

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016  
9:30 am  
MCEDD OFFICE  
515 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
The Dalles, OR 07058

**ATTENDANCE**

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Joan Silver, Kathy Ursprung, Daniel Hunter, Stan Kelsay, Nan Wimmers, Gary Grossman, Frank Kay, Dean McAllister and Fred Justensen

GUESTS: Mathew Klebes (City of The Dalles), Nate Stice (Regional Solutions)

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich and Sherry Bohn

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Kathy Ursprung called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

**SEPTEMBER 2016 EDC MINUTES:**

Joan Silver moved to approve the September 1, 2016 meeting minutes. Nan Wimmers seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**EDC COMMITTEE UPDATE:**

**Wamic Water**—Joan Silver and Stan Kelsay are the committee members. Carrie Pipinich reported that she and Stan Kelsey reviewed Wamic Water's water assessment report and that they were expected to accept the report last night.

**Dufur**—Mary Kramer and Kathy Ursprung are the committee members. Carrie Pipinich reported that the Dufur water/waste water plan was moving forward. Kathy Ursprung reported that the strategic plan/visioning process was going very well and that the sessions had been very well attended.

**Mosier**—Terry Moore and Gary Grossman are the members. Carrie Pipinich reported that Terry Moore had shared that he had met with Union Pacific on behalf on Team Mosier and that the conversations went very well. He stated that they hope to wrap up negotiations in the first half of 2017. Carrie noted that the report could be found at TeamMosier.org

**Broadband**—Stan Kelsay and Frank Kay are the members of the Broadband Committee. Carrie Pipinich reported that Maupin is about done and that they are very excited to come online. She also shared that they are continuing the dialogue with CenturyLink around investments in Wasco County and opportunities for collaboration to support improved service.

**Open for Business** – Kathy Ursprung, Daniel Hunter, Nan Wimmers and Fred Justensen are members of this Committee. Carrie reported that the committee had been working to promote the siting guides and that she has been working with Kathy to rework the EDC part of county website. This will be done in conjunction with the update to Wasco County's website that is underway. Kathy also reported that the committee is discussing hosting workshops on grant writing and website content.

**Agriculture** – Dean McAllister and Joan Silver are the members of this committee. Dean reported that agritourism is a large opportunity and that the committee members hope to meet with county planning in order to offer their assistance. Dean noted that the goal was to bring agriculture knowledge to the commission. Joan Silver reported that the committee is developing a questionnaire/quiz asking about

market access, transportation, entry into farming, labor, food safety and water. This would be a start to conversation around these important topics rather than used as a survey.

### **EDC ACTION PLAN UPDATE-DEMOGRAPHICS, TRENDS**

Carrie Pipinich explained the proposed process to update the EDC's Strategic Action Plan. She requested that at today's meeting the commission discuss trends, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats analysis, and update overarching mission, vision, and goal statements. Carrie proposed that the January meeting focus on the Community Enhancement Projects presentations which will lead into the discussion of strategies as well as project prioritization at our February meeting. Carrie also noted that after reviewing and re-forming committees at the February meeting, each committee will then develop actions around relevant strategies to their focus areas for review by the full EDC prior to our June meeting.

Carrie presented the background and current work of the commission noting that the EDC's work had been driven by several key processes over the last several years in addition to its Strategic Action Plan. She noted that these included the community enhancement projects process and the EDC committees development. She noted that this process allows space for formal dialogue around upcoming projects, provides a platform for both the EDC and communities to highlight key priorities, and enables the EDC to express its fundamental priorities and role in the economic development ecosystem. This lens, in addition to discussion of long term-strategies, is used to help determine the focus of EDC working committees each year. In addition to this review, the EDC also considers where its limited technical assistance resources can have the largest impact on communities, moving projects forward, and the economic development outcomes in Wasco County.

Carrie reported that development of a committee structure is the EDC's strategy to incorporate the more active role taken on with the 2015 update into its organization. Each committee is a working group that further leverages staff time with EDC Commissioner expertise and time to increase the EDC's impact in Wasco County.

*Discussion: Kathy Ursprung stated that development of a Workforce Committee would be beneficial. She also stated that she thought the committee process was very successful. Joan Silver stated that the commission's work this past year had the most recognizable impact ever and made a difference for communities in the county. Frank Kay stated that the commission's accomplishments needed to be communicated. He also noted that additional support with grant writing would be beneficial for communities and organizations. Carrie Pipinich stated the change to more work being done by the committees has leveraged staff time to accomplish more this year. Nan Wimmers stated that she could not imagine the commission without the committees.*

The commission members discussed the presented demographic trends.

