

Ginger Newman
Director of Communications and Training
Wyoming Association of Municipalities
315 West 27 Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Telephone: 307-632-03908; Fax: 307-632-1942
gnewman@wyomuni.org

It was truly my pleasure to sit on the August 2010 Rural Community Assessment team for the Town of Star Valley Ranch. The leadership in your community—the elected officials of Star Valley Ranch and the Star Valley Ranch Association—appear determined to hear and to address concerns and issues of the citizens. The residents of Star Valley Ranch are to be commended on their interest in making Wyoming’s newest community one of the finest in the state. Their education, knowledge and enthusiasm are assets to be envied.

MAJOR THEMES:

INFRASTRUCTURE—RECREATION—ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT—PUBLIC SERVICES—COMMUNICATION—GOVERNANCE OF COMMUNITY & REVISION OF DCC&R’S (DECLARATION OF COVENANTS, CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS)

INFRASTRUCTURE (WATER, SEWER, ROADS):

For Star Valley Ranch, infrastructure is like a “How do you eat an elephant?” question. There is so much that could be done, and needs to be done, that the challenge can seem overwhelming. The answer, of course, is “one bite at a time” and it really works. Like other issues in Star Valley Ranch, communication is a key.

Priorities must be established. Items where there is an immediate threat to public health and safety must be addressed first (Urgent and Important). After that it is critical to focus on projects that are Important but not Urgent. There is a natural temptation to work on things that are Urgent but not Important, but that is a questionable strategy. People or groups that have a single purpose often have difficulty seeing the big picture, and try to get top priority for their projects. Those who are in position to see a broad view need to play a large role in setting the infrastructure priorities.

A different consideration is being prepared to take advantage of opportunities. Sometimes funds are available for a particular purpose (water, for example) but not for other purposes. In such a circumstance, going for a lower priority project may be a good decision if the community keeps its eye on its original priorities. It is always good to have projects of various types ready to go on short notice in case a special opportunity occurs.

When a community sees a series of small positive steps, people begin to have confidence that they can “eat their elephant” and that they can afford to wait their turn for their project. It is important to document the successes and keep that track record in people’s minds all the time.

Funding Opportunities for Infrastructure may include:

Local Option Sales Taxes - both general purpose and specific purpose are a good source for all kinds of infrastructure needs.

SLIB Grants and Loans. Contact Rob Tompkins, SLIB office, 307-777-6646,
rtompk@wyo.gov

Wyoming Business Council – CDBG, Business Ready Communities Program. Contact Shawn Reese, 307-777-2813, shawn.reese@wybusiness.org

USDA Rural Development, Derrel Carruth, 307-233-6700, derrel.carruth@wy.usda.gov

State Revolving Loan Funds – Drinking Water and Waste Water, Brian Mark, 307-777-6371, bmark@wyo.gov

Wyoming Water Development Commission – Water Sources, Treatment and Transmission (not distribution).

Mike Purcell, mpurce@state.wy.us, 307-777-7626

US Economic Development Administration (“EDA”), Denver Regional office is at 410 17th Street, Suite 250, Denver, CO 80202. 303-844-4714, Robert Olson, Regional Director, rolson@eda.doe.gov

Bond Issues. Bret Jones, WY Government Investment Fund, 307-778-8492, jonesb@gkbaum.com; Dan Baxter, Kaiser and Company, 307-634-1547, dbaxter@kaiserinvest.com

WYDOT Urban Systems Program and TEAL Grants. Rick Douglass, 307-777-4484, rich.douglass@dot.state.wy.us

Federal Stimulus Funds (if program is continued). Richard Hawley, Senator Enzi’s Grants Coordinator, Richard_Hawley@enzi.senate.gov, 307-258-9659

Indications are that Star Valley Ranch needs to develop a long range plan for the sewer and wastewater treatment system, but there are water and road projects that are more ready to go.

RECREATION: a year round facility for all ages, pathways and trails, developing youth activities.

Challenge: Regarding the year-round community facility, I will defer to some of the other representatives with a much broader knowledge of programs available. The Wyoming Business Council representatives, Pat Robbins and Elaina Zempel would be helpful in this direction.

Resources regarding energy efficiency: If the Town of SVR should at some point own a year round facility in need of energy efficiency updates, it should investigate whether it could qualify for an Energy Lease Program that WAM and the Wyoming County Commissioners Association (WCCA) jointly administer. The energy lease program offers zero interest loans for energy efficiency to cities/towns/counties. Applications are available on the WAM website at www.wyomuni.org under Member Services/ELP. The program funds zero interest leases for projects authorized under the State Energy Conservation Plan (SECP), including energy efficiency improvements to existing or new public buildings. The improvements must show a monetary savings, and, if possible, a BTU savings. The BTU savings should have verifying documentation. For additional information contact Earla Checchi at the WAM office, 307-632-0398 or checchi@wyomuni.org.

Challenge: Currently the Town of SVR doesn’t have a parks and recreation department, and some services are being provided by the association. Many communities in Wyoming struggle due to the cost of recreation programs they are able to offer, but as the Town attracts more citizens, the demand for programs will continue.

Solution: I would suggest asking for volunteers from differing groups in the community, along with an elected official (or two), and town staff to form a committee to brainstorm what realistically could be accomplished and define specific time frames. Members should include differing age groups—especially including youth. A few

of the projects mentioned included ski trails around the golf course, sledding hills in differing parts of the town, an archery/shooting range, and walking/bike paths around the area. I realize the Town is in the process of planning for a pathway to include exercise stations, which I think citizens will greatly enjoy.

