

Logan County Commissioners Work Session
September 9, 2025

Present: Mike Brownell, Jim Santomaso, Alan Samber, Mike Burri, Josilyn Lutze, Rick Cullip, Marilee Johnson, Trae Miller, Dusty Johnson, Christopher Kelley, Jeff Schiel, Callie Jones, and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION - Commissioner Santomaso moved to approve the minutes of the August 26, and September 2, 2025 Work Sessions. Commissioner Brownell seconded, and the motion carried 2-0.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK SESSION AGENDA – Commissioner Brownell added Representative Dusty Johnson to New Business.

LCEDC INDUSTRIAL SITE ENGINEERING REPORT – Trae Miller, Logan County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director met with the Board. Miller discussed the State Land Board property which has been previously discussed over the years. LCEDC has started an Economic Development Administration disaster supplemental grant application that they are eligible for because of disaster declarations from 2023. Part of the process requires a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER). This was put out for bid. The bid came in at \$52,900. This is the first step to move forward with the project and be able to pursue grant dollars and to be able to pursue any project activity at the site. LCEDC would like the City and County to split the cost three ways to take the next steps forward.

The idea is to work with the State Land Board to identify an approximately 200-acre site that can be potentially acquired from them or work out an arrangement that they can begin to put in infrastructure, including rail assets, electrical and other required elements to move forward with more shovel ready Industrial Park for projects.

They have some projects that they have been working on over the last few years and some in process right now. It's important for the site and for the future of the community.

Miller will meet with Sterling City Council tonight. From an economic development perspective, this is an important move and investment for the community. It is a substantial chunk of the LCEDC budget. The LCEDC board did not want to take this on solely on their own, especially if there was not a commitment from the City and County.

The PER will not have specific project parameters. One of the things that they are looking at is the potential of getting City water and sewer out there. That will be part of what the PER will look at. There were four wells that were permitted for the site that the County had purchased back in 2009 for that project. It might be determined that a better route is to put in a pipeline and get those wells in place as opposed to doing the municipal services. All of the initial pieces, including what will be the ideal parcel boundary will be studied.

Commissioner Brownell asked if the land used Excel Energy for power. Miller said that it uses Highline Electric for power. The County Landfill Supervisor would like to have three-phase power at the landfill. The Scoular side is fed by Highline Electric. The methane requirements have been pushed back about three years, although the rules will probably be made in December.

The Board will discuss this further when Commissioner Yahn returns. Trae Miller will be rescheduled on the next Work Session Agenda.

Commissioner Santomaso asked if the wells on the property were drilled. Miller stated that the wells were not drilled. They were only permitted on the property. There would have to be an easement that would run a pipeline to the site.

CLEAR PATH RECOVERY – Jeff Schiel of Clear Path Recovery met with the Board to let them know what is going on. Clear Path Recovery is putting together an addiction treatment center with a 35-day inpatient program. It will have 35 days plus up to 60 days for partial hospitalized patients, a PHP plan, and then up to 90 days of intensive outpatient treatment. Both of those programs that are outside of residential patient programs can be as short as 30 days or as long as 60 to 90 days.

They will have the potential of having people there over 90 days, which gives patients a huge advantage to have success within recovery. This is all based on the fact that in eastern Colorado, there are no services for people with addiction. There are no detox services, and that puts a lot of pressure on our hospitals and our legal system. If somebody wants help with addition, they have to go to the Front Range or to North Platte, Nebraska. There are a lot of peer support specialists and peer support groups, but the area does not have anything substantial for the initial recovery journey for someone with a need for medically assisted detox.

Clear Path Recovery is putting together something for that. The program is going to have an over 13,000 square foot building. They have been working with the City of Sterling on a 10-year lease agreement on a 12.7-acre property. The lease agreement will allow low payments for the first 18 months to help the non-profit get off the ground. After 18 months, the nonprofit's finances will be reviewed, to see if a legitimate payment can be made. After 10 years, they will purchase the lease, so they will own the building.

Schiel would like to have a partnership with the Commissioners and work together as this progresses. They are hoping to break ground sometime in the first part of November, pending their grant funding that they are hoping to hear back on soon. They have applied for \$1.2 million on a House Bill 1287 grant.

Things have changed within Colorado Behavioral Health since the beginning of July. Signal Behavioral Health will be their supervising organization, and Northeast Health Partners will be their Medicaid accreditation partner. That holds them accountable for everything that they will be doing.

Their kickoff event will be a concert on Main Street this Saturday. Schiel has completed a reservation form for the Mitchek Event Center for a Gala on December 6th and requested a reduction in the fees, because right now the rehab doesn't have any money.

After the non-profit is sustainable, one of their goals is an amphitheater located somewhere in Logan County. Right now, they are planning an operating budget of \$4 to \$6 million annually. Revenue at full capacity will be about \$11 million annually.

When they receive their funding, Schiel will be executive director. He will work on getting solid partnerships with the Department of Human Services and with the judicial system, probation and parole. We have the largest prison in Colorado, but we have nothing to help anybody else.

