

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2016
9:00am to 12pm
Columbia Gorge Community College,
Large Board Room, Building 1, Rm 1.162
400 E Scenic Drive, The Dalles

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Joan Silver, Fred Justesen, Kathy Ursprung, Stan Kelsay (teleconference), Daniel Hunter, Mary Kramer, and Gary Grossman

GUESTS: Kate Sinner (Regional Solutions), Carolyn Purcell (Columbia Gorge Discovery), Kathy Fitzpatrick (City of Mosier), Trish Neal, Mark Seder, Dennis Morgan (Civic Auditorium), Linda Cassidy (Youth Empowerment Shelter), Celeste Hill-Thomas (MCMC)

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich and Sherry Bohn

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. There was a quorum present. A round the room of introductions took place.

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 2015

Kathy Ursprung moved to approve the September 2015 Wasco County Economic Development Commission minutes as presented. Daniel Hunter seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Carrie Pipinich explained that the Community Enhancement Project Prioritization Process is an opportunity for the EDC to learn about community priorities from throughout Wasco County, highlight key projects that support economic opportunity as they seek funding, and identify areas to focus technical assistance resources at the EDC. Carrie noted that the EDC's prioritization efforts should result in both identification of key economic development projects in the County and direction for staff and EDC Committees as they prioritize use of their technical assistance capacity.

Carrie stated that the process would continue to use the criteria developed last year to provide continuity to the process. They are as follows:

- Address specific economic development challenge or opportunities—compliance concerns, required capacity for growth, necessary infrastructure (broadly defined) for a vibrant community, barriers to job creation, etc.
- Effectiveness—how much does the project impact community capacity (for community sustainability, for moving other projects forward, etc.) and/or create jobs?
- Community Support: Community supportive of moving the project forward; local leadership is positively engaged in the process.
- Funds Committed: financial investment from communities is committed

- Technical Assistance Ready: Potential for action high with some technical assistance to be provided by EDC staff
- Commissioner's Choice: Each Commissioner has an additional 20 points that they can add to the score of a project, or several projects, they think are important to achieving the diversity the EDC has expressed interest in for small versus large projects and communities representation in the final ranking and compensating for any flaws in the criteria utilized for prioritization.

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PRESENTATIONS:

Joan and Carrie explained the process for the annual Community Enhancement Project Presentations. Communities, agencies and organizations presented on their new or significantly changed projects for review and consideration by the Wasco County Economic Development Commission. Project owners reviewed their project proposals and had questions and comments from the EDC.

Mosier projects – Kathy Fitzpatrick noted that Mosier's main focus was to obtain a back-up water source with the development of Well #5. She reported that Mosier was just beginning work on an update to their water system plan with funding obtained this year. Kathy reported that besides the actual development limitations the perception that there is a water problem is an issue for economic development in Mosier. She also reported that Mosier had just completed an emergency backup study so that until they have the new well in place, they have a plan for what to do in case of emergency to support continued water access for the system. She noted that they have 40 lots now available for residential development, and that over the last year she has had 6x the number of permits in the last 6 years combined for development in Mosier. This growth pressure makes it even more pressing to develop this additional water source. Kathy also highlighted the Gorge Hubs project that has been moving forward throughout the last couple of years with development of a system of bike hubs along Route 30 throughout the Gorge. They worked with a TGM grant for planning and a Travel Oregon grant for design and branding. Currently each community along the historic highway way is working to fund development of their hubs.

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center – Carolyn Purcell reported that there continues to be alarm system malfunctions that cause false alarms repeatedly. This is a concern for emergency services in The Dalles as they have to respond to these false alarms. They have bids to map the system, correct wiring issues and install new alarm panels. Fred Justensen asked if disconnecting the existing system and installing a new one had been researched as a potentially more cost effective approach. Gary noted that this might also provide an opportunity to utilize more current technology. Joan noted that this approach might also be more attractive to potential funders. Carolyn said she would look into this option as well.

