

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, June 19, 2014
Mid-Columbia Senior Center Deschutes Meeting Room
1112 West 9th Street, The Dalles, OR

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Joan Silver, Frank Kay, Andrea Klaas, Donella Polehn, Mary Kramer, Gary Grossman, Dan Durow, Fred Justesen and Terry Moore

GUESTS: Scott Hege (Wasco County Commissioner), Steve Kramer (Wasco County Commissioner), Scott McKay (Mid-Columbia Senior Center), Maggie Hanna (Agora Platform Manager, MCEDD), Marvin Pohl (Center on Aging) Nolan Young (City of The Dalles), Dr. Frank Toda (Columbia Gorge Community College) and Senator Ted Ferrioli (Oregon State Senator)

EDC STAFF: Amanda Hoey and Sherry Bohn

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joan Silver called the meeting called to order at 10:10 am.

WELCOME FROM SCOTT MCKAY

Scott McKay, Mid-Columbia Senior Center Director, welcomed the commission members and guests. He explained the senior center's mission, current budget, meals on wheels program and thanked everyone for their continued support. Scott gave an update on the Uplifting Elevator project.

Discussion: Scott Hege asked about the number of seniors that use the facility. Scott stated that the facility is volunteer run and that he did not have the exact numbers. Joan Silver stated that, based on the meals on wheels program and bingo, she estimated the center sees about 100-150 people per day. Scott stated that the center provides 250 hours of activity and 60 hours of free space for other activities.

APPROVAL OF APRIL 17, 2014 MINUTES

Donella Polehn provided the following correction: under "Activities of Interest" the Fort Dalles Readiness Center was a ribbon cutting not a ground breaking. Gary Grossman moved to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2014 meeting. Frank Kay seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

EDC COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMUNITY ISSUES

Joan Silver asked each of the EDC Commissioners to give a brief update on their community and its issues

Mary Kramer – Dufur's biggest issue is public infrastructure including water, sewer and street issues.

Andrea Klaas – There is a need to find ways to make the process for finding/making businesses move to The Dalles and Oregon easier. Andrea used Wal-Mart as an example and stated that there needed to be a better/faster process.

Terry Moore – Mosier is similar to Dufur. Mosier needs assistance with community/economic development along with water and sewer infrastructure. Terry spoke about the plans for the Mosier Centennial celebration that will include a number of public improvement projects. He reported that Mosier had a new City Manager who is actively looking for improvement projects like the bike hubs.

Dan Durow – The City of The Dalles and Wasco County recently applied for electronic commerce zone designation. Dan reported that the Riverfront trail project was recently objected to by the tribes so they are now seeking alternatives. He reported that the downtown hotel project is having some funding challenges and that they have until the end of the year to commit. He explained that this project is a 20 million dollar investment into downtown. It will include a hotel and conference center which will bring a large number of new people to downtown.

Frank Kay – The good news is that in the last 15 years Maupin has been working very hard towards growing economic development. Frank reported that the community wide effort has been successful in building 40 new homes and a new market. He reported that successful community events including River Fest, a Motor Cycle Poke Run and Splash for Pink bring people to town. Frank reported that Maupin recently hired a Business Facilitator who has been hard at work on things like a unique shop local program. He also reported that the community is actively involved in the South Wasco County Alliance.

Discussion: Scott Hege asked for more information about the shop local program. Frank explained that through an article in the city newsletter the city asked what would Maupin be like without a gas station, a market, and a hardware store. It then explained the consequences. The article went on to suggest that if each household spent a minimum of 10 dollars more a month, particularly in the winter, at each of those stores the cash flow to these business would be astronomical and cause a significant outcome.

Steve Kramer - Announced the South Wasco County Alliance meeting in Dufur that evening.

Gary Grossman – Downtown The Dalles has a high vacancy rate and family wage level jobs are badly needed. He stated that the Wal-Mart issues continue, that Gorge Commission funding is a major issue and legislation concerning rural development including enterprise zones continue to cause problems.

Donella Polehn – Agriculture is what drives the economic engine in this area. She reported that all the various cherries are coming on at once and it will be an early harvest. Donella stated that regulations and enforcement continue to be an issue. She also reported that the shortage of workers emphasizes the problems with the guest worker programs. Frank Kay added his support to the need to address the state guest workers program problems.

