



INYO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Board Approves, Discusses Grants and Grant-Funded Projects

INDEPENDENCE – Grant funding – receiving it, applying for it, and spending it – was a common thread throughout the February 28 Inyo County Board of Supervisors meeting.

On Tuesday, the Inyo County Board of Supervisors received announcements of grant awards, approved letters of support for other entities seeking financial aid, approved a contract for a new regional position to be paid through state funding, and discussed leveraging resources through the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to obtain grants for regional projects.

MUSEUM WINS BIG

Eastern California Museum Director Shawn Lum announced that the County facility has been awarded \$364,500 from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment Museum Grant Program – almost a year to the day after applying for funding. Lum noted that the program is extremely competitive with rigorous application requirements, making Inyo County's award of full funding all the more remarkable.

The funding will be used by Eastern California Museum on a three-year, multi-phase effort to create a more relevant in-person space, build a more robust virtual visitor experience, and honor previously untold, historically under-represented Tribal and rural stories of Eastern California. The project is designed to re-imagine the Eastern California Museum and to build a visitor-centered experience that more fully contextualizes the existing 30,000-plus object collection, through community stakeholder input, within the 6,000 square-foot gallery space. According to Lum, the project will improve equity and understanding of the diverse communities of Inyo County, and incorporate greater inclusion of the region's Indigenous communities, and transform the museum from object-centered to narrative-centered interpretation themes.

HOUSING PROJECTS FUNDED

In other positive news, Assistant CAO Meaghan McCamman announced Tuesday that Inyo County has been approved for \$490,685 in state funding for programs to maintain and enhance access to existing housing stock and encourage new development.

The County applied for and received three years' worth of funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development's Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA). Inyo County is eligible for a total of \$622,622 over the course of the five-year program; the remaining two years of funding will be available next year and the year after.

Once received, the first three allocations will be used to provide assistance with housing rehabilitation and the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADU) – including developing prototypes and pre-approved building plans

for ADUs. According to McCamman, by making available pre-approved plans that meet Inyo County Building Code, the County hopes to incentivize the creation of new housing stock and make it easier and more affordable to build.

McCamman said it's unknown when Inyo County will actually receive the grant funding, but is well-positioned to move quickly on the programs once it does.

LENDING SUPPORT

The Board approved two letters expressing support for other entities' grant applications related to transportation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Big Pine Paiute Tribe is applying for funding under the California Air Resource Board's (CARB) Clean Mobility Options Voucher Pilot (CMO) Program, which is aimed at increasing access to clean mobility options in disadvantaged communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and criteria pollutants, increasing the acceptance of zero-emission vehicles, and improving air quality and public health in the state's most vulnerable communities.

The Tribe proposes supplementing existing transit opportunities with the purchase and installation of electric shuttle buses, transit shelters, and charging stations.

The Inyo County Local Transportation Commission, meanwhile, is applying for a Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant through Caltrans to develop a plan for expanding coordinated electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure throughout the county. According to Transportation Planner Justine Kokx, the plan would include working with landowners and utilities to identify suitable sites for EV charging stations – sites in addition to County-operated buildings, campgrounds, and parks that can help fill in charging gaps as EV adoption steadily increases.

It is hoped the planning grant will also generate a roadmap to convert County fleets from gas-powered to zero-emission vehicles.

REGIONAL BROADBAND

A \$600,000, three-year grant from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has allowed the County to hire a Regional Broadband Coordinator to assist in the development of broadband infrastructure projects throughout Inyo and Mono counties, under the recently revived Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium (IMBC).

The IMBC is a project of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments – comprised of representatives from the County of Inyo, County of Mono, City of Bishop, Town of Mammoth Lakes – that has been dormant since 2019. ESCOG received funding from the CPUC in January to reboot the regional consortium to focus on leveraging additional grant allocations to design and build new broadband networks in Underserved and Unserved communities throughout the Eastern Sierra.

On Tuesday, the Board also approved a contract with Scott Armstrong, effective March 2, to serve in a new Regional Broadband Coordinator position. Armstrong has been serving as Inyo County's Director of Information Services since 2017. In his new role, he will be responsible for working with agencies to better understand broadband gaps, conceptualize new projects, and collaborate with interested providers in leveraging grant funding to construct them. IMBC's ultimate goal, according to CAO Nate Greenberg, is to deliver cost-effective Gigabit (plus) broadband connectivity to every household and business in the Eastern Sierra.

Separately, Inyo County received \$1 million of funding through the Local Agency Technical Assistance program to complete the design and engineering ultimately required for constructing new broadband infrastructure projects. The County will be leveraging this money to complete "shovel ready" designs with the intent of streamlining future construction efforts.

LEVERAGING GRANT FUNDING

Supervisors discussed and approved a contract with Elaine Kabala on Tuesday to serve as the full-time Executive Director of Regional Coordination for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG).

Kabala's contract is effective March 2 and comes as the result of Inyo County offering to employ staff to provide full-time Executive Director services for ESCOG – which were deemed necessary in light of increasing grant opportunities, new initiatives, and implementation of regional projects.

ESCOG is a Joint Powers Authority established for regional coordination among Inyo and Mono Counties, the City of Bishop, and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. It is used mostly as a vehicle to apply for grant funding and has to date acquired \$5.5 million for projects. Kabala will be responsible for: initiating, organizing, directing, and administering the design, development, implementation, and ongoing management of ESCOG programs; supporting the design and development of programs among subcontractors and partner agencies and community partners; serving as an executive team member; and providing proactive and positive leadership and support to ESCOG staff, the ESCOG Board, partner agencies, and contractors.

Kabala had the same responsibilities while serving as the first and only ESCOG Executive Director, on a part-time basis, since October of 2020. Per the new contract, she will work under the oversight of the ESCOG. Each ESCOG member agency will reimburse the County for providing the Executive Director services. The arrangement is modeled after the Owens Valley Groundwater Authority, for which the County is reimbursed for providing legal and executive director services through its staff.

ESCOG's three main areas of focus are recreation, commercial air service, and broadband, and is continuing to see progress, increased momentum, and new developments among its top priorities.

No project or initiative can be approved by ESCOG without each member agency voting in support of it.

ESCOG meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes can be found at www.escog.ca.gov.

Video of Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting can be found at <http://inyococa.civicclerk.com/Web/Player.aspx?id=3187&key=-1&mod=-1&mk=-1&nov=0>.

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