

BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

---

MONTANA FIVE-YEAR 2015-2020 CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND  
2015-2016 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN  
PUBLIC MEETING

---

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Heard before Jennifer Olson, Presiding Officer  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park, Room 228  
Helena, Montana

July 29, 2015  
1:35 p.m.

REPORTED BY:                    CHERYL ROMSA  
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A P P E A R A N C E S

Attendees on webinar:

Andrea Davis  
John Firehammer  
Travis Hoffman  
Marcia Lemon  
Heather McMillin  
Tracy Menuetz  
Michael O'Neil  
Wendy Thomas  
Tim Trzinski  
Bob Buzzas  
Anne Boothe  
Janice Brown  
Heather Grenier  
Traci Sears  
Trudy Skari  
Harlan wells

Attendees in Room 228

Julianna Crowley  
Keith Bocian

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1           WHEREUPON, the proceedings were had as follows:

2           MS. OLSON: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is  
3 Jennifer Olson. I am with the Community Grants Bureau at  
4 the Montana Department of Commerce. I'm the Community  
5 Grants Bureau Chief, and I'd like to welcome you to our  
6 public hearing today about the Montana Five-Year  
7 Consolidated Plan and the one-year, 2015 through 2016,  
8 Annual Action Plan public meeting. I appreciate you  
9 taking the time out of your day today.

10          Before we begin today, I just want to make you aware  
11 of a few things. We have a court reporter in our facility  
12 today to help record the meeting and transcribe it for us.  
13 So if you could, if you're in the room and would like to  
14 provide comment, make sure that you speak clearly. But  
15 then also, if you're on the conference call or webinar,  
16 please make sure that you speak clearly. Later on in the  
17 presentation, we'll open up the phone lines so you can  
18 provide verbal comments, but while I'm giving my  
19 presentation, if you have any questions, please feel free  
20 to write them in your webinar queue, and Stephanie will be  
21 able to read them.

22          So I'm going to ask that we just go through and  
23 announce who is here in the room. Just in case they're  
24 away from the phone, I will repeat their names. And then  
25 I'll have Stephanie read who is on webinar. So again, I'm

1 Stephanie Olson. I'm the Community Grants Bureau Chief.

2 MS. CRIDER: I'm Stephanie Crider. I'm a program  
3 specialist for Community Development Division.

4 MS. CROWLEY: Julianna Crowley, Community  
5 Services Program Officer for DPHHS.

6 MR. BOCIAN: I'm Keith Bocian, with the Rural  
7 Housing Service here in the Sub-Area Office in Helena,  
8 Montana.

9 MS. OLSON: So if you couldn't hear, that was  
10 Keith Bocian from the Rural Housing Service. So thank you  
11 all for attending here.

12 And Stephanie, who do we have out in webinar?

13 MS. CRIDER: Bob Buzzas, Heather McMilin,  
14 John Firehammer, Marcia Lemon, Tim Trzinski, Tracy Menuez,  
15 and Travis Hoffman.

16 MS. OLSON: Well, thank you again for joining us.  
17 As you know, the Consolidated Plan is a document that the  
18 Department of Commerce and Public Health and Human  
19 Services worked together on. And we have developed the  
20 final draft document, and it's available online, but let  
21 me go through a few informational points for your  
22 consideration as you review the Consolidated Plan and  
23 provide public comment to both Commerce and Public Health  
24 and Human Services.

25 So it is a five-year plan and it's updated annually

1 for the federal housing, community and public facilities,  
2 and economic development investment in the state. What  
3 that means is that every five years, HUD requires that we  
4 go through a larger analysis of what our goals and  
5 objectives are for using those HUD funds to provide  
6 funding to the state that will support housing, community  
7 development and public facility programs and projects, and  
8 economic development programs and projects; so how we  
9 invest those funds in the state.

10 It combines planning and application, citizen  
11 participation, and reporting requirements for CDBG, HOME,  
12 and ESG. So what that means is that we use this document  
13 to help plan how we're going to use CDBG, HOME, and ESG  
14 funds. And also in the back of the plan, you'll see  
15 there's SF424s, which becomes our application to HUD for  
16 federal funds for that five-year plan and then also, with  
17 annual updates, our individual yearly application for  
18 federal funds.