Joan Silver – There is an ongoing and growing need for better help with the senior population. She stated that there needs to be improvement both at the local and state level. Joan reported on the funding channels and their problems.

REFLECTION FROM SENATOR FERRIOLI

Senator Ferrioli thanked everyone for their volunteerism and stated that the issues presented are not new. He stated that all the enthusiasm and experience around the table is not the usual representation of what he typically sees as the problem solvers for our communities.

Water/waste water issues – Its good when a community can get ahead of their systems' problems and needs or the repair/improvement costs cannot be supported by the community. He told the commission members that everyone needed to stay ahead of their infrastructure needs. He suggested contacting the League of Oregon City to find out what other communities have done.

Nolan Young joined the meeting at 10:44 am

Tribal Relations – Senator Ferrioli's advice for working with the tribes was to treat them as a sovereign nation, recognize that tribal government changes very frequently and to ask for consultation not permission.

Fred Justesen joined the meeting at 10:45 am

Empty store fronts – Senator Ferrioli stated that these are a fact in most communities. He stated that the state/communities need family wage jobs.

Downtown hotel project - Senator Ferrioli asked if the community was speaking as one voice on the hotel project. He stated that he was not hearing that single voice and used Baker City as an example. He reiterated that cities/towns need to speak as one voice and that it needed to be a very strong voice.

Growth/Wal-Mart – Senator Ferrioli expressed an interest for a case study on the 40 new homes in Maupin and another one on why it takes 5 years for Wal-Mart to build a store. He stated that if a community, within the urban growth boundary, wants expansion then the state should help work towards it. Senator Ferrioli stated that Wal-Mart development is confounded by the political hostility toward Wal-Mart. He reiterated that areas inside the urban growth boundary should be allowed to grow. Senator Ferrioli stated that ecosystems should not be an issue. The state has done a lot to protect ecosystems but it also needs to protect economic development. Senator Ferrioli stated that tax abatement is a great tool but it is cutting the throat of the local taxing authorities. He stated that there might be other ways to do incentives.

Air Quality - Senator Ferrioli stated that The Dalles may face air quality issues. He told the commission not to be oblivious to the challenges of air quality and used Tillamook Cheese as an example. He told the commission to keep in mind what needs to be done to make this sustainable.

Hot goods - Blueberries and labor force issues fall under “hot goods”. He stated that the problem is not only losing the crop but losing the customer.

Workforce – The senator stated that workforce is tremendously important. He stated that every time someone meets with a federal representative they need to be made aware that guest workers need programs that allow them to work.

Regional Solution – Senator Ferrioli stated that Regional Solutions Committees need to be more regionally focused and need more power to wave land use rules.

AGORA UPDATE AND DEMO

Maggie Hanna gave an overview and presentation of the Agora Investment Platform. Amanda Hoey stated that all the Community Enhancement Projects are on Agora and staff has been encouraging owners to keep them updated.

Discussion: Senator Ferrioli asked if Agora had a public portal. Maggie Hanna stated that she would be glad to help get him on the platform. The senator stated that he thought it would be good for elected officials to have access.

DISCUSSION ON STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Regional Solutions Update:

Kate Sinner gave an overview and highlights of the Regional Solutions Committee along with the governor's view/purpose of them. Kate stated that the people on the ground are aligned with economic development districts. She stated that the Regional Solutions Committee bring team member from state agencies to help and coordinate. Kate stated that the current focus is on infrastructure, support for business clusters and work force training. She also reported that the committee's priorities will be reviewed/ updated in July.

Discussion: Frank Kay stated that the last 4 or 5 years of economic development the Regional Solutions teams have been very effective. He commended the concept and the execution. Senator Ferrioli stated that the Regional Solutions Committees have the ability to be the convener.

Community Outreach Team

Noland Young stated that the Community Outreach Team focus has previously been at the federal level and they will now be focusing on the state as well. He stated that he is looking forward to meeting with the senator. Nolan also stated that the Outreach Team will be meeting with Kate Sinner in July. Nolan stated that he believed that the strength of Community Outreach Team was in giving support to community issues and projects.