Civic Auditorium – Trish Neal, Mark Seder, and Dennis Morgan reported that the Civic has been making significant progress on the theater rehabilitation project. During fall 2015 they updated the cost estimates to match labor and materials costs projected for the proposed time period of the project. They also recently decided not to use a phase approach and will shut the theater down in order to complete the renovations because this approach would provide a very significant cost savings. Daniel Hunter asked about the

costs associated with complete shutdown vs a phased approach. He also asked what the time frame that was used for the materials and services. Mark Seder stated that he thought they were about a year and half out for the project. Trish noted that the Civic Board had determined that the cost savings for doing the full renovation at once would make up for the lost revenues around use of the theater. Dennis noted that during that period they would also save significantly on the costs for heating that portion of the building. The Civic also recently updated their Capital and Sustainability Plan to reflect current needs, so the tools are in place to begin a significant fundraising campaign.

Community Harvest Food Co-op – Kathy Ursprung reported that the Co-op is in the midst of a membership drive that will provide information on the feasibility of the project as well as begin the fundraising needed to develop a physical space. The Co-op will have several fundraisers in the coming year to both increase publicity and raise funds. They have approximately 50 members currently, and are seeking approximately 400 as they ramp up outreach.

Youth Empowerment Shelter – Linda Cassidy reported on the current status of the project to support youth in crisis in the Gorge. She noted that they are leasing space now, and have three staff (two volunteer and one paid part time). They are able to provide counseling and family facilitation currently but not house youth in need of somewhere to go. They are working on their application for certification by DHS, which will open up additional sources of contract revenue that will provide a sustainable model for their services. As they grow they will create four additional jobs. They are currently submitting grants to seek funding for purchase of their building and continued growth in services and staff.

Dufur Recreation District and– Carrie Pipinich presented an update on the status of Dufur City Park restroom replacement and fitness trail projects. The restroom replacement will improve the RV Park and make the facility more accessible. The fitness trail will provide an opportunity for Dufur visitors and residents to utilize outdoor fitness equipment along the park trail.

City of Dufur—Carrie also presented an update on the City’s water assessment project. She noted this is the City’s number one priority in the coming year. Without this assessment they are not able to ensure they can accommodate growth that is planned for the community. This assessment will help the City better understand the long term outlook for the water supply and their current challenges with their main well.

City of Maupin – Carrie Pipinich reported that the South Wasco Library Project had raised \$100,000 since last year showing local support, and expected to receive another \$40,000 in the coming months. The City of Maupin sees the library project as part of a broader effort in Maupin that includes a new City Hall and the fiber project that will set Maupin in the right direction for the future.

Mid-Columbia Medical Center – Celeste Hill-Thomas presented an update on the MCMC Hospital Expansion project including the history, dollar amount, funding mechanisms and construction timeline. She noted that the \$55 million project will double the footprint of the hospital as well as move patient care into a new, state of the art

patient tower. Celeste noted that the project would also expand the Emergency Room and add “flex beds” to that facility that will allow MCMC to treat more patients more efficiently, as well as rehabilitate the old hospital building for administration and other services for patients like radiology, etc. Joan Silver asked about the project timing and readiness to proceed in relation to current CEP timeline. Celeste noted that they are working through the planning process and seeking funding this year from foundations, state, and federal government programs.

Wamic Water & Sanitary—Carrie noted that WWSA received a \$20,000 planning grant to update their system assessment. This process will provide needed detail on the updates for the system that will be their focus in the coming years. These updates will require construction of a new, larger reservoir to accommodate fire flows and meet requirements, as well as replacing the distribution system that is very old and increasingly costly to repair.

City of The Dalles – Daniel Hunter reported on the City of The Dalles projects noting that the replacement of Dog River Pipeline was ranked number one, Chenoweth Area Storm Sewer number two, West 6th Street Widening/Traffic Signals number three and the Mill Creek Greenway was ranked number four. He noted that the Downtown Parking and Phase III of the Streetscape Improvements are contingent on the Granada development. He noted that the City had completed their Bicycle Master Plan process and were incorporating recommendations into their Transportation System Plan update, and that the Council had decided that they would not pursue the Downtown Riverfront Railroad Undercrossing at this time.

Senior Center Elevator Uplift – Joan Silver reported that the project was approximately \$100,000 short of funds needed currently. They had one additional foundation to approach, but would also explore additional local support in the coming year.