Resources:

1. The City of Green River’s Parks and Recreation Director Walt Bratton has implemented popular and award-winning recreation programs in Green River and the City Administrator Barry Cook has said he would be glad to “loan” Walt to the Town to help in their recreation efforts. Walt can be contacted by calling 307-872-6153, or by email at wbratton@cityofgreenriver.org. He can also refer the town to others who could help in kick-starting these efforts. He has recently worked with the Town of Cokeville and was successful in getting a university intern to help develop some long-range plans.
2. I would suggest contacting the *National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (“RTCA”)* for assistance in moving ideas into reality. The deadline for technical assistance grants is due August 1 of each year, and their mission statement “*is to assist community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives. RTCA staff provide guidance to communities so they can conserve waterways, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways.*”

Contacts and information are on their website at <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs>

I would also suggest looking at the **Community Tool Box** link on the NPS website as it gives valuable suggestions on where to start the process of visioning and the logistics of making that vision happen.

Joy Lujan from their office has been helpful and can be reached at (303) 969-2853 or by email at joy_lujan@nps.gov. Their regional office serving Wyoming and Colorado is National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: commercial development; employment opportunities/training.

This is an area where the Business Council, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Workforce Services, and WEDA will have the advice and information.

PUBLIC SERVICES

The creation of a town center belonging to the town and including law enforcement, fire suppression/safety.

Challenge: The creation of a physical town center can best be left to Business Council staff. Regarding some of the other aspects mentioned during the listening sessions, read on.

Challenge: Exploration of establishing a law enforcement presence.

Resources: When contemplating the idea of establishing a police presence in SVR, a visit with Bryon Oedekoven, Executive Director of the WY Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, could be helpful. He

can be reached by calling 1-307-682-8949 or by email at byrono@direcway.com. He can also be contacted through WASCP, PO Box 605, Gillette, WY 82717-0605.

Challenge: Fire suppression

Solutions: There seemed to be many SVR citizens concerned about potential fire issues. It also was mentioned that some citizens had a background with fire safety. Consider recruiting some of these citizens to investigate the following resources and report back to the town their findings and suggestions.

Resources:

Teton Interagency Fire, PO Box 170, Moose, WY 83012, 307-739-3630
<http://gacc.nifc.gov/egbc/dispatch/wy-tdc/education-prevention.html>

Firewise Communities, <http://www.firewise.org/usa/wyoming.htm>

Terri Potter, Alpine Fire Chief
307-654-7581, alpinefiremsdept@hotmail.com

Fremont County Firewise Community, <http://www.fremontcountyfirewise.com/links.htm>
Criag Haslam, District Chief Fremont County Fire Protection
307-857-3030, chaslam@wyoming.com

Miscellaneous challenge: A town map. During the listening sessions someone mentioned how challenging it was to get around SVR and the need for a town map.

Resources available: A very easy to read town map of SVR exists on the Lincoln County website under Lincoln County/Planning/GIS/Basic Road Map. The link to the map is:
<http://www.lcwy.org/documents/NorthLincolnCntyroadsm3.pdf>

COMMUNICATION:

Challenge: To enhance communication between the town and the citizens; the citizens and the association board; the town and the association; and between various demographic groups in the community.

Solutions: One of the comments we heard included the statement that “*growth is emotional for a community.*” As SVR and the SVRA have been tied so closely in the past, and as much as it has been explained over and over, more communication would benefit your citizens. A brochure explaining the services of the town, *who* to contact for questions or concerns, and *how* could be developed. This brochure would be sent to all current residents, and after it has been distributed once, be given with each new water hook up, and copies available at town hall.

Additionally to help citizens understand the difference between the Town of SVR and the SVR Association, I would suggest one or two easy-to-read brochures noting who does what.

The Town could do a brochure emphasizing the services they provide, with a *notation* of what the Association provides; and the Association could do a separate brochure emphasizing what they provide to their members. One brochure could also be produced with bullet points showing the differing roles and responsibilities of the Town and the Association. If you decide on one brochure I would suggest making the points of who does what very simple to understand, and to divide those points into separate sections of the brochure.

Resources: I would be glad to help anyone set up such a brochure. I can be reached by emailing gnewman@wyomuni.org or by calling 307-632-0398.

Miscellaneous regarding communications:

As many people expressed frustration of paying for services they do not use, it would be beneficial for the association to note what the membership fee covers. It is also helpful to provide a reminder that in the long run everyone in a community benefits from improved community services and facilities, even those who are not immediate direct beneficiaries.

Star Valley Ranch is a beautiful area with great potential – which will become reality only if all of the community accepts some responsibility to support the common good.

One suggestion was made to have a marquee at the entrance by Town Hall listing a schedule of activities available. A marquee may not be in the budget, but a simple one-page calendar may be.

If town staff had a specific deadline of when the information was due at town hall, it would not be a huge amount of work to make this calendar or schedule and enclose it in water bills. I would limit the calendar to the activity name, dates and contact person until you get an idea of how much time is spent putting this together. Better yet if you can get a volunteer to put something together, perhaps the town could make copies to put in the bills without undue cost and staff time.

GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMUNITY AND REVISIONS OF THE DCC&R'S.

This is politically a very sensitive area. The process cannot be rushed and there must be intense communication efforts. Legal expertise is essential in the process. It may be very helpful to have a trained facilitator to assist in the process – someone who has no stake in the outcome. The UW Cooperative Extension Service may have such a person on staff. Your area rep is Mary Martin, Teton County Extension office in Jackson. 307-733-3087 or mmartin@tetonwyo.org.

Using interest-based negotiation processes may be the most viable alternative. It is quite likely that people who have staked out opposing positions on certain issues actually have very similar interests and can come to consensus quite easily once they develop the habit of understanding what the various interests are.