Dr. Frank Toda stated that there are multiple pieces of the Community Outreach Team. He stated that they focus on two trips to Washington DC in September and March and that these are tied to the budget cycle. Dr. Toda stated that the team talks about financial needs and policy. He asked if Senator Ferrioli had a Community Outreach Team book and offered to send him one. Dr. Toda stated that the book contains top priorities and pictures of accomplishments. He stated that the team is well liked in DC because they are a collaborator and the information that flows is getting things done. Dr. Toda stated that to date 40 million dollars of federal funds has been brought into the community.

Fred Justesen asked Senator Ferrioli what can we do as a state and region to encourage renewable energy development.

Discussion: Senator Ferrioli asked what the missing component is. Fred Justesen answered that it was public information. The senator asked about the effect on agriculture with the land leases. Amanda Hoey stated that Sherman County is doing a study on the effect and she would share that when it is done. Dr. Frank Toda stated that there will need to be a balancing act on public policy between hydro and wind. He also suggested that solar will play into that balance.

Senior Issues and Costs

Joan Silver reported that a large percentage of the senior population is not financially prepared. She reported that this is a growing community issue and that the state does not really do a lot. Joan reported that the Senior Center is operating on deficit budget and with limited to no public support it is becoming difficult to maintain.

STAFF REPORT

Amanda Hoey presented an EDC Staff report highlighting the following

University of Oregon Analysis: Economic Impact of Events

The final report from the University of Oregon student group, Ann Westmoreland and Nhi Dhao was presented.

Discussion: Frank Kay was surprised with the \$500,000 figure and he felt the report would have been better if there was more data. Both Fred Justesen and Andrea Klaas were surprised as the number of local attendees reported at What the Festival. Scott Hege suggested sending thank you notes to students. Joan Silver asked if there was for consensus to send a thank you card and staff was directed to do so.

Macks to Mouth

MCEDD staff worked with individuals from the City of Maupin and others to submit an application to Oregon State Parks for a planning/ feasibility study for the Macks to Mouth Trail. The trail runs 25 miles along the Sherman County side of the Deschutes River from the mouth to Macks Canyon. It would have positive impact on the City of Maupin, in particular.

Broadband

Completion of a regional resource for broadband information can be found at gorgebroadband.org. It provides a listing of internet service providers by county, public access sites, and information about the ongoing efforts around expanding broadband service to underserved areas and opportunities to develop skills to make the most out of existing internet connections. The website was created with sponsorship from Gorge.Net and The Gorge Project. It is a great resource for the EDC and we will get it connected to our website as well.

Consortium Forum

On May 16, 2014 the Columbia Gorge Consortium (MCEDD, MCCOG, CRGC, CGCC and MCHA) hosted lawmakers from Olympia and Salem at a bi-state legislative summit. The event began with a regional bus tour of capital investments in the western Gorge and discussion of critical regional issues that require collective action on the part of legislators from Oregon and Washington, in partnership with northwest federal delegates and local leadership. A reception held at the White Salmon Pioneer Center followed the bus tour. We anticipate that this will be an annual forum and we will combine the federal and state forums into one, scheduled for

November 7, 2014. It is proposed to include a tour of the western end of the region, so will involve the Wasco County EDC.

Activities of Interest to the EDC

MCEDD is supporting Klickitat County and City of The Dalles in submission of an EDA Public Works application for the Airport Flex space project in Dallesport. This facility is critical to local employers, including MCMC.

The Oregon Investment Board recently approved a loan to support a key Wasco County business: Muirhead Cannery in The Dalles. Funding is pending Gorge Commission certification. It also approved a grant to the Port of The Dalles to help Port of The Dalles business market their products and services at trade shows and to assist with travel for trade missions.

WASCO COUNTY LARGEST EMPLOYER CONTACT LIST

Amanda Hoey presented the Wasco County larger employer contact list and asked for input on others that should be contacted. The following were suggested:

Maupin Market
High Desert River Rafting
Imperial River Company
Barlow Ranger District
Young Life
Azure Standard

FY 2015 MEETING CALENDAR

Amanda Hoey presented the proposed FY 2015 Meeting Calendar. Joan Silver asked about holding the April meeting at the Young Life facility.

Frank Kay motioned to approve the FY 2015 Meeting Calendar as presented. Andrea Klaas seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjourned 11:50 am

Next meeting July 17, 2014 in The Dalles at 10 am.

Submitted by Sherry Bohn, EDC Staff