

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Thursday September 22, 2011

Northern Wasco PUD

2345 River Road , The Dalles, OR

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Chair Joan Silver, Dan Durow, Frank Kay, Donella Polehn, Carina Schmidt, Dan Spatz, Gay Melvin and Fred Justesen

ABSENT: Michael Zingg and Andrea Klaas

GUESTS: Dwight Langer, John Roberts, Jim Wilcox, Carrie Pipinich and Michael Held

EDC Staff: Jessica Metta and Anna Tompkins

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 10:01 am. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF July 21, 2011 MINUTES: Frank Kay moved to accept minutes as presented. Carina Schmidt seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

NORTHERN WASCO PUD UPDATE

Dwight Langer, General Manager for Northern Wasco PUD, gave an update of his department. Starting October 1, 2011 the new 17 year BPA tiered rates plan will begin. He explained that the PUD will have a 60% load growth and with the new contract rates will raise 2.8%. The PUD will be conducting a study to review retail customer rates to determine their rate change. He explained that his goal has always been to provide adequate supplies of energy at affordable prices. After his update it was open to the board for questions. Frank Kay asked if there are strategies to build extra power, and Dwight responded that NWPUD is an owner in resources which has provided the best opportunity to keep competitive energy rates, and therefore it is in the interest of the community to insure ownership. Fred Justesen asked if wind has added to energy supply and Dwight answered that they purchase 1MW of wind power but looking into other renewable energy resources that cover base load, not just secondary load like wind and solar.

STAFF REPORT

Jessica Metta gave her staff report and updated the board about the Maupin Business After Hours event on Sept. 15 which she and Mary Merrill talked about the Economic Development Assistance Task Force. She also gave an update on PubTalk which the WCEDC co-hosted with The Dalles Area Chamber, and passed out information about the product pitched by This Old Painter. Next she wanted to discuss with the board the proposed closure of the Shaniko and Antelope Post Offices. She had completed some research on the issue to determine if the EDC would want to submit comments. Discussion among the board followed, and agreed they were concerned about the closures effecting the growth of the towns. After an exchange of ideas the

board agreed to write a letter against the closure of the Post Offices but to include alternative solutions to keep Post Offices open and cost effective. Joan Silvers will work with Jessica Metta on drafting a one page letter with alternatives to keeping the offices open. The draft will be sent to the board before being submitted to the State. Lastly, Jessica gave an update to the board on the Gorge Robotics Program, which has been very successful this year and is looking for volunteers to help with the tournaments.

THE DALLES BUSINESS TEAM

Joan Silvers gave a review of The Dalles Business Team which will assist The Dalles and Wasco County prospective and existing businesses. The Team advocates will take on prospective clients to help direct them to appropriate entities and support efforts needed to locate in the area. Advocates are trained volunteers committed to give the time assistance and help where entities are short staffed. Jim Wilcox stated that the goal of the Team is to identify and help prospective business owners and developers work through barriers. The Team is for new and existing business and advocates have already made contact with clients within 24hrs of a lead.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Jessica Metta gave a review of the past role of the Strategic Action Plan, which the revision will continue but will now include a more defined work plan for the EDC. The new defined work plan was compiled of existing information and extended documentation of things in place by the EDC. She expressed that she is looking for feedback from Commissioners and asked that they discuss and include what they believe to be important. Joan Silvers added that there was a lot of input from Commissioner Scott Hege who guided the committee to be more action orientated and have an EDC project. Review and discussion of the Strategic Action Plan followed. Discussed action items such as an increased role for full time WCEDC staff position, resources and website long-term maintenance, and frequency of regular meetings. The board discussed in more detail the options of holding more WCEDC meetings which was looked at favorably since current meeting agendas are full with limited allowance for outreach and presentations. The board agreed on the suggested ten meetings a year which will allow time for community outreach.

The board agreed to continue with meeting every third Thursday of the month. Jessica will draft a proposed calendar for the WCEDC and will add the drafted work plan to the existing Strategic Action Plan for final approval of the Wasco County Commission. The board was asked to send any additional comments to Jessica during the week.

INDUSTRIAL LANDS PROJECT

Jessica gave an update on the Industrial and Commercial lands project. She had a meeting with TYCO, and discovered that soon there will be public access to Wasco County GIS information. There has been concern however that if the information is put online that entities will no longer want to pay for the cost to support the GIS department. Jessica announced that static maps, satellite images with parcel and zoning overlays, are available online in PDF format accessible through the WCEDC website. She asked the board to please review and send feedback.

Discussion from the board followed on what is available now, next steps, and overall agreed that information is getting more streamlined and easier to navigate. The board thanked Jessica for her work and asked to continue.

REGIONAL UPDATES

Gay Melvin gave an update on Dufur and expressed how impressed he has been by the business of Balch Hotel and We3 Coffee. These businesses have been doing well and have kept busy throughout the year. He also gave a quick update on the tavern, Pastime, in Dufur.

Dan Spatz updated the board on the Outreach Team's meeting with Congressman Walden who had requested to lead the meeting with public entities to find a resolution to the vernal pools issue. Key staffs of Senator Wyden and Merkley were in attendance as well to start working on a solution. He also stated that the Port of The Dalles is working with DEQ and EPA to work with Lockheed Martin about what to do with materials on site and to looking into creating a road through the parcel.

Dan Durrow is working through bids to build a dock and is hoping to award contracts by end of October. The in-water work permit periods ends in March so there is a press for timely work however, is very encouraged to get project moving. He also had a joint meeting with the county and the planning department for a workshop to work on the UGB application. Currently they have archaeology, wetlands, and tribes to address before submitting an application to the Gorge Commission.

Carina Schmidt has been encouraged by all the projects and things happening that have been a long time in the process but are now coming to fruition.

Fred Justesen reported that a new wind farm in South Wasco County is moving forward as land has been leased and now conducting wildlife study. However, nothing will be built until the cost of energy goes up in order to be cost effective. The other update is PGE is looking to build a new power line through the area.

Frank Kay reported that Maupin had its first Business After Hours during the summer and unfortunately had a low attendance so will probably avoid having events during the summer for business owners. However the Chamber does want to have a weekly welcome event to the guests coming into the area for the weekend.

Michael Held talked about projects he will be working on as the new RARE for the Port of The Dalles. Projects currently are to work with business to locate on Port property and working with the DEQ on rodeo grounds to get property ready for development.

John Robert had a focus group of about 20 people to discuss customer service and development progress. He also announced that he is planning a BBQ event to welcome and introduce new staff and have good media coverage.

Joan Silvers made an announcement of a workshop that will be held at the CGCC commercial kitchen for those who make and market food in their own home and looking to expand. The goal of the workshop is to advertise the availability of the commercial kitchen for the community and help grow business through the support of SBDC. She asked board to help get the word out.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joan Silver announced that Gay Melvin's term will be ending asked him to submit request for re-appointment or information for replacement.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:05 pm

-Minutes submitted by Anna Tompkins