

TESTIMONY TO BE GIVEN TO THE HOUSE RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 24, 2020
REFERENCING: SB 20-025

Conservancy District Boards Art And Beautification Projects

Concerning authorization of the Board of Directors of a conservancy district to participate in certain projects within the district, and, in connection therewith, authorizing such a board to consider such participation a current expense of the District.

My name is Bud O'Hara. I have been a member of the Pueblo Conservancy District (PCD) Board for six years. The PCD was established after the 1921 flood of the Arkansas River which devastated the downtown area of the city. As a result of the flood the "Conservancy Law of Colorado" was passed into law by the State Legislature in that same year. The PCD was then organized by a petition filed on May 26, 1922 with the Pueblo District Court. The Court issued a decree on September 4, 1922 forming the PCD and construction of the levee began. So, as you can see, the levee is almost 100 years old. The purpose of the PCD has always been to maintain the levee through Pueblo. It is a concrete lined channel, 2.5 miles in length. After the Katrina Hurricane the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was directed to inspect all the levees in the United States that the federal government insures. The Pueblo levee was found to have numerous deficiencies and was in need of extensive repairs.

After a thorough analysis, taking into consideration the existence of Pueblo Dam and its ability to contain large river flows, the decision was made to rebuild the levee. Replacing the entire concrete face and lowering the levee height by fourteen feet. To date, the PCD has completed five phases of construction and is working on phase six. This work has been financed by a Maintenance Fund Assessment on all the property in Pueblo County. By law, these maintenance fund assessment monies are restricted to paying for "current expenses" of the District. "(CRS 37-5-107 (1)). Those expenses are the "Maintenance" of the levee. As a result of the lowering, the width of the top of the levee went from ~~15~~ feet to 40 feet. The old concrete face was crushed and placed on top of the levee for a driving surface. It has created an excellent area for trails and a viewing area for the kayak course.

The Bill before you would allow an amendment to the current law and allow the PCD to participate in the development of parks and recreational facilities along with artistic beautification projects that improve the aesthetic appearance of the levee through Pueblo. The new face of the levee is a blank 2.5 mile long canvas waiting to be painted. The next two speakers will explain the possibility of murals along the levee in more detail.

Thank you for this opportunity and if you have questions I will do my best to answer them.

Bud O'Hara, Pueblo Conservancy District Board Member