*Discussion: Joan Silver noted the key demographic takeaway of the percentage of people over 65 years of age in Wasco County is increasing faster than the State as a whole. She noted that many had fixed incomes and were challenged to fully participate in the local economy. Nan noted that The Dalles housing has risen to the point where it is no longer affordable to many in the region. She noted that many are having to look further afield for something affordable. Kathy noted that ensuring the workforce has the skills for the jobs we currently have and those that are coming in the immediate future is really*

*challenging. Without this piece residents are being left out of the local economy. Frank noted adapting to the jobs we will have in five or 10 years is needed. Kathy noted that to do this she thought involvement of the businesses was critical. Daniel noted that there are also challenges with the workforce not having the needed skills to fill jobs that baby boomers are retiring from. Daniel Hunter reported that the City of The Dalles research had noted a moderate increase of wages, population and new businesses.*

Carrie Pipinich reported that EDC staff had utilized MCEDD's Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy discussions in September and the draft SWOT analysis that came out of those conversations as a basis for the draft SWOT for the EDC's economic development strategy. She noted that it was intended as a starting point for discussion related to the foundations, challenges, and opportunities for economic development in Wasco County.

*Discussion: Joan Silver noted the need to focus on "do able" projects. Nan Wimmers stated the need to enhance the local economy by focusing on jobs that provide a livable wage for the current population rather than focusing on expansion as there is not necessarily room for expansion given the restrictions on urban growth and services. Joan Silver noted that housing is a regional issue and that areas outside of the Scenic Area could be considered with appropriate planning for that potential growth. Frank noted that Maupin had added 40 new homes in the last 20 years, and that these homes paid 60% of the property taxes so the growth has been supporting keeping city services affordable through careful investment.*

*Joan also noted that the increase in homelessness is a challenge in the area and should be included in the threat column.*

*Nan noted that there are currently 43 homes listed for sale, where normally there are about 150 available in the market. She noted that they are seeing an influx of workers coming to The Dalles looking for housing. Some are a result of one household member getting a job in the community and the other continuing to commute into Portland. Some are service sector workers from Hood River that can no longer afford to purchase a home there. And some are retirees with some wealth coming in and looking for a nice place to settle down. She noted that these pressures are making it difficult to find the right housing for those looking.*

*Frank noted he thought the EDC should host a discussion or forum to highlight some of these key issues with legislators.*

*Carrie asked the group to spend some time thinking about the SWOT piece focused on the EDC as an entity. Frank noted he agreed about the need to better highlight and communicate the value the EDC brings to communities throughout Wasco County. He also suggested the EDC needs to consider writing grants to fund specific project activities to further diversify its revenue. Kathy noted that the EDC should better emphasize its relationship with Wasco County and the Board of County Commissioners in particular. Joan encouraged staff and the EDC to continue to develop a clear budget with specific deliverables that outline priority projects and keep the County Commission and partners up-to-date on progress.*

Carrie Pipinich reported that she and EDC Chair, Kathy Ursprung, had worked together to provide the following proposed updates to the mission, vision, and goals developed in 2012 for the EDC in order to provide a starting point for conversation.

Proposed VISION: Wasco County and its communities are economically-robust, livable, and continue to have strong rural character.

Proposed MISSION: The EDC works with partners and local communities to cCultivate economic and business development in Wasco County.

*Discussion: Fred Justesen suggested using sustainability as it can have both economic and environmental implications and reflects things like renewable energy development opportunities. Frank Kay suggested using collaborate and support or something along those lines to better reflect the EDC's approach.*

*Frank also noted that as we move through this process the EDC should think about business development and support. Many of the businesses in the community are run by the generation approaching retirement and thinking about ways to support succession planning could have a big impact. Fred concurred and suggested thinking about the co-op structure to continue these businesses if no individual owner is identified. Stan agreed that exiting a business with a successful transition is something that requires a lot of planning and is very important.*

Carrie Pipinich reported that the current versions of the EDC's goals were largely based on its previous role in the county as an information gathering and advice giving body. However, given the significant changes to the EDC's outlined role and approach to its work, Commission Chair Ursprung and staff propose major overhauls of these goals to further align with the EDC's current role and the above provided information.

