



WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
DUFUR, OREGON – TOWN HALL  
MAY 9, 2017

PRESENT: Rod Runyon, Commission Chair  
Steve Kramer, Commission Vice-Chair  
Scott Hege, County Commissioner  
STAFF: Tyler Stone, Administrative Officer  
Kathy White, Executive Assistant

At 6:00 p.m. Chair Runyon opened the Town Hall explaining that this is the purpose of the meeting is to hear from the public. He explained that there is some business to which the Board will need to attend at the end of the meeting.

Commissioner Hege noted that the County is currently moving through the budget process with a total budget of \$55.6 million – most of which is pass-through money; the General Fund budget is \$19.3 million which is down 4% from last year. He explained that pass-through funds are monies that come from outside sources and move through the County budget on their way to other entities. For instance, Mid-Columbia Center for Living is building a new mental health clinic through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program; CDBG funds can only be awarded to a government entity, therefore all the money for the \$5 million construction project will flow through the County.

Vice-Chair Kramer thanked everyone for being at the Town Hall. He observed that the Association of Oregon Counties has many active committees; each of the Wasco County Commissioners serves on at least one of those. He stated that Chair Runyon serves on the AOC Executive Board as Treasurer. He explained that by serving on various committees, the Commissioners have a greater voice in Salem when advocating for Eastern Oregon issues.

WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION  
MAY 9, 2017  
PAGE 2

Chair Runyon concurred, saying that it is important to be an active commission. He reported that he was able to make connections for our County while attending a National Association of Counties Conference in Washington D.C. Funding for local roads projects had been stalled until he connected with Senator Merkley's staff in Washington, D.C.

Commissioner Hege announced that we have two upcoming road projects in the southern portion of the County – overlays will be done on Ramsey Creek Road and the lower part of Tygh Valley/Wamic. There is federal funding for both projects through the Federal Lands Access Program; they should be complete by the end of June, 2018.

Barry Kepner stated that he believes 5<sup>th</sup> Street is a County road and there is a speeding issue on that road. Vice-Chair Kramer replied that 5<sup>th</sup> Street is a City street but that the County Sheriff does provide patrolling through the area.

Mr. Kepner said that he wonders if the County could do something about the speeding as it is dangerous for the kids that walk along that route.

Commissioner Hege said that since it is a City street, any striping or signage would be done through the City; however, the City could contract with the County for that work. Dufur Mayor Merle Keys reported that he is working with Wasco County Public Works for that. He stated that the shoulder is not a smooth, solid shoulder which makes it challenging.

Commissioner Hege asked Mr. Kepner if he has spoken to Sheriff Magill about the issue. Mr. Kepner replied that he had; the Sheriff does not seem to think it is a big problem. Commissioner Hege suggested that there are other ways to control speed such as reader boards. Mayor Keys commented that the local school has ordered some of those. He suggested that Mr. Kepner hold on further comments until the City Council meeting which directly follows the Town Hall. Commissioner Hege said that he would also bring these comments to Sheriff Magill.

Frannie Nelson suggested that what is needed is a re-routing of the truck traffic so that they are taking the back routes. She reported that when working in her front yard for 5 or 6 hours one day, she counted 89 trucks and not one was under the speed limit of 25. She stated that they have to build speed as they approach town and they do not slow down. She stated that many times she has seen an elderly couple trying to rush across the road to beat the traffic. She said that she understands the farming needs but there are

also tourists and residents that are being placed at risk. She added that there is also the problem of diesel fumes settling in the valley.

Vice-Chair Kramer re-iterated that this is really a City issue to be addressed by the City Council. Chair Runyon added that the Board will contact County Public Works Director Arthur Smith to see if there is anything that can be done cooperatively with the City.

Mayor Keys stated that there is a piece of land on the other side of Hwy 97 that could be developed; the City is working with the Port. He asked if there are any funds that might be leveraged in Wasco County.