19 And the most important component is citizen  
20 participation. How we use funds or how we intend on using  
21 funds, it is important that we receive citizen  
22 participation and feedback in order to make sure that  
23 we're making the funds available in the most appropriate,  
24 effective, and efficient manner. So you'll see throughout  
25 the planning documents that we've done a number of

1 different things in order to analyze and collect  
2 information or analyze that information in order to make  
3 the decisions and determinations of how to use those  
4 funds.

5 Also, the Consolidated Plan has really two parts, if  
6 you will. The Five-Year Consolidated Plan, which we're  
7 taking public comment on, is the umbrella for the next  
8 five years, and there's an Annual Action Plan within that  
9 that's annually updated. So we will be doing this  
10 annually for the next five-year period based on that  
11 five-year plan to help guide how we use housing, community  
12 and public facility, and economic development funds to  
13 create those policies and actions over the next five-year  
14 period.

15 So as you go onto the website, you'll find that there  
16 are two documents. One is quite lengthy, and that's our  
17 five-year plan and one which encompasses a large number of  
18 sections, and I'll go through that later on; and then a  
19 smaller plan, which is the Annual Action Plan, which is  
20 supplemental to the Consolidated Plan.

21 So these planning documents all pertain Montana's HUD  
22 programs, so ESG, Emergency Solutions Grant; the HOME  
23 Program or HOME Investment Partnerships Program; CDBG or  
24 the Community Development Block Grant Program, including  
25 the three primary uses of those funds, economic

1 development, housing, and public and community facilities.

2 So again, the purpose of the plan is to identify what  
3 our needs, priorities, and goals are as they relate to  
4 housing and community development in all of the local  
5 cities, towns, and counties across our state. It also  
6 stipulates how the funds will be allocated, which informs  
7 how those funds will be used across the state, and it also  
8 helps us to invest money into the areas of greatest need.  
9 So as part of our review and data collection, we identify  
10 what those greatest needs are and then stipulate how those  
11 funds will be allocated to meet or at least address those  
12 needs.

13 So HUD has some specific things that have to be  
14 identified as goals in the Consolidated Plan, and they  
15 fall under these three points of providing decent housing,  
16 providing a suitable living environment, and expanding  
17 economic opportunities. So ESG, HOME, and CDBG all look  
18 to the Consolidated Plan as how we support those ultimate  
19 goals that HUD mandates.

20 So there are, again, several components to the  
21 Consolidated Plan. As you can see, the five-year plan, or  
22 the Con Plan as we affectionally call it here at Commerce,  
23 is open for public comment. It's the 2015 through  
24 2020 Con Plan. It already actually began July 13th, 2015,  
25 and it ends August 12th, 2015.

1 I would just point out that there are 18 repositories  
2 across the state. So we have asked individual entities to  
3 provide a copy -- or rather, we provided a copy to those  
4 repositories to make that copy available to the public if  
5 they come in to look at it, or to any other entities. So  
6 there are a number of organizations from each corner of  
7 the state. And we appreciate them opening up their doors  
8 to the Consolidated Plan and putting it in a place where  
9 people can view it and read it and make comment on it.  
10 All comments must be received by the Department of  
11 Commerce, so none of the repositories are taking public  
12 comment. We just asked them to make it available in the  
13 public location for people to have access to.

14 Additionally as part of the Con Plan is the Annual  
15 Action Plan, and it is also open for public comment. So  
16 it's the 2015-2016 Action Plan. The comment period is the  
17 same, July 13th, 2015, through August 12th, 2015. And  
18 again, you'll find that at all the repositories across the  
19 state.

20 One part of the Con Plan is the Consolidated Annual  
21 Performance and Evaluation Report or CAPER. And so that  
22 is not part of this comment period, but it's one of the  
23 three components of the Con Plan that we complete. So  
24 you'll be hearing from us in the spring more about the  
25 CAPER as we finish our program year, which always ends in

1 March in any given year, and then we go through a public  
2 hearing at that point in time. So more information to  
3 come about that.

