

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
THURSDAY, June 1, 2017  
9:30 am  
Wasco County Fairgrounds  
81849 Fairgrounds Rd  
Tygh Valley, OR

**ATTENDANCE**

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Joan Silver, Matthew Klebes, Nan Wimmers, Frank Kay, Dean McAllister, Gary Grossman and Stan Kelsay

GUESTS: Denny Ross (SWA), Lisa Gambee (SWA), Bill Arnio (SWA), Mike Davis (SWA), Nate Stice (North Central Regional Solutions), Kelly Howsley-Glover (Wasco County Planning), Cynthia Kortge (Fair Board), Kay Tenold (Fair Manager), Zach Harvey (Caretaker, Fairgrounds/Hunt Park)

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich

**CALL TO ORDER**

Staff called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.

**WELCOME**

Cynthia Kortge provided a welcome to the Fairgrounds and a history of the facility. Approximately 11,000 attendees come to the fair annually with about 80% coming from Wasco County and 20% from elsewhere. The fair has seen significant changes in the last several years and some challenges with its distance from The Dalles. However, Kay Tenold noted that there are a number of large church groups as well as junior livestock groups, rafting group overflow from Maupin, weddings and funerals that book the park in the summer. However, both Kay and Cynthia noted that the grounds were underutilized and that there were opportunities for improvement. Cynthia noted that they are exploring repurposing some of the buildings.

Mike Davis asked if there was commercial space for rent at the grounds. He noted he was thinking about an agriculture business. Cynthia said that they were open to considering all avenues at this point to make the facility more sustainable. Nan noted that other fairs she had been involved with had offered RV storage during the off season as another potential revenue stream.

Cynthia noted that the Fair Board had opted to change the date this year in order to host a full carnival and that they were anticipating growth in attendance and receipts as a result. Lisa noted that the County website overhaul also provided an opportunity for use of an online reservation system for both the camp sites and the other facilities on the grounds.

**Local Organization Presentations**

Lisa Gambee provided an overview of the South Wasco Alliance. She noted that the organization began approximately four years ago and is now a 501(c)3. Lisa shared about their focus areas, including working with South Wasco Parks and Rec and broadband. Their other major project has been support for Amber Anderson's afterschool and summer programs through acting as a fiscal agent for grants for the programs. Lisa noted that if anyone had connections with Northern Wasco Parks and Recreation they were interested in taking the camp to the aquatic center in The Dalles for swimming lessons but were trying to reduce costs as they are out of district. Nan noted that she could reach out in support of a request as well as explore scholarship opportunities if that was not possible.

Mike noted that he is working closely with the SWA Economic Development Committee. The group is looking to attract 10 new businesses that employ 10 workers apiece to support economic development in South County. Mike noted interest in adequate infrastructure, crop diversification, and housing.

### **FEBRUARY 2017 EDC MINUTES**

Nan Wimmers moved to approve the February 2, 2017 meeting minutes. Joan Silver seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **2017 STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

Carrie Pipinich noted that the Strategic Action Plan had been developed based on the EDC's input over the last several months as well as conversations at each Committee about work for the coming year. She requested feedback from the group on any missing items or edits.

*Discussion: Nan noted that she liked the workplan and its connection to each committee so that the work we are doing could be clearly communicated. Mathew noted that in the overview of MCEDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy there was a lot of discussion about increasing wages, and asked if it would be appropriate to incorporate that type of language into the EDC's plan as well. Joan noted that the focus has generally been on attracting enterprises that are economically viable and that they would likely provide wages at an appropriate level. Nan noted that she thought it would be appropriate to focus on higher paid sectors. Dean concurred. There was consensus to incorporate this update. Joan also noted that given we run on a fiscal year, it would be more appropriate to call the Action Plan a 2017/2018 plan. The group agreed.*

Joan Silver made a motion to adopt the EDC's Strategic Action Plan as amended to incorporate 2017/2018 as well as the language around increasing wages. Nan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **WASCO COUNTY 2040 UPDATE**

Kelly Howsley-Glover, Long Range Planner for Wasco County, shared that the Planning Department requested periodic review of their comprehensive plan from the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to work through along with several other plan updates that are needed at the present time. Wasco County 2040 is a chance to provide a vision for what residents and businesses want Wasco County to look like in 20 years. They hosted their kick off meeting for input into the focus areas for this update in April and will continue to gather feedback through September with a series of events in the various communities throughout Wasco County. They have a three year time frame for implementation of this process and acknowledgement of the final plan update from DLCD.

The current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1983 with several iterations of revisions in the interim. The Comprehensive Plan provides the policy framework that the Land Use and Development Ordinances (LUDO) then implement. After the comprehensive plan is adopted and acknowledged, the County will then move through an update of the LUDO to align with that framework. Kelly noted that the policies now incorporated are reflective of the agricultural and forestry practices in the 1980s, but much has changed with these as well as their economic development provisions. The Planning department is seeking input from technical experts, like the EDC, to help develop the policy framework that will support what has been heard in the public outreach.

