

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY January 20, 2011
Northern Wasco Count PUD Board Room
2345 River Rd, The Dalles, Oregon

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Chair Joan Silver, Carina Schmidt, Dan Durow, Dan Spatz, Frank Kay, and Andrea Klaas

ABSENT: Donella Polehn, Mark Cherniack, and Gay Melvin

GUESTS: Representative John Huffman, Bill Lennox and Kenneth McBain

EDC Staff: Jessica Metta, and Anna Tompkins

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF November 18, 2010 MINUTES: Dan Spatz moved to accept minutes as presented. Frank Kay seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME REPRESENTATIVE JOHN HUFFMAN

Rep. John Huffman attended the WCEDC meeting to answer questions and give a report of happenings in Salem. On February 1st the House of Representatives will be back in session and he will be given his committee assignment at that time, which has been Education in the past and hopes that continues. He gave an update from Governor Kitzhaber's recommendation to the House, and what is to be expected in his budget proposal. To balance the budget Rep. Huffman is serious about tightening allocated funds such as designated funds for positions in departments that have not been filled in over a year. The main work for February will be balancing the budget and assessing the Governor's proposed budget. Rep. Huffman's concern is for separate fund accounts such as schools moving to the General Fund to balance the budget. He explained the intricacies of trying to balance a budget; some cuts are easy while others require tough decisions.

During open discussion time, Andrea Klaas asked what legislation is doing to increase the budget balance, so that the cuts to the budget will not be an issue, in essence, what is being done to increase the wealth of Oregon?

Rep. Huffman responded that Gov. Kitzhaber has mentioned the idea of gaining back forestry jobs, and reclaiming some of the lost timber industry. Oregon is rich in natural resources such as biomass and timber, and the Governor would like to create a balance of conservation and utilization of resources. At this present time legislators are waiting to see how Gov. Kitzhaber will manage the state and what his focus will be in his proposed budget.

He was asked by board members his view on jobs, land mitigation, and land use planning for existing businesses. Huffman replied that he understands that jobs are key, he supports local land use planning but not if it involves the removal of an operating and successful business. In which case he would find it wiser to punish through fines and then set appropriate zoning in order to begin collecting taxes. It is important for every new business to coordinate with planning and on that note, knows that the vernal pools and wetlands are hampering industrial land in the area and understands the need for mitigation that makes sense for each region.

EDC VACANCY

Two applications were received for the open EDC vacancy and the applicants, Bill Lennox and Kenneth McBain, were given an opportunity to present themselves and be interviewed by the EDC board.

Ken McBain introduced himself as a local of The Dalles area, but his work in the medical health field caused him to move around and live in several surrounding states during the last 15 years. He and his wife returned to The Dalles in the past year and have been amazed by all the changes. Ken would consider it an honor to be apart of the decision making for the future of Wasco County.

Frank Kay asked Ken, given his medical background, what he sees in Wasco County to be an opportunity in health care? Ken responded that his specialty was in rural health care and that it functions like a business and there is tremendous opportunity for Wasco County because it is vast in natural beauty and that the WCEDC should maximize on available resources.

Bill Lennox introduced himself by giving a brief history about his life and work and how he came to Wasco County by working in the Sheriff's office. He became interested in economic development through volunteer working with the United Nations in Kosovo. When he returned to Wasco County he ran and was elected to the Wasco County Commission. He respects and understands the work of the WCEDC and is excited about the opportunity to be a part of the outreach to communities in the Wasco County area.

After questions and discussion with candidates, Joan Silver announced that it is time for the board to deliberate and to submit a recommendation to Wasco County Commission. Although not required, the two candidates chose to leave the meeting in order to facilitate the discussion.

Carina Schmidt said she would like to select both to be submitted to Wasco County Commission; she expressed that both seem very qualified and would like to have either one on the WCEDC. There were several others in agreement with Carina's statement that it would be impossible to choose between them.

Frank Kay suggested requesting an expansion of the EDC to 11 members to take both on and said it may come down to selecting a candidate by qualification and background to fulfill the needs of the board.

Dan Durow expressed concern to keep the candidates from being The Dalles-centric. Both candidates have a history of outreach to rural communities however they reside in The Dalles rather than the South Wasco County region. He noted that most of the current members of the EDC are from The Dalles. He discussed the history of the creation of the EDC as being a board with countywide representation. During the following discussion, the board agreed that while both applicants were well qualified to serve on the EDC, the board thought the EDC would benefit from broader geographic representation among the Commissioners.