Proposed goals include:

**Goal: Vibrant and diverse local economy.** Develop and implement short and long term strategies that build and diversify the economy in Wasco County and its communities.

**Goal: Infrastructure.** Support communities throughout Wasco County in efforts to provide adequate infrastructure to enhance community livability and economic opportunity.

**Goal: Community Capacity.** Work with local partners to provide meaningful technical assistance to bring in additional resources and complete projects that enhance their community's capacity for appropriate economic development.

**Goal: Information Source and Advocacy.** Ensure that partners, funders, companies, and the Board of County Commissioners have up-to-date information on economic conditions, activities, and projects that support a strong local economy in Wasco County.

**Goal: Ensure a strong and sustainable EDC.** Continue to build strong relationships with partners, diversify funding streams, and provide key services.

*Discussion: Stan Kelsey stated that he did not like "ensure" and suggested considering a change in the wording. Joan Silver stated that she thought Information Source and Advocacy should be reversed.*

## **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PROCESS:**

Carrie Pipinich reported that EDC staff was beginning the process of outreach to organization to request project submission by the January 4, 2017 deadline and requested the EDC Commissioners help with this process. Carrie noted that project presentation would take place January 12<sup>th</sup> in Dufur and project prioritization on February 2<sup>nd</sup> in The Dalles.

### **STAFF REPORT**

Carrie Pipinich presented the staff report highlighting a note from Wasco County Planning about a pre-application conference regarding the purchase of American Adventure RV Park.

*Discussion: Joan Silver noted a major concern about water access and Kathy Ursprung noted a concern about fire and other emergency services access. Nan noted that it was a need identified in The Dalles especially as relates to both visitors and short-term employees and out of town workers looking for places to stay.*

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTS:**

Fred Justesen – Fred reported that the Sherman County Grass Valley Pavilion Dinner Dance was very successful. He noted that cattle prices were down to about ½ price, wheat was also about ½ price but cherries prices were holding. He also noted some concern around wind energy siting opportunities. Fred also reported that SOAK was applying for a permit again next year.

Stan Kelsay —Stan reported that Maupin library/city hall civic center project was going into final design. He also reported that the South Wasco Parks and Recreation was moving forward with an almost \$400,000 rehabilitation project for the Pine Hollow Reservoir dock. They would like to raise the funds in 2017 to enhance the facilities around the dock as well as bring the dock back into working order.

Frank Kay—Frank also noted that the Civic Center project in Maupin was moving forward. He noted that they are just looking for funding for the library portion but that the City is in good shape to decide if they would like to look for financing or use reserves for their portion.

Joan Silver—Joan reported that the senior center elevator received city planning approval. She reported that the first payment to contractor had been made and that the elevator is ordered. Joan reported that they are within \$7,000 of the fund raising goal and had received seven grants to support the project in addition to donations.

Nate Stice – Nate reported that Regional Solutions is included in the Governor’s budget for \$11 million dollars. He reported that they will start talking about projects in the spring 2017 and that if things moved forward as proposed about half of these funds would be dedicated to regions while the other half would be competitive. Nate also noted there was a new team member, Sue Davis, from Department of Agriculture.

Gary Grossman – Gary reported that MCMC is preparing for their new CEO search. He also reported that they are moving forward with the plans for their new patient tower project.

Daniel Hunter —Daniel reported that 3 commercial development projects in downtown were progressing. He noted that the enterprise zone would sunset June 2018 and that all agreements for long term abatements need to be completed by June 30, 2017 in order to take advantage of the tax break. Daniel also shared that the new owner of the Honald Building had received a \$3,000 grant to do some engineering for development of second floor housing in that space.

Mathew Klebes – Introduced himself and shared a little bit about his background and previous role with The Dalles Main Street.

Kathy Ursprung—Kathy reported that the Port of The Dalles has been working on a workforce piece with The Dalles High School and are working to coordinate with the Regional Achievement Collaborative and the Workforce Investment Board so that each entity is aware of the work being done locally. She noted that they are also working on a food incubator building and that she has been serving on the food security committee. One of the big topics related to food security was focused on getting food to market as well as accessing it locally.

Meeting Adjourn at 11:58am

Next meeting is January 12<sup>th</sup> in Dufur

*Submitted by Sherry Bohn, EDC Staff*