*Discussion: Joan noted that there are several bills in the legislature that would again change parameters for planning at the local level. She told Kelly that she and the EDC would be happy to engage in any way helpful throughout the process.*

*Dean asked how parcel size and opportunities for additional development relates to soil classifications, and Kelly noted that it can be easier to site a non-farm dwelling or create an additional dwelling on lower quality soil. Joan noted that she had seen rezoning in some other communities that had not thought about the consequences and that she encouraged the County to be very careful as they consider these requests to explore potential outcomes.*

*Kelly noted that increasing capacity in rural communities might be an opportunity that comes out of this process as well. Nan noted that there will likely be no one-size fits all approach to land use given the diversity in communities throughout. And Joan encouraged ensuring that agriculture maintains its viability through land use as well as preparing the area for additional visitors looking for a place to come and recreate.*

*Carrie thanked Kelly and noted that they had also discussed opportunities to support and promote broadband deployment throughout the County. She also noted that it was important to continue engagement with the process by the EDC throughout. The EDC Commissioners and Kelly agreed.*

## **OFFICER ELECTIONS**

Carrie noted that the EDC elects officers annually for a one year term starting July 1. The positions include a chair and vice chair.

Nan Wimmers moved to reappoint Kathy Ursprung as Chair of the EDC. Joan Silver seconded the motion. Dean noted that Kathy has been doing a great job. All voted to approve the motion and it passed unanimously.

Nan Wimmers moved to appoint Stan Kelsay as the Vice Chair of the EDC. Dean McAllister seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

## **STAFF REPORT**

Carrie presented the staff report. She highlighted several items:

- Wamic is continuing to explore funding opportunities and had Board Training from RCAC regarding this process.
- She noted that the Dufur Action Plan had been adopted by the City Council in April and that the EDC is working on identifying specific areas to focus on with the implementation phase.
- The Mosier Committee is working with the City to build on the various public processes underway to complete an abbreviated strategic planning effort.
- The Broadband Committee is working closely with Q-Life and the City of Maupin to identify opportunities for additional funding as well as reducing costs for the Maupin Fiber Project in order to address the funding shortfall resulting from higher than anticipated construction bids.
- The Open for Business Committee is focusing on additional business interviews to compliment The Dalles BRE and Port interviews as well as exploring technical assistance to local communities around grant writing and website development/maintenance.

## **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

Dean McAllister – Dean reported that the Wasco County Farm Bureau is focusing on water and scheduling bills in the legislature and is concerned about their potential impacts. They are keeping an eye on conversations focused on gross receipts taxes as well. Dean also shared that despite serious concerns

around labor traveling to the area for cherry harvest, there seems to be interest through calls checking on start of harvest and labor camps filling up.

Stan Kelsay – Stan noted that he has been working with Mayor Ewing on a variety of issues related to their ongoing projects including broadband, the library/city hall project, and others.

Mathew Klebes – Mathew reported that the Enterprise Zone is scheduled to sunset at the end of June in 2018, with extended abatements required to be in place before June 30, 2017. They are getting several inquiries ahead of these deadlines. One they are currently in conversations with is PowderPure, who has been purchased by International Flavors and Fragrance. Matthew noted that they are beginning conversations about if there is interest in renewing the zone as there are potential paths to do so despite positive changes to our local unemployment rate and income levels. Carrie noted that along these lines, Oregon Cherry Growers has sold to a company out of California.

Frank Kay – Frank noted that the big projects in Maupin continue to move through their processes. They are the Library/City Hall project, the fiber deployment, and the proposed new health clinic. He noted that the Deschutes Rim Health Clinic has hired a team to do some strategic planning and that their next steps will be to develop the local fundraising campaign.

Joan Silver—Joan noted that the elevator project at the Senior Center was moving forward, if slowly. Joan also noted that it is looking like a very busy construction season for local contractors.

Nan Wimmers – Nan agreed with Joan that it has been a very busy time for local contractors. She noted that as the housing market has been more constricted, some potential buyers are looking to renovate their current space to suit needs. However, they are having a difficult time finding contractors. Nan shared that she had pulled some information on listings in South Wasco County. She noted that there are 30 active listings in South Wasco County which is a 10 month supply, but they range from a \$12,500 trailer up to million dollar homes. This leaves few options for those looking in the area. She noted that the North Wasco County has 61 listings currently, with only four in Mosier and two in Rowena. She also noted that they have been seeing homes list for significantly higher than they were this previous year. She shared it is concerning to see such huge demand with very little supply being developed. With the unemployment as low as it is and interest rates continuing to be low, she noted a significant economic shock would be required to change the market. Stan asked if the listings included lots, and Nan noted that there were very few lots available for those looking to build, and that many of those available had CCNRs or required engineering to put a manufactured home on them, so would likely not provide an affordable location.

Nate Stice - Nate reported that the two top regional priorities remain housing and broadband and that He noted that a study by the State Economist's office noted that Hood River was in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile for unaffordable small counties in the country, and Wasco County was also in the low 90s on this list. The Attainable Housing Loan Fund has seen its first approvals. He also noted that the Governor's Office has convened conversations with developers to discuss potential tools for creating more attainable housing and that they will continue to refine these moving forward. He also encouraged the group to let him know if they heard any interest in employer assisted housing development in the area as he was working to explore this as a potential model.

Meeting Adjourn at 11:45am for tour of the Wasco County Fairgrounds and Hunt Park.  
Next meeting is September 7, 2017 in Shaniko.

*Submitted by Carrie Pipinich, EDC Staff*