They have their Medicaid application complete and will have Amanda Nichols a medical advisor on their Board. She wants to help and use her medical license to finish the application. However, she's part of the Banner system, so it is a conflict of interest. If Amanda isn't an option, they will find somebody for the Medicaid application and get that finished.

Commissioner Santomaso asked about staffing. Schiel explained his extensive research in the area of staffing. He researched former HB1287 grant recipients. He looked at some of the problems that they ran into and

what some of their failures were. He found in Las Animas, recruitment and retention was their hurdle. They didn't have a pool of therapists or nurses. To remedy that for Clear Path, NJC has a CSU Accredited Masters in Addiction Treatment Program. He contacted Celeste Delgado-Pelton, at NJC and suggested creating a partnership where some of NJC's first-year therapists could have an internship program with their rehab, and they could remedy the problem of retention and recruitment from day one. He discussed this with NJC President Mike White, so they have a partnership already with NJC to be able to recruit and retain employees.

He has a person that's going to be the clinical director. He was hoping to be able to be here today, but they have not found out about the grant funding yet. Amanda Shank will be Case Manager on board as soon as they get funded. There is a therapist on staff that's going to actually start. She's the one that they used for the behavioral health, the counseling side of our Medicaid application. The medical side of it is something that we're looking at. Medically assisted detox has protocol.

The other portion of it is marketing. As you know, we don't have a large population in eastern Colorado, but we have a population that is hugely in need. Sixty percent of their population is going to be from the area, and they're probably going to be Medicaid recipients. Some of them are going to have private insurance, but generally, when somebody needs to get addiction treatment, they're not in the best financial position in life.

He compared the rehab that he went to in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Harmony Foundation in Estes Park, and looked at their marketing scheme. He ended up in Beach House Recovery in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, because of a very inexpensive Google marketing plan. To market this rehab nationally, it costs about \$50 to \$100 in Google advertising fees to be the first site that comes up for somebody looking for an addiction treatment center in this area. When he Googled America's best alcohol treatment in February of 2019, Beach House in Fort Lauderdale, Florida had decided to do Colorado as one of their Google search areas for that period.

Schiel estimates that the non-profit would have revenue surplus of about \$2 million. They would offer 30-35 scholarships to people in our area, when they get to that point.

Schiel attended a meeting several weeks ago and talked to Daniel Darting, CEO of Signal Behavioral Health. Clear Path Recovery will be getting financial support from Signal Behavioral Health as soon as they sign a contract with them as their supervising organization. Daniel assured him that they would have infrastructure funds available from Signal with or without the grant. They are moving forward with or without the grant. They will be working in collaboration with the Opioid Abatement Council and CO Act and others.

OEM GRANTS – Josilyn Lutze met with the Board, concerning the Homeland Security Grants. Weld County is the fiscal agent for the grants. They are both 100% grants with no county match. Josilyn felt that the original budget for the CART grant, which is the animal shelter grant, was more than what was needed for the region. The CART grant amount is up to \$26,000. She presented a revised list of equipment to purchase for the grant. Pricing for equipment was obtained from Amazon, Chewy and Walmart. She felt that 50 kennels would be sufficient. The Chewy and the Amazon quotes are more accurate. The Walmart quote would not allow her to add the proper number of items to the shopping cart. She could also purchase the totes and fans at Home Depot and Walmart.

The Board agreed to go ahead with purchase of supplies and then apply for reimbursement from the grant through Weld County. The grant reimbursement paperwork is due back to Weld County by January 31, 2026.

Commissioner Santomaso moved to approve up to a \$12,000 expenditure by Emergency Manager Josilyn to purchase the crates and kennels and assorted equipment for the emergency shelter of pets and livestock through the grant. Commissioner Brownell seconded and the motion carried 2-0.

REPRESENTATIVE DUSTY JOHNSON – Representative Dusty Johnson met with the Board. The Colorado Legislature went into Special Session having to cut about \$1.2 billion from the State's budget and instead added about \$300 million. They got an extension on the artificial intelligence mandates, which is what was needed out here for rural areas, for small businesses, schools, and hospitals. It was pushed to October of 2026. That means the artificial intelligence discussions will be continued next session.

SNAP benefits were passed to put on the ballot. Free school lunches and any surplus now go to the SNAP aspect to help fund that. Commissioner Brownell asked if the parameters of the program are going to change so that the state will require Logan County to add additional money over the 20% match. Johnson answered through HR1, it's going to be phased in and delayed until late 2026-2027 for some of these programs. Federal numbers should be available by the end of this month, if not early next month. Should the ballot initiative not pass, they're going to come back as a special session and do what they want.

Johnson thinks the ballot initiative coming forth from them is not the answer, because they're wanting more money for school lunches that are already over funded. Schools should have freedom to use and allocate funds. The way the ballot issue was written, there must be 100 meals ready for 100 kids. There might be 10 kids who bring their lunches so there are 10 extra meals. Schools also have kids gone with FBLA, sports camps, and FFA. They may be gone for a week; that's possibly another 15 gone. Now you have 25 extra meals, and you have a whole bunch of lunches that aren't eaten. Johnson feels that schools should be able to do a head count every day for lunches. There is so much food going in the dumpster right now. This is their way of using some of that money to get SNAP and again, we don't have the federal numbers.

