinpoint a date and time to hold another clean up event this fall!

### **UNCOMPAGRE WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP FIELD TRIPS**

To attend any of the events listed below, email [tanya@uncompagrewatershed.org](mailto:tanya@uncompagrewatershed.org).

- Rollans Park volunteer morning  
Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024  
Ridgway by the Uncompagre River
- Ridgway Reservoir Cleanup  
Saturday, Oct. 5, 2024  
Ridgway State Park, in collaboration with Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Love Your Gorge  
Saturday, Oct. 12, 2024



Join at Ouray Ice Park and the Uncompahgre River Gorge in Ouray.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

- **Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting** – September 10, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Town Council Regular Meeting** – September 11, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **FUSE Creative Main Street Committee Meeting** – September 17, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Decker Community Room and virtually via Zoom
- **CML Fall District Meeting in Ridgway** – September 23, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the Decker Community Room (Social hour begins at 5 p.m. followed by a dinner meeting at 6 p.m.)
- **Planning Commission Meeting** – September 24, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Sustainability Advisory Board Meeting** – October 2, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom
- **Town Council Regular Meeting** – October 9, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in-person at Town Hall and virtually via Zoom

### **JOKE OF THE DAY**

I'd be a terrible superhero.

I'd be at home and see the signal calling me in and think, "I literally just sat down."

Bonus Joke:

Just asked my 7-year-old son what he learned in school today.

He said, "apparently not enough because I have to go back tomorrow."