Carrie reiterated the project scoring process. She requested that the EDC Commissioners prioritize the projects based on the discussed criteria and provide their completed matrix to staff by January 25, 2016 so that staff could compile the prioritized list for review. Carrie stated that staff would provide a list of priorities to Commissioners for feedback on January 28th, 2016 via email. She noted that the EDC has a meeting scheduled for February 4th, 2016 to review the combined prioritization scores, discuss modification to the rankings and to identify key projects to provide technical support to during 2016.

COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY DISCUSSION:

Carrie reported that the EDC’s annual Community Enhancement Project process provides the EDC significant input from stakeholders around the county, and information about community projects and priorities that can be incorporated into our economic development strategy. She also noted that there are additional activities, opportunities, and challenges the EDC should consider as it formulates its strategies and action plan for 2016. These topics are either not formulated enough to be considered for the Community Enhancement Projects process, or are broader than a specific project.

Carrie presented the following projects for discussion:

- NORCOR Industrial Property Development
- Old National Guard Armory Site

- Columbia Gorge Regional Airport
- The Dalles Bridge Deck Replacement Project
- School Facilities
- Wasco County Fairgrounds
- South Wasco Parks and Recreation District

Carried also presented the following broader economic development strategies for discussion:

- Broadband Access
- Forest Collaborative
- County Strategic Plan

Mary Kramer left the meeting at 10:54

Discussion: Joan noted that the School District is working through the due diligence process around their potential facilities expansion, and would likely consider a 2017 bond. Kathy noted that this approach would ensure that the tax burden on residents did not shift significantly as it would be the tail end of the current bond. Kathy Ursprung suggested adding the Gorge Youth Center to the list. She noted that they are working through the project development phase, and it could be a significant asset to the community as the project comes together. Gary noted that the ACTS Board will separate out the Youth Center into its own entity as the project progresses. Carrie asked if there were any other areas that the EDC felt needed more engagement or conversation. Joan Silver suggested adding this to the February agenda for further discussion.

STAFF REPORT

Carrie Pipinich presented the WCEDC staff report highlighting the following:

Broadband Committee

Carrie reported that staff has been working with Q-Life to support development of the feasibility study and identification of resources for the proposed Maupin area fiber project. This included working with the South Wasco Alliance and community members to gather letters of intent to purchase service information, working with Q-Life staff to identify potential additional funding sources, and providing information on assets and demand in the area gathered through the recent studies.

She reported that staff worked with SWA, Q-Life, City of Maupin, and the Maupin Chamber of Commerce to host a WebWorks: Anywhere! Forum in November at the Legion Hall in Maupin. 28 community members attended the gathering that highlighted the broadband needs of local businesses and community institutions.

General EDC Activities

Carrie reported that she is working with The Dalles Main Street, the SBDC, the City of The Dalles, and Rural Development Initiatives to explore implementation of a downtown The Dalles focused business retention and expansion program. This program seeks to gather and analyze data on barriers and opportunities to business development in the

community in order to work with economic development partners to address them. This process will likely get underway in the spring of 2016.

She also noted that she has developed business siting guides for Dufur and Maupin. Both are under review by local partners and will begin distribution as soon as they are finalized.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

Kathy Ursprung reported The Port of The Dalles continues to work with wetland issues. She noted that they have applied for their wetland regional general permit, and that the process could take up to a year for a determination. Kathy also noted that the Port has had a number of inquiries about their available land, and has received some letters of intent.

Fred Justensen reported that commodity prices are low. He noted that the Grass Valley restoration project in Sherman County has been very successful and could be a good model for some of these smaller community projects. He also noted that there is a new alpaca farm in the Tygh Valley area. Fred reported that the county adopted the State of Oregon marijuana laws with only minor tweaks.

Daniel Hunter reported that Gary Rains noted that Free Bridge Brewery's opening in Downtown The Dalles was very successful. He also noted the continued focus at the City on addressing challenges in process for the urban growth boundary expansion. He also reported that the Enterprise Zone workshop and town hall the City hosted in December were successful.

Gary Grossman reported that the Granada Block request for proposals closing date is January 19th and that the Tony's building was moving on a fast track with a strong respondent to the request for qualifications for its redevelopment.

Joan Silver reported that Greg Johnson cannot continue on the Commission due to new job scheduling conflicts. She requested input from EDC members on outreach for potential representatives from the North Wasco County agricultural community to fill that spot.

Meeting Adjourn at 11:40am.

Submitted by Sherry Bohn, EDC Staff