Johnson invited the Board to her community event tonight at 5:30 p.m. in the Tennant Art Gallery at NJC. It is open to the community.

Commissioner Brownell asked if Johnson is anticipating a lot for the Regular Session coming up that they need to be aware of. There is supposed to be an agreement with the governor that there will not be any oil and gas bills until after his term ends. However, there are rumors of out-of-state interests coming in wanting to mandate that every oil rig has to have a fence around it, even though it's on private property. They also want to be able to have drone drivers, to be able to go around and be able to cite well operators for safety.

There's going to be a "Right to Float" bill that's going to question private property as well. Rumor has it that it's the House Speaker using the Water Resource and Ag year around committees to get out and stake hold this bill. They want to allow everyone to be able to float down a water basin that has Point A and Point B. It could be a creek or a river. They want people to be able to touch ground or wade and to be able to walk on the bank if needed for whatever reason. This puts them on private property, standing in the water, fishing, etc. Depending on what landowners have going on with their property, they could have their dogs roaming, watching their cattle, they could be dogs aggressive towards people. Who is liable if someone twists their ankle on the bank? They also want to be able to shoot from these rafts now. There is a possibility of huge liability for private property owners.

Johnson wants to run a bill for Emergency Medical Service Providers, EMTs and Paramedics to be considered essential service workers. They're currently not recognized as essential service workers in the State of Colorado, so she wants to run that bill to make sure they have those protections. A lot of fire departments are hybrid and include EMT, Paramedic and Fire. If they need to pull state funds for these emergency situations because they just saved a building full of people, they can get the state funds for the fire side, but the medical side is not included because it's EMS not fire.

Fire mitigation efforts are being looked at. Right now, she is looking at the cost aspect of how many big fires

there have been, both rural fires and out west and how much money has been lost because we are now recovering. It does take money to get aviation out there, but it will save money in the long run, for lives, livestock, and property.

Johnson also explained Direct Primary Care (DPC). They are the primary units that decide they don't want to take insurance. The state just lost two major insurance companies actually because of what the state is doing. They want to offer Medicaid if someone on Medicaid wants to go to these services they can, they have to pay cash, but they can still keep their benefits for their medications, and their specialty care. It also gets treatment because a lot of people on Medicaid tend to be elderly, those with chronic issues. Sometimes, it takes three weeks to get scheduled. Right now, DPC is still new, they schedule their own time, people can get seen within two to three days. If somebody needs more urgent treatment, if they call HCPF, they can get seen within 48 hours, but you have to travel to Greeley or Denver or Colorado Springs. If you're on Medicaid, how are you going to get that resource to travel, how are you going to get the gas to go, especially in our areas?

Johnson told the Board that the House Rural Caucus now has 19 members. Minority Leader Rose Pugliese just joined. They have three of the leaders, one is the Democrat Speaker in the House. Simpson, who is the Minority Leader in the Senate and Roberts is the chair. They are now working on getting higher leaderships, trying to make sure they have holes for some of the main initiatives when it comes to rural Colorado.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS – Rick Cullip gave the Board his recommendation for the fairgrounds stadium roof bid. He reviewed each bid and consulted each bidder on anticipated extra inclusions. Individual bidders have included items that were not related to the wind damage last year but should be done such as re-flashing on some of the storm drains. It does not make sense not to do it at the time the repairs are done. Cullip recommended the Board accept the bid of Front Range Roofing.

Cullip also updated the Board on the damage to the exterior Courthouse lighting. Nate Webb replaced the computer that was damaged. In the process of doing that, it was found that there was a digitizer that communicates with some of the other components within the lighting system that was also damaged. The computer is programmed and up and going, the digitizer was bad, so it was also replaced. It was also discovered that some of the lighting controllers were not communicating and the LED light strips attached to the controllers were not responding. Nate Webb has provided a thorough repair assessment which amounts to roughly \$126,000. An additional \$16,000-\$17,000 in upgrades is recommended for lightning arrestors for each section as well as lightning arrestors on the main power. The lightning arrestors on the main power and an EMP that would remove the extra energy, whether it came in through the cat5 line or whether it came in through the electrical line. Everything was protected by battery backups on the electrical side, but we didn't have anything set up for the IT side. We're almost sure that the voltage came in through IT means. This is the reason the majority of our damage is through a couple of switches. There was one server, one computer, the elevator, and the lighting system which had a direct impact. There were some external security cameras and cabling damaged. An insurance claim has been filed with CTSI.

Cullip stated that there are not that many companies out there that do this type of lighting. He asked if the Board would be ok with allowing Nate Webb to continue with repairs. Commissioner Brownell said that he believes it would qualify under the emergency building repairs under the County's purchasing policy. Cullip said insurance may cover the lightning arrestors in this case because they want to protect the new equipment. The Board agreed to replace the lighting.

COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS – Commissioner Santomaso moved to approve the Commissioners Proceedings for July and August, 2025. Commissioner Brownell seconded and the motion carried 2-0.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.