4 So the Five-Year Con Plan is a little bit different  
5 than what we've seen from previous years. If you've taken  
6 a look at our previous con plans and even our previous  
7 five-year con plan and look at this one, it is very  
8 different, actually. The Econ Plan, which is the  
9 Consolidated Plan that's entered electronically into IDIS  
10 or the Integrated Disbursement and Information System that  
11 HUD has established that we must use in order to submit  
12 our plan, is what we are calling the Econ Plan. So while  
13 you're looking at the version that we've prepared in a  
14 word document, we will also be submitting to HUD our  
15 Econ Plan.

16 And HUD developed the Econ Plan to create consistency  
17 between all entities that receive federal funds in order  
18 to have more consistent con plans that they review on a  
19 nationwide basis. It also creates a standard way of  
20 collecting information and analyzing information that go  
21 back directly to support how those programs need to  
22 function under the Code of Federal Regulations.

23 So we will be using the Econ Plan beginning this year,  
24 which is our very first year, but now until forever, until  
25 HUD so chooses to change it. So if you hear us talk about

1 the Econ Plan, that's what we're talking about, is the  
2 electronic submission to HUD. But it's identical to the  
3 written version, with some just functionality of a  
4 database. So some of the populated data in the tables  
5 come pre-populated in the Econ Plan for us, so we've  
6 integrated that into our word document to create that  
7 consistency in the version that you see and then also what  
8 we submit to HUD.

9 There are five sections of the Five-Year Con Plan, and  
10 they are, as required by HUD, Executive Summary, Needs  
11 Assessment, Market Analysis, Strategic Plan. And you can  
12 find our Con Plan and our Annual Action Plan on the  
13 website that you see on the screen in front of you. What  
14 I'd like to point out about those five sections is that  
15 the Executive Summary obviously is what it says it is,  
16 which is an overall summary of what we found in regards to  
17 what we've identified as needs based on the needs  
18 assessment, the market analysis that we've performed for  
19 the state, and then also the strategic plan, which is  
20 really implementing the Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

21 So as you go through the Con Plan, you'll see that the  
22 main heading of those sections is apparent. And then  
23 there are specific questions that HUD requires us to  
24 respond to, so you'll find the narrative as those  
25 subsections refer to, to inform the idea of the grand

1 section that you see of those five sections.

2 The 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan is also part of the  
3 Econ Plan suite, and so we will be submitting that as  
4 well. And then also, what you'll see this year for the  
5 action plan, because it's part of the five-year plan,  
6 probably will be slightly different than next year,  
7 because the five-year plan won't have those answers in it.  
8 So we'll have a little bit more robust annual action plan  
9 for the next four years after we complete this five-year  
10 plan. More information about that for next year. But we  
11 will be completing the Econ Plan every year and then going  
12 through this similar process to provide a word document  
13 for public review and then submitting to HUD  
14 electronically.

15 There is only one section this year of the Annual  
16 Action Plan, but there are 15 subsections, and we'll talk  
17 a little bit more about that in a minute. And again, you  
18 can find the Action Plan on the Con Plan website.

19 So CDBG and HOME and ESG are part of the 2015-2016  
20 Action Plan, and I wanted to point out these sections  
21 because this is really something that's going to be  
22 ongoing. And it supports how we use and allocate those  
23 funds, but primarily based on the analysis from the needs  
24 assessment and also the analysis from the market  
25 assessment and how that then, again, goes back to

1 supplement or support our strategic plan.

2 So the first -- And these are just some select  
3 sections. I'm not going to go through all 15. There's an  
4 Annual Goals and Objectives section, and this is important  
5 because it identifies the goals for the programs, each of  
6 the programs. It also identifies needs that will be  
7 addressed with those funding sources. It also establishes  
8 funding to meet those goals, so how much money is being  
9 set aside to meet those goals and objectives, and what  
10 those indicators of meeting those goals look like; how do  
11 we know that we're successful. This section is more of a  
12 table-like setting as part of what is available in the  
13 Action Plan, so I'd encourage you to look that up, and  
14 that will definitely inform how the State intends on using  
15 its funds.