Commissioner Hege said that the best approach is to work with the Port as they know where all the pots of money are for supporting land development. He stated that one issue is transportation; ODOT may have funding available. He observed that when Walmart was looking for a distribution center location, they looked at that piece of property but ultimately selected a site in Hermiston.

Commissioner Hege went on to say that there is also a community component; the community needs to decide what kind of development they want – it is a strategic issue. He stated that it is important to have a plan for how the community wants to grow. He added that there are existing water problems that will need to be addressed in conjunction with any future development.

Barbara McKenzie noted that Commissioner Hege sits on the Public Health Board and asked what can be done for this community with an aging population. Commissioner Hege asked what types of services she would be looking for. Ms. McKenzie replied that one of the issues is transportation to health care. Commissioner Hege observed that Vice-Chair Kramer is involved with some medical related expansion in Maupin; there may be an opportunity there.

Chair Runyon stated that he believes there are visiting nurses. Commissioner Hege confirmed, saying that there are nurses that come into the school and he thinks there are also some home visits. Ms. McKenzie asked if there have been any blood pressure clinics. Commissioner Hege responded that he knows there have been immunization clinics but he is not sure about blood pressure clinics. Chair Runyon suggested that MCMC, a regional hospital, may be able to help with that as well.

Vice-Chair Kramer stated that he is working with Representative Johnson on a project related to Work Force; there is an awareness that we are aging and do not have enough

home health care providers. He said that some of our partners are willing to step up to address this issue but the project is in the very early stages. He added that The Dalles area is a Blue Zone; he will be interviewed in conjunction with that project and will be bringing home health care issues to the table. He concluded by saying that there is also AOC support for this issue.

A citizen asked what a Blue Zone is. Commissioner Kramer replied that it began with a National Geographic study of communities around the world that had exceptional longevity. Those communities were then studied to find what they had in common so that the longevity might be recreated elsewhere. He said that it is a nationwide project; Klamath Falls was the first city in Oregon to be designated as a Blue Zone.

Commissioner Hege added that one of the reasons The Dalles area was selected was poor health statistics for the area; the project targets communities most in need of improvement. Chair Runyon commented that he believes there will be room to include other local communities. Commissioner Hege went on to say that there will be more Blue Zone activity in the next few months; it is a three-year project. They want to make it easy to be healthy.

Chair Runyon stated that one of the things supported by local tax dollars is the Economic Development Commission. He explained that they do surveys around the County to identify economic development needs and opportunities; they develop a prioritized list that comes to the Board of Commissioners for approval. He encouraged citizens to go to the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) website to contact the EDC and become involved.

Doug Peters asked if the County has any plans for Building Codes. Vice-Chair Kramer replied that there is an Interim Director, David Meriwether, for Mid-Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG) which oversees Building Codes. Mr. Meriwether, former Hood River County Administrator, has been meeting with partners around the County; he and Mr. Meriwether will be meeting tomorrow to discuss what he has learned. He said that MCCOG is being assessed for viability; in the meantime it will continue to operate as usual. He reported that one of the inspectors has now been cross-trained to do multi-discipline inspections; a second inspector should complete his cross-training soon.

Mr. Peters said that he understands that the inspectors have to cover a lot of territory, but it is difficult for local contractors when an inspector can only get to your area once a week.

WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION  
MAY 9, 2017  
PAGE 5

Commissioner Hege stated that Wasco County has brought up Building Codes issues a number of times and have gotten push-back from the contracting community, basically telling us to stay out of it. He said that Wasco County wants to address these issues but it has been frustrating; we want to make it more efficient.

Mr. Peters responded that it may be true for contractors in The Dalles area but not elsewhere in the County. Commissioner Hege asked if the cross-training will help. Mr. Peters replied that it will. Vice-Chair Kramer added that he also wants to see them take advantage of technology; there has been some resistance to that idea.

Commissioner Hege observed that MCCOG has been challenging; it is not just Wasco County Building Codes. Vice-Chair Kramer agreed, saying that of the MCCOG five member-counties, four use Building Codes – Hood River opted out.

