



The Importance of Met Rec's De-Brucing

February, 2020

Last month, you heard from the Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District (Met Rec) about why we were formed and how our mission has evolved. In part two of this four article series we want to share the importance of Met Rec's successful "De-Brucing" and what it will enable us to accomplish moving forward.

You may recall having seen campaign signs around your neighborhood in 2018 that read, "Unlock the potential of Met Rec, Vote Yes on 7D!" This was part of Met Rec's successful effort to be "De-Bruced," a term associated with the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). The bill was written by Douglas Bruce, and the phrase "De-Bruce" is used to describe the process of eliminating the TABOR restriction.

Colorado is the only state in the nation with TABOR, an amendment made to the state constitution in 1992 to limit revenue at all levels of government, including special districts. As a special district whose primary revenue is sourced from property tax, this had a direct impact on Met Rec. Under TABOR restrictions, as property taxes went up, Met Rec had to decrease its mil levy to avoid exceeding its revenue cap.

The budget constraints imposed by TABOR made it increasingly challenging for Met Rec to fulfil the entirety of its mission. There were not sufficient funds to maintain and replace aging television system equipment, even after essentially dropping all financial support of recreation. Fewer community grants were awarded and less staff time was devoted to recreation. TABOR also restricted the District's flexibility to operate more cost effectively by sharing the costs of its tower infrastructure with broadband and cellular service providers. Combined, the recreation community's growing need for support, paired with the television system's depreciating components underlined the urgency for a successful de-brucing.

In 2018, the community voted in favor to de-bruce Met Rec, allowing the original 1.0 mil limit to be utilized. This resulted in an approximate 75% increase in property tax revenue for Met Rec in 2019. Getting to this point has enabled Met Rec to engage in more meaningful support of recreation. In 2019, Met Rec awarded \$86,266 in grant funding to 19 different community recreation initiatives. An additional \$10,000 contribution was made to the Gunnison Stewardship Fund.

Being de-bruced has also allowed us to take a holistic approach to maintaining, enhancing and expanding the television system. Last fall, we brought on an experienced broadcast engineer to assist Met Rec in identifying priority maintenance needs that will greatly enhance the system's overall reliability. The development of a more robust system will better position Met Rec to consider expansion projects when a Federal Communication Commission (FCC) application window opens. To guide Met Rec in its television improvements and enhanced recreation support, Met Rec committed to developing its first ever strategic plan.

To learn more about our approaches, keep an eye out for our March and April articles. Also, consider attending our next Strategic Planning Work Session, scheduled for Wednesday, March 18th at 4:30 PM at the Met Rec office, located at 710 South 9th Street.