Kansas and Nebraska formally rejected Colorado's plans for a compact compliance pipeline, Tuesday morning, but it appears there is hope the states are getting closer to resolving their various issues.

That is due to the fact that, instead of Colorado immediately calling for arbitration after Tuesday's vote, State Engineer Dick Wolfe called for a continuation of the special meeting to a yet-determined date in two to three weeks. Kansas and Nebraska each agreed to the continuation.

Tuesday's telephone gathering was an official meeting of the Republican River Compact Administration (RRCA). Wolfe is Colorado's commissioner on the RRCA. His counterparts in Kansas and Nebraska, David Barfield and Brian Dunningan, respectively, are the other commissioners.

All three were on the phone Tuesday. There were sites set up in all three states from where the public could listen in, and also make comments. The Colorado sites were in Wray and Burlington. A group of about 20 crowded into a meeting room at the Wray Ambulance Building.

Dennis Coryell, president of the Republican River Water Conservation District Board of Directors, was at the Burlington site and was among those who spoke.

He urged the commissioners to allow construction of the pipeline, which must receive approval from the RRCA, which is the administrative board of the Republican River Compact. Coryell noted the pipeline funding has been in place for a while now.

"Give us the green light…we really, really need to move forward with this pipeline so Colorado is in compliance," he said.

Tim Pautler, a RRWCD board member, also spoke from Burlington, urging for approval of the pipeline. He noted the increased assessment fee to pay for the pipeline is in place, but the property owners who are seeing the big tax bills are not seeing the project happening.

Wolfe had listed the numerous entities that had sent letters of support for the pipeline project. Yuma County and the Yuma County Water Authority somehow were not included, so Commissioner Robin Wiley, speaking from Wray, made it clear both entities fully supported the project.

Terry Hall of Y-W Electric, also in Wray, noted the cooperative was not listed among the supporters. He said large portion of Y-W's business is supplying power to irrigation wells, and it would be devastating to the cooperative if wells had to be shut down because the pipeline was not approved.

Byron Weathers, sitting in at Wray, is a local farmer and president of the Colorado Corn Growers. He said 70 percent of Colorado's corn production is in the Republican River Basin, and it would have a severe impact on the state's economy if that production was dried up.

One gentlemen speaking from McCook, Nebraska, said he heads a water district in that area. He said 40 percent of the farming water is supposed to come from Swanson Reservoir, but there has not been any release from Swanson for years because Colorado is illegally diverting water. He said Colorado should shut down wells if the pipeline is not approved.

In the end, it came down to the three state engineers. Dunningan of Nebraska said the state supports Colorado's efforts to receive approval. However, Nebraska still has issues with protecting the surface water users along the Haigler Canal, and limiting the volume of water delivered by the pipeline as Nebraska then is responsible for sending on the water to Kansas, and there will be evaporation in the process.

Barfield recognized Colorado's "significant" efforts to get into compliance. However, significant concerns remain for Kansas, particularly in regards to sub-basin compliance along

the South Fork of the Republican River.

“For this reason, Kansas will be voting ‘No’,” Barfield said. He added, though, that Kansas believes the states can continue to find a resolution for the pipeline plan.

Wolfe said Colorado recognizes there are issues still not resolved, but Colorado was ready to entertain a motion to approve the pipeline. Barfield approved the motion, then he and Dunningan voted against, while Wolfe voted in favor.

Wolfe then requested the meeting be continued for two to three weeks, with the states continuing negotiations in the interim. Kansas and Nebraska agreed to the continuation.

The specific date will be announced at a later date, after the parties involved can coordinate when all three will be available.