16 Allocation Priorities. The section identifies how  
17 funds are prioritized for individual programs.

18 Method of Distribution identifies how the funds will  
19 be distributed by program. Which the Allocation  
20 Priorities and Method of Distribution is something you'll  
21 probably remember if you've looked at our action plans in  
22 prior years that we already had as part of our action  
23 plan. The setup will definitely look different to follow  
24 along with what the Econ Plan looks like.

25 Barriers to Affordable Housing. So this morning we

1 had a public hearing about the Analysis of Impediments to  
2 Fair Housing Choice in Montana. And Barriers to  
3 Affordable Housing identifies those action items that  
4 we've identified in our Analysis of Impediments and  
5 translated those into the Action Plan to identify what  
6 action items the Department is going to implement to  
7 address those housing barriers. So there's a supplemental  
8 document, although it's definitely a stand-alone document,  
9 called the Analysis of Impediments that informs a lot of  
10 this information. So I'd encourage you to look at the AI,  
11 the Analysis of Impediments document.

12 There's also Program Specific Requirements, which is a  
13 great little section to find out more about what specific  
14 programmatic requirements are discussed to implement the  
15 programs. So there are some specific requirements in the  
16 Code of Federal Regulations that HUD requires us to  
17 include in our Consolidated Plan, and these program  
18 specific requirements are discussed more at length in that  
19 section.

20 So who can you contact to talk about the Consolidated  
21 Plan and the Annual Action Plan? At Department of  
22 Commerce, you can call Kelly, myself, or Allison; and then  
23 at Department of Public Health and Human Services, Jamie,  
24 Kane, or Julianna, who is definitely an available resource  
25 here in the room, too.

1           So our public comment period is open for these  
2 two documents. If you have any comments during this  
3 webinar, please definitely chime in. We'll make the  
4 webinar functional so that you can speak through the  
5 conference call and provide your comments verbally. And  
6 as I said, we have a court reporter here today, and so if  
7 you could please state your name and spell it, and the  
8 organization you're representing, if you're representing  
9 an organization.

10           We'll be receiving comments until August 12th, 2015.  
11 5:00 p.m. is when we need them. And I'll give you some  
12 information on where you can send them. But it's  
13 important that we receive that so we can finalize the  
14 document, submitting it to HUD, but definitely considering  
15 your comments as we finish the draft document before  
16 sending it off.

17           So I appreciate, again, all of your time today. And I  
18 will open up the floor for any public comments. So  
19 anybody here in the room yet?

20           (No audible response.)

21           MS. OLSON: Stephanie, do you have anybody in  
22 webinar?

23           MS. CRIDER: Not yet, but I will unmute everybody  
24 now.

25           MS. OLSON: So we're going to work on unmuting,

1 and I will give Stephanie just a moment to do that.

2 And while she's working on that, I'd just like to  
3 discuss that beginning on page 137 of our Consolidated  
4 Plan is our Strategic Plan, which provides a more specific  
5 analysis -- or rather, excuse me, intention what the  
6 departments plan on doing in regards to the use of those  
7 funds. The information on page 1 through 136 is also  
8 important, but provides more of an analysis of what we  
9 have seen from our data collection in order to make these  
10 decisions and whatnot. So I would encourage you to turn  
11 to page 137 and look through the document, but definitely  
12 the whole of it is important.

13 Lastly, I wanted to point out there are several  
14 appendices as part of the Consolidated Plan, the five-year  
15 plan, and the Annual Action Plan that provide you  
16 supplemental information that was collected in order to  
17 inform the decisions. May not be specifically in one of  
18 the subsections that are part of the Econ Plan Suite;  
19 however, definitely provided the Department information to  
20 make those selections and come up with the goals and  
21 objectives that we did.

22 MS. CRIDER: Michael had raised his hand.

23 MS. OLSON: So Michael, I think you have a  
24 question, and I think your phone is live.

25 MR. O'NEIL: Thank you, everybody.

1 Michael O'Neil, with AWARE. I just wanted to make a  
2 comment. I would encourage the State to adopt as an  
3 additional priority to housing needs persons with  
4 disabilities who are in higher levels of care,  
5 institutional care and nursing homes, and provide those  
6 folks an opportunity as a priority to live in the  
7 community, or those at risk of being institutionalized or  
8 at higher levels of care.

