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Shadow Mountain the focus of DOLA meeting

By [Joe Moylan](#)

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Capital improvements to roads and water infrastructure at Shadow Mountain have been on the radar for both the City of Craig and Moffat County for several months.

Although both parties recognize upgrades to the subdivision are overdue, how to fund those improvements — estimated to cost in the neighborhood of \$5 million — is another issue.

City and county representatives may have inched closer to figuring out a solution when they sat down with Reeves Brown, executive director of the Department of Local Affairs, on Thursday morning at the Moffat County Courthouse for a conversation on the future of energy impact grant funding.

In the past, a portion of energy impact funds were managed by DOLA and distributed among Colorado communities to assist with capital improvement projects similar to those required at Shadow Mountain.

However, in each of the last three years the legislature has moved energy impact money into the state's general fund in an effort to balance the budget.

On Thursday, Brown told local officials Gov. John Hickenlooper has proposed reinstalling a small portion of those funds — \$10 to \$17 million — in an effort to rebuild energy impact grant programs.

But, Moffat County Commissioner Tom Mathers took offense to the governor's proposal considering there is approximately \$250 million in backlogged grant applications dating back to before energy impact funding was re-appropriated to the state's budget.

"I thought that was a slap in the face," Mathers said. "That's a drop in the bucket in comparison to what the fund once was and it's not enough to do anything with."

Brown agreed with Mathers, though the backlogged grants won't be given priority should DOLA receive energy impact funds this year, but defended the proposal as a step in the right direction.

"It's less than a drop in the bucket," Brown said. "We're a long way from getting back to \$70 million, but \$17 million is a lot better than zero."

The conversation turned to how Craig and Moffat County can maximize chances of a grant to upgrade a subdivision Brown quickly discovered is a curious case.

Shadow Mountain was built in the 1970s to accommodate an influx of workers who moved to town to build Craig Station.

The subdivision was never intended to be a permanent fixture in the community and was built on top of water and sewer lines that were not up to city code, officials said.

In addition, decades of wear and tear have taken their toll on roads, curbs and gutters.

Nevertheless, Shadow Mountain has survived and the subdivision needs improvements.

But, it's uncertain who's responsible for making them.

Shadow Mountain has never been annexed into the city, making the subdivision Moffat County's responsibility.

However, water and sewer lines are on Craig's grid and upgrades to those lines would therefore fall on the city.

County commission and Craig City Council members pledged to tackle the project together.

Commissioners took the first step in the process last year by committing \$2 million of its 2012 budget for roadwork in Shadow Mountain.

But, the city and the county were not working on 2012 budgets at the same time, and the city council had already finalized its budget for this year when approached by the county about a potential partnership.

Rather than waste county money on upgrading the roads only to have them ripped up by the city for water and sewer line repairs later, the two parties asked Brown how to maximize their chances for energy impact grant assistance so that both phases of the project can be done right after the other.

"Is there going to be any specific criteria or qualifications for applying for that money if you get it?" city council member Ray Beck asked. "And, would it be to local governments' advantage to apply jointly?"

Although Brown said his office takes collaborative community partnerships into consideration, the key to receiving a grant in what is expected to be a competitive process is having a project that is ready to go.

"Shovel-ready is the key," Brown said. "The state is going to want to see a quick return on its investment and tangible proof of how the money is benefiting the community."

Brown recommended the city and county apply for a grant jointly, but to conduct engineering work first to determine the cost of the project and goals for completing each phase.

The governor outlined reinstalling the energy impact grant program in his proposed 2012 state budget, which still needs to be approved by the legislature when it reconvenes later this month.

If approved, energy impact grant assistance could be available as early as July 1 when the new fiscal year begins.

Brown is hopeful it will happen, but is concerned legislators will find a way to appropriate those funds to the state budget for at least another year.

"I believe the governor is sincere and that he truly wants to see energy impact dollars going back into Colorado's communities," Brown said. "If I'm right, he's going to do everything he can to make sure those funds are available this year."

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