Chair Runyon stated that he has a lot of faith in Mr. Meriwether; he has experienced a different model for Building Codes and so has a broader perspective. He stated that Mr. Meriwether works well with Wasco County and already has a good working relationship with our County Administrative Officer.

Robert Parke said that he does not feel Dufur is being represented by the Sheriff's Office. He stated that they come through sporadically and there are a lot of different officers – some do their job, some want to but can't and some just want to collect a check. He said that some just sit for hours waiting for a speeder to come to them; some just go through town but never stop – they have all the power and we don't have any. He stated that he wants someone to come through town and walk around and talk to people; instead of being a public person, they are just here to make a bust.

Chair Runyon said that the Sheriff holds town halls around the County and wants to do community policing. He said that he believes this would be an appropriate discussion for one of the Sheriff's town halls, suggesting that getting specific questions and concerns to the Sheriff ahead of time will help him to provide a better response.

Commissioner Hege added that a lot of times the Sheriff attends city council meetings throughout the County. Mayor Keys noted that the Sheriff attends a lot of Dufur City Council meetings. He added that the deputies do spend a lot of time in Dufur in the mornings and after school gets out.

Chair Runyon pointed out that we have 13 patrol deputies for over 700 miles of road for 7 days a week. He said that we want to be sure the citizens are being served politely and

effectively. Wasco County Administrative Officer Tyler Stone added that we are actively moving toward community policing.

### **Wasco County Courthouse – Future Space Needs**

Mr. Stone explained that at the last Board Session, the Board asked that the County Property and Space Committee be convened to look at needs at the Courthouse. He said that since Chair Runyon leaves tomorrow for a veterans outreach project, it is important to get this information to the Board this evening for further direction.

Mr. Stone continued by saying that the Committee evaluated the current Courthouse space usage and future needs. Currently all offices are filled. Vice-Chair Kramer and County Treasurer Elijah Preston are occupying the room behind the Board of Commissioner's meeting room; there are plans to remove the wall between the two rooms to create a larger meeting room at which time there will be no place to relocate Vice-Chair Kramer and the Treasurer.

Mr. Stone went on to explain that there are plans to clear the old jail which is not currently conducive to office space. Right now, that area is used for overstock storage and archives. As the old jail is cleared, we will need alternate storage space. He suggested that all of the archives could be moved into the basement at an alternate location and all Courthouse basement staff could be moved into the new space.

Mr. Stone said that in the long-term, if we add additional staff into the Courthouse, there is nowhere to place them; we would have to try to clear a storage room to create office space. He said the Committee is seeking permission to seek out and begin negotiating for an alternate space.

Chair Runyon clarified by saying that the Team would negotiate and the results of that negotiation would come back to the Board for final approval. Mr. Stone confirmed saying that ultimately, the final decision will be made by the Board of County Commissioners.

Chair Runyon explained that this is not a new discussion; the County has been talking about this for a while. He pointed out that one space was lost for use as an office when it was dedicated as a locked room for the ballot counting equipment.

**{{{Vice-Chair Kramer moved to designate Mr. Stone and the Property and Space Committee to enter into negotiations for and possibly secure property and report**

back to the Board for a decision. Commissioner Hege seconded the motion which passed unanimously.}}}

Chair Runyon thanked everyone for coming saying that Town Halls are held periodically throughout the County – everyone is welcome.

Chair Runyon adjourned the Town Hall at 6:56 p.m.

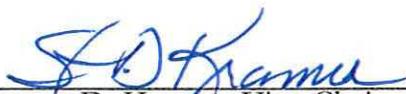
### Summary of Actions

#### Motions Passed

- To designate Mr. Stone and the Property and Space Committee to enter into negotiations for and possibly secure property and report back to the Board for a decision.

Wasco County  
Board of Commissioners

  
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Rod L. Runyon, Board Chair

  
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Steven D. Kramer, Vice-Chair

  
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Scott C. Hege, County Commissioner