Andrea Klaas made a motion that the WCEDC is looking for broader geographic representation among the Commissioners and they would like to conduct a wider search for a candidate in order to meet the countywide perspective for which the EDC was intended. Frank Kay seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

AGRICULTURAL PROJECT

Discussion moved to next WCEDC Meeting in March. Joan Silver urged the board to read the memo from Jessica sent out prior to the meeting and be ready for discussion at the next meeting.

STAFF REPORT

Jessica Metta gave her report on assisting Waco County Planning Department in updating the data contained within the Wasco County Comprehensive Plan chapter related to Goal 9- Economy of the State. Much of the work was looking for updated information, since much of the data was from the 1970's and 1990's. Initial review of the data shows that the number of farms is increasing, however the number of acreage in farming is declining, and this could be due to local farming movement.

The 2011 Needs and Issues forms have been sent out and are due back January 21st; the presentations are scheduled for February 17 (corrected from the 18th on staff report sent out to board) at Dufur City Hall from about 10 am to 2 pm.

ODOT's Transportation Enhancement grant is in public comment period and has an online survey for supportive comments of the Fort Dalles Museum and Riverfront Trail projects. Jessica passed out postcards from the Fort Dalles Museum with the link to the survey.

The EDC and MCEDD are hosting the Gorge PubTalk in The Dalles on February 15th at the Sunshine Mill, 5:30pm. Jessica has been advertising to businesses to pitch their product, and asked board to encourage anyone they may know to participate. She also reminded the board that the cost is \$10 for attendance. Andrea Klaas asked if there were vouchers available for businesses for PubTalk, and Jessica Metta said she would look into it.

Jessica Metta also reminded the board of the Vision Action Plan meeting on Jan 26th, 2011 to review The Dalles downtown.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Andrea Klaas reported that they are in the certification process for industrial land in The Dalles, not Port land but old smelter site, and has taken years to get through process. Also addressing the vernal pools concern by looking into dedicating staff to gain comprehension of the vernal pools issue such as mitigation options, area, definition, etc. The cost of mitigation is \$80,000 per acre and trying to grasp the reality of cost. On the plus side of the wetlands issues, is that the DEQ is gaining and understanding that the blanket definition is impeding growth. That there needs to be regional difference in wetland restrictions. All said and done she feels confident about the Port of The Dalles eventually owning the land in the next year.

Frank Kay shared about the Vision Plan workshop coming up for Maupin; the aim is to have a workshop every 5 years. The goal of the workshop is to have needs and issues collected from the community in March, and Andrea Klaas is helping with the process. He also brought along an article from the Oregonian on comparing Oregon counties in median household income changes, based off latest US census information. He himself could attest to the decline within South Wasco County and realized that their loss was not the worst in the state for household income decrease. Discussion followed among board and Frank said he would give the article to Jessica Metta to share among the board.

Dan Spatz shared that the Columbia Gorge Community College approved a new curriculum and also will be taking a trip to Washington D.C., though not expecting funding from this trip, he sees the importance of keeping a connection and giving updates on projects. Announced that he is looking into a Wine and Beer Institute for the Discovery Center to put the Mid-Columbia region on the map as a wine producing area, he will be bringing this idea to the Discovery Center board shortly. If approved then he will then will be submitting funding requests for a feasibility study and marketing plan. He also noted that workforce grant funding is available to the college through the Department of Education if they can prove impact of trade in the area and will be looking to research to see if CGCC meets the criteria. He is also working on the Wi-Fi cloud project for Downtown The Dalles from a Google grant, and the goal is to have it up by summer 2011.

Dan Durow mentioned again a reminder of the Vision Action Plan workshop on Jan 26th. Still working on the new dock and his concern is that the tribe does not want to talk with the City and only with the USACE. A historical permit is also required because pilings are over 50 years old. He has been quite troubled with regulation for historical relevance to begin at 50 years; it seems far too short of a time for buildings and structures. Discussion followed among board on this topic and about having the state appoint persons with knowledge of historical and regional context.

Discussion followed on the cost of projects with the increased amount of restrictions and BOLI requirements with the tedious reporting that is involved. Joan Silver voiced her concern for small communities that are unable to meet the requirements.

Carina Schmidt gave her report that new projects have been good and the local chamber is keeping a weekly newsletter which has been helpful in keeping members and the community informed of happenings in The Dalles area.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:20pm

-Minutes submitted by Anna Tompkins