

Western Colorado Board Retreat.

On February 11 & 12, 2024 – Dan Kigar and Al Lowande attended the Western Colorado Board Retreat.

Representatives from all the affiliated regional organizations were in attendance, including members from WCA of Mesa County, Uncompahgre Valley Alliance, WCA of Garfield County and ROCC.

Day 1 morning of the retreat consisted of a broad overview of the financial status of WCA and reporting from the several of regional organizers' program work, including:

- Homegrown Prosperity – Local Food and Agriculture
- Just Transition of the Montrose County West End Economy
- Climate and Energy (Oil and Gas)
- Clean and Renewable Energy
- Grassroots Democracy – Western Slope Youth Voice

ROCC has expressed interest in bringing this last program – WSYV – to Ouray County. In Mesa County the program had a very successful effort in 2023, particularly with organizing a candidates' forum for the School Board election, and in preparing for the 2024 legislative session.

On the afternoon of Day 1 attendees participated in a Language Justice Training program by the Community Language Cooperative. This dynamic program made clear, with several crucial examples, the the racist nature and negative impact of language oppression, poignant historical examples being the forced assimilation of native Americans in schools and multiple forced sterilization programs both of which – along with many other examples relied on language discrimination.

“Language Justice is the intentional practice that values interpretation and translation as critical tools for opening communication. The term “language justice” is a powerful way to describe individuals' fundamental right to have their voices heard and the ability to connect in the language in which they feel the most comfortable.”

From the Community Language Cooperative pamphlet.

Day 2 of the retreat was the actual board meeting of WCA. A more thorough discussion of the organization's finances took place, including a discussion of the WCA's financial sponsorship program where the organization offers its non-profit tax status to other organizations (most of which are in the process of obtaining non-profit status) for a modest charge. WCA will continue its financial sponsorship program with certain restrictions on the types of organizations it works with.

The most of exciting news for discussion at the board meeting was WCA's intention to purchase their current offices at 601 N. 1st Street in Grand Junction. After moving their offices several times in recent years, the purchase of the building will allow a more streamlined operation without the negative impact of moving at the whim of a lessor. Essentially WCA will make an affordable down payment then exchange their rent payments to a promissory note with the owner of the building. The purchase of this office building which includes ample parking – a very desirable commodity in GJ – is a great success for the staff and the executive director, Emily Hornback. Update: the contract has been signed for the purchase of the building the closing is March 25th.