9 Under the Supreme Court Olmstead decision is an  
10 obligation of the states to provide, to provide those  
11 citizens with even some of the severest disabilities the  
12 opportunity to live in the community. And the programs  
13 that are covered by the Consolidated Plan have been  
14 identified by the federal government as tools states  
15 should use in addressing and implementing their Olmstead  
16 plan.

17 There's a number of, you know, certainly ongoing -- in  
18 almost all the disability divisions of the Montana  
19 Department of Public Health and Human Services, in every  
20 one of them, they identify that the lack of affordable,  
21 accessible, quality housing is the primary barrier to  
22 living in the community. And so that becomes a major  
23 barrier in terms of the State's obligation to help these  
24 folks live in the community. And I would encourage that  
25 that be identified in the Consolidated Plan as a priority.

1           In addition, some of the priorities which are  
2 identified, such as helping homeless persons, I would also  
3 encourage, since persons with disabilities make up a large  
4 number of the homeless population, that you would identify  
5 that subgroup within that priority population as well.

6           So with that being said, my comments are completed.  
7 Thank you.

8           MS. OLSON: Thank you, Michael. I appreciate  
9 your comments.

10          MS. CRIDER: John has a comment.

11          MS. OLSON: John, go right ahead. It sounds like  
12 you have a comment.

13          MR. FIREHAMMER: Yes. This is John Firehammer.  
14 I'm a consultant to the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention  
15 Program. And I would urge you to include some language  
16 regarding smoke-free housing in the State's qualified  
17 allocation plan which is used by the Housing Division.

18          There is some language in there that is a threshold  
19 requirement of all funded projects. Multiunit housing  
20 projects funded through that plan must be smoke-free. And  
21 that's something that's in the latest update of that  
22 document, and it seems like it would make sense to include  
23 a similar requirement for housing funded through this plan  
24 as well. And I'd add also that at the local level,  
25 Missoula and Billings, within the last year, have also

1 adopted the threshold requirements for smoke-free housing  
2 in their five-year plans.

3 MR. BUZZAS: This is Bob Buzzas. I have horrible  
4 feedback. Are you okay? Can you hear me on that end?

5 (A brief discussion was held off the record.)

6 MS. OLSON: Go right ahead.

7 I think we can hear a little background noise, but I'm  
8 not hearing any comment, but please go ahead and take your  
9 time.

10 Any other comments?

11 Again, I appreciate your time today. It's important  
12 to receive all your comments. If you cannot provide a  
13 comment today or need more time to review the document in  
14 order to provide the comment, we understand that, and the  
15 comment period is open until August 12th, 2015. We're  
16 happy to receive your comments in the next couple of weeks  
17 and consider them as we finalize our draft.

18 It looks like we lost --

19 MS. CRIDER: He's back on.

20 MS. OLSON: He's back on. Great. We'll just  
21 give him a minute to sign back in.

22 So I think what I'd like to do is also point out that  
23 the Annual Action Plan, like I said, does have the  
24 15 sections, and you'll find that that looks very similar  
25 to the former documents that we prepared and probably will

1 be very familiar to you as you read it. So I also  
2 encourage you to make any comments about the Annual Action  
3 Plan, but you can combine them as well for both documents.

4 Bob, go right ahead.

5 Bob, if you have a comment, the phone is live, and so  
6 you can go ahead and speak into your phone.

7 Bob, if you're having trouble, you definitely can type  
8 your question in as well, and Stephanie can read it from  
9 the webinar queue. We'd be happy to accept your comment  
10 or question there.

11 MS. CRIDER: He says he will send in written  
12 comments because we can't hear him.

13 MS. OLSON: Okay. Thank you, Bob. We will  
14 definitely accept your written comments. Just please make  
15 sure to get it to us before August 12th -- or by  
16 August 12th. I apologize for the technical difficulty.

