

**RHA S.T.E.E.R Advisory Committee Meeting Notes**  
**May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2-3:30 pm Chamber of Commerce Conference Room**

**Meeting #4**

Purpose: Finalize the committee's findings and recommendations for viable funding mechanisms, in preparation for presentation to the RHA Board.

**Attendees:**

Pat Vaughn, RHA Chairman  
Brad Blake, Pine River Commons Developer  
Heather Hawk, Early Childhood Council of LPC  
Julie Cooley, Neighbors in Need Alliance  
Dan Hunt, Animas Mobile Home Park Co-Op & MHP Non-Profit  
Elizabeth Salkind, Housing Solutions for the SW  
Brian Crawford, Resident  
Pam Moore, HomesFund  
Mike French, City of Durango  
Dalton Kelley, Butler Snow (online)  
Jason Simmons, Hilltop Securities (online)  
Eva Henson, Contract Director Regional Housing Alliance  
Deedee Schadt, LPEDA Contractor

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

There were introductions and a recap of S.T.E.E.R. Committee's previous meetings.

**Meeting 1 – March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

- Purpose: Overview of the Housing Needs Assessment and introduction of potential revenue streams.
- Outcome: Established a shared understanding of housing challenges and funding needs.
- Action Item: Engage legal and financial consultants to support the initiative.

**Meeting 2 – March 31<sup>st</sup>**

- Purpose: Dive deeper into revenue streams and legal/financial analysis.
- Outcome: Narrowed down the list of viable funding mechanisms.
- Action Item: Review early findings from legal and financial assessments.

### Meeting 3 – May 8<sup>th</sup>

- Purpose: Finalize analysis and discuss feasibility of options.
- Outcome: Group exercise to prioritize revenue strategies.
- Action: Reconvene on May 19<sup>th</sup> to finalize findings and recommendations.

### Meeting 4 – May 19<sup>th</sup>

#### **Context:**

The committee has been progressing through a structured, multi-step process to address La Plata County's housing challenges. Building on last year's work, the Lodgers' Tax has served as a short-term funding source. This year's efforts began with the Housing Needs Assessment, presented in the first meeting, to provide updated data and guide the committee's direction.

#### **Today's Focus:**

Today's meeting will focus on reviewing a refined list of potential revenue options, informed by legal and financial analysis. The committee will work to finalize its findings and recommendations for viable long-term housing funding mechanisms, in preparation for a presentation to the RHA Board in June.

We are joined by representatives from Hilltop Securities and Butler Snow, who will provide legal and financial expertise to support the committee's final deliberations.

## **1. Review Narrowed List of Funding Mechanisms**

#### Presentation from Hilltop Securities:

An overview of potential tax-based funding mechanisms for a ballot initiative was provided. The following options were reviewed from Meeting #3:

- **Option 1:** Sales & Use Tax
- **Option 2:** Lodgers' Tax Increase
- **Option 3:** Combined Property Tax and Sales & Use Tax (as a single ballot question)

#### Key Points from Hilltop's Presentation and Committee Discussion:

- Under the existing RHA Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), approval by 75% of the RHA Board is required for the RHA to place an initiative on the ballot. Consent means agreeing to appear on the ballot.
- Initiatives can be placed on either odd- or even-year ballots but must be in November due to TABOR.

- Ballot landscape considerations:

**2025:**

- *La Plata County* is exploring a potential funding measure for an upcoming ballot initiative.
- *Local Fire Districts* are also assessing funding needs that may lead to ballot initiatives.

**2026:**

- *The Library* is evaluating long-term funding strategies and may conduct polling in 2025 to inform potential ballot initiatives. These efforts could help shape future discussions with the City and County regarding a joint sales tax and its potential uses.
- **HB25-1247 (County Lodging Tax Expansion):** This bill may influence future discussions around Lodgers' Tax adjustments at the County level.
- These should be monitored as part of the broader funding landscape.
- Utilizing a single-question ballot initiative is preferred to minimize voter confusion.
- A dedicated RHA sales tax can only be used for housing purposes; it cannot include other groups, such as early childhood education (ECE).
- Joint ballot initiatives with other entities (e.g. RHA + County) could be considered, but would have to be further explored in collaboration with the County.

### **3. Group Discussion: Feasibility and Final Recommendations**

- Butler Snow provided examples of question language used in ballot questions from other Colorado communities as reference points.
- **Timeline Considerations:** July 25 (100 days before the election) Political subdivision notifies County Clerk in writing regarding the political subdivision's participation in a coordinated election, if political subdivision has taken formal action to participate in election. The final ballot language must be certified by September 5, 2025. Butler Snow can assist with review and legal vetting in advance of these deadlines.
- **Public Communication Needs:** It will be essential to clearly explain how the projected \$3 million in annual revenue will be used. RHA Preliminary categories include:
  - RHA Operations
  - Catalyst Fund
  - Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund
  - Land Acquisition and Land Banking
  - Other Opportunities/Resources/Programs/Support
- **Challenges and Opportunities:**
  - The timeline for public education is compressed ahead of a potential November 2025 ballot measure. Early outreach and messaging will be critical.

- Building public support before finalizing ballot language offers the opportunity for broader engagement and alignment across stakeholders.
  - Forming a dedicated community group or advocacy committee to lead public outreach and issue-specific advocacy could strengthen the initiative. This group must comply with campaign finance regulations (e.g., keeping expenditures under \$5,000 unless formally registered as an issue committee).
  - Identifying potential committee members and securing County buy-in—alongside RHA’s support—will be key to ensuring momentum and credibility.
- **Discussion conclusion:**
    - A dedicated sales tax initiative for the RHA emerged as the most viable and straightforward funding option.
    - There was consensus among attendees that the measure should move to the ballot sooner rather than later, with a standalone 0.2% sales tax seen as the clearest and most effective approach—keeping the proposal simple and focused.
    - Coordination with the County is essential; timing and potential collaboration must be considered to align efforts and avoid conflicts.
- **Action points:**
    - Refine the draft S.T.E.E.R. recommendation letter for the RHA Board.
    - Pat Vaughn will follow up with the County regarding their ballot plans.
    - Compile and provide a detailed election timeline, including estimated ballot costs.
    - Prepare presentation slides for those presenting to the RHA Board, including:
      - An overview of the S.T.E.E.R. Committee’s vetted recommendation(s)
      - A summary of the evaluation process, highlighting the diversity of input and rigor of analysis
      - A clear call for the RHA Board to consider endorsement of the S.T.E.E.R. recommendation(s)

#### **4. Upcoming Meeting – S.T.E.E.R. Presentation to RHA Board**

- Thursday, June 12th from 2 -4 p.m. Durango Chamber Conference Room