

Memorandum

To: Mayor and Council
From: Tom Baker, Town Administrator
Date: May 17, 2016
Re: Request for Funding: LoVa

Purpose: The purpose of this item is to consider LoVa's funding request for \$4,500 to support LoVa operations.

Background and Discussion: Historically, the Town has provided a small amount of annual funding to LoVa from the Health and Welfare Fund. As you know, recently LoVa's activity has increased markedly and they are requesting additional funding to help pay for the additional work. As you can see from the attached memo from Larry Dragon, both Garfield County and Glenwood Springs have provided significant funding.

In the past, New Castle has funded LoVa from the Health and Welfare Fund (\$500 in 2016); however, this fund is not capable of providing the level of funding that is now being requested. If we are going to fund LoVa at the \$4,000 - \$5,000 level in the future we need to fund it out of our economic development line item or create a new trail planning line item.

Recommendation: The LoVa Trail is an important component to our economic future and will also be a valuable recreation and quality-of-life amenity to the New Castle community. This is an investment in our future. Staff recommends Council award \$4,500 to LoVa and take funding from the Economic Development line item, (Lyle will create a new Trail Planning and Construction line item to track these expenses and allow us to budget for this in the future). LoVa's request for 2017 funding is premature and will be considered as part of the 2017 budget cycle.



LoVa
Lower Valley Trailway

April 29, 2016

Tom Baker, New Castle Town Manager
Box 90
New Castle, Colorado 81647

Re: 2016 Request for Financial Contribution to Lower Valley Trails Group (LoVa)

Dear Tom,

I am writing to ask that the Town of New Castle contribute funds for operational support of LoVa for 2016 and 2017. This request is in addition to the \$500 contributed through the Town's annual grant process. LoVa's work for the Town has dramatically increased due to the following:

1. Governor Hickenlooper's "Colorado the Beautiful, 16 in 2016 Trails Initiative": LoVa successfully led the effort to have the LoVa Trail included on this prestigious list. LoVa spearheaded the planning and development of the presentation that was made to the governor's Inter-Agency Trails Council on April 11, 2016. This Council is working with the 16 trail groups to help move their projects forward. We are meeting with Chris Kehmeier, Colorado the Beautiful Project Manager, on May 19th to provide "status updates and to explore the constraints that are immediate hurdles to progress."
2. New Castle's efforts to plan and construct a section of the LoVa Trail from town to Canyon Creek: LoVa identified the opportunity for planning funds through the DPW State Trails program, assisted in the grant-writing, lobbied the DPW State Trails Manager and a DPW commissioner. The grant was awarded and the planning is about to begin.
3. Steered the New Castle to Glenwood Section as the LoVa Trail's top priority with "16 in 16": LoVa has been successful in getting the City of Glenwood Springs to take on the responsibility for the trail west from Glenwood to South Canyon, previously dropped by Garfield County. Without this critical decision by Glenwood, the connection between New Castle and Glenwood would not be progressing. LoVa has also been successful in bringing Garfield County back into the mix. Though the County is not accepting the responsibility for ownership and maintenance, they are now intently involved in the planning, and have indicated that they will be involved in funding.
4. RFTA's Involvement: LoVa has led the efforts to get RFTA involved. As a "transportation" authority, RFTA owns, operates, and maintains a large section of the Rio Grande Trail, and both Glenwood Springs and New Castle are members. LoVa has had discussions with the RFTA CEO, and the board representatives in Glenwood Springs and New Castle (and other board members) about requesting that RFTA make a policy decision to get directly involved in the trail between Glenwood Springs and New Castle. Upon the request of the RFTA CEO, we are currently updating RFTA staff about the issues for the trail between Glenwood and New Castle. This is all in advance of having this issue brought to the RFTA board at their board retreat in June.

We anticipate that our efforts will be needed at this increased level for New Castle for the next several years to complete the trail connection to Glenwood Springs.

Though LoVa's activity for New Castle and the region has significantly increased, the funding for our operations has decreased. In 2013, Garfield County's policy regarding the LoVa Trail changed, and the \$50,000 annual support for LoVa was eliminated. LoVa had to reorganize and learn to live with an annual budget that was reduced from \$75,000 to a bare minimum of about \$27,000. Garfield County has since recognized LoVa's value to the County and, for 2015 and 2016, has contributed again to LoVa, but at a substantially reduced rate. However, our revenue is still less than this minimal amount. LoVa's revenues for 2015 and 2016 are as follows:

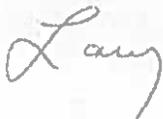
<u>Source</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
City of Glenwood Springs	15,000	15,000
Garfield County	5,000	5,000
Town of New Castle	800	500
Town of Parachute	-0-	1,000
Town of Silt	200	-0-
Aspen Environment Foundation	3,500	-0-
Rifle	-0-	-0- (some support in prior years)
<u>Total</u>	<u>24,500</u>	<u>21,500</u>

To continue our efforts, which have been unwavering, LoVa has been spending down its operational reserves. However, this is unsustainable, and to continue our work for New Castle and the region, to fulfill the dream of the LoVa Trail, additional support is necessary. Though less glamorous than trail construction, operational funding is critically important. Organizations like GOCO, CDOT, the State Trails Program, the IMTPR, and private foundations require that groups like LoVa show significant community support for their operations, preferring instead to fund actual trail construction projects.

To build on the recent momentum, we are asking that the Town of New Castle (and Silt, Rifle, and RFTA) help take us to the next level. With only a handful of volunteers and one very part-time contract staff, we have done well. However, we have only begun to scratch the surface and want to be fully engaged in pursuing the development of the LoVa Trail in ways that will benefit both citizens of, and visitors to, New Castle and Garfield County. To achieve this, we request that the Town contribute an additional **\$4,500 in 2016** toward operational support of LoVa (for a total of \$5,000 for the year), and **\$5,000 in 2017**.

Thank you for your past contributions and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Larry Dragon, Executive Director
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New Castle, Colorado 81647
970-379-9889