17 Any other thoughts or comments?

18 And also, for Bob and everyone, you can send your  
19 written comments about the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and  
20 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan to the Department of Commerce  
21 at P.O. Box 200523, Helena, Montana 59620-0523. And  
22 please put it attention to Consolidated Plan, and we'll be  
23 sure to collect it as part of the record; or you can also  
24 e-mail those comments to DocConPlan@mt.gov.

25 MS. CRIDER: Michael has another comment or

1 question.

2 MS. OLSON: Okay. It sounds like Michael has a  
3 question. Go ahead.

4 MR. O'NEIL: Just one additional comment on the  
5 public hearing format that's been adopted in recent years.  
6 Again, I've made this comment a few times in recent years.  
7 I don't find the new style where -- I think the public  
8 participation is greater if you can allow yourself to  
9 answer some questions from the public. Certainly, in the  
10 public comment, I can understand taking just the pure  
11 public comment. But there's information I think these  
12 hearings -- that people participate in these hearings with  
13 the hope of gaining some additional information in terms  
14 of the program. And today is not as good an example as  
15 some of the other public hearings that are required in the  
16 programs. But it's just kind of a general style that's  
17 been adopted, I think, based on legal advice. But I think  
18 it has a tendency to limit meaningful, collaborative  
19 interaction between the public and the guys that's  
20 administering or managing these programs.

21 So I just wanted to make that as a general process  
22 comment. Thank you.

23 MS. OLSON: Thank you, Michael.

24 So again, the documents are available on our website  
25 and also this PowerPoint presentation, along with the

1 Powerpoint presentation for the Analysis of Impediments to  
2 Fair Housing Choice in Montana is also available on our  
3 website. Happy to help anyone who has trouble accessing  
4 that information. But you can definitely review that, and  
5 those might help inform your comments, as well as the  
6 documents.

7 And again, please do visit our repositories. We have  
8 a specific section on our website that lists all the  
9 repositories and their addresses around the state. So we  
10 not only appreciate that, but hopefully that will be more  
11 accessible. And if anybody has comments about those  
12 locations or their accessibility in regards to reading and  
13 reviewing the Consolidated Plan, we're more than happy to  
14 accept those as well.

15 Stephanie, any other comments?

16 MS. CRIDER: I'm just asking right now if there  
17 are any others.

18 MS. OLSON: Okay. We'll give them a minute.

19 And I'll take this time to also note that the  
20 development of the plan, as you recall, began last year,  
21 as we worked with several of the focus groups and provided  
22 an opportunity for people to be involved in those focus  
23 groups to help with the development of the plan;  
24 additionally, general public meetings in order to collect  
25 information and responses to develop the plan. So we

1 appreciate all of that time and energy and comment that we  
2 received as we were developing the plan. That definitely  
3 helped inform the decision-making process. And we hope to  
4 continue in that realm with encouraging greater public  
5 involvement in the development of the plan so that, as you  
6 see it finalized, it is more representative of how the  
7 comments are reflected within the goals and objectives  
8 established.

9 Anybody have comments in the room?

10 Seeing none, I just want to thank everyone for  
11 attending the public hearing. Again, please definitely  
12 feel free to submit all of your comments to the Department  
13 of Commerce by August 12th at 5:00 p.m. We're happy to  
14 receive them. Again, if you find you have one last  
15 comment and it's on August 12th, you can always e-mail  
16 that, so you don't have to worry about sending it through  
17 postal mail, at DocConPlan@mt.gov.

18 I really appreciate everyone's time today, and I  
19 encourage you to look at the draft documents, if you have  
20 not already, and provide any comments that you might have  
21 as we move into our next five-year cycle. So thank you so  
22 much, and have a great day.

23 (The proceedings concluded at 2:07 p.m.)  
24  
25

COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF MONTANA                    )  
  ) SS.  
COUNTY OF LEWIS AND CLARK    )

I, CHERYL ROMSA, Court Reporter, residing in Helena, Montana, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were reported by me in shorthand and later transcribed into typewriting; and that the -22- pages contain a true record of the proceedings to the best of my ability.

DATED this 7th of August, 2015.

s/Cheryl A. Romsa  
CHERYL A. ROMSA