

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2019
9:30 a.m.
MCEDD OFFICE
515 E SECOND STREET, THE DALLES, OR 97058

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Kathy Ursprung, Matthew Klebes, Gary Grossman, Mary Kramer, Terry Moore, Joan Silver, Frank Kay

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Lauren Hernandez, Tatiana Eckhart

GUESTS: Megan Thompson, Carolyn Meece

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kathy Ursprung called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

DECEMBER 2018 EDC MINUTES:

Motion to approve the December 6, 2018 meeting minutes made by Mary Kramer. Matthew Klebes seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

EDC VACANCIES: POSITION 7

Carrie Pipinich thanked the commissioners for their support in outreach for interest forms to fill Position 7. The EDC received 3 applications for consideration from Bob Krein, Brian McCormick, and Amy McNamee. Position 7 focuses on dryland crops and cattle producers. Carrie asked the EDC to discuss the applications and to provide a recommendation to the Wasco County Board of Commissioners for official appointment.

Joan Silver stated she had worked with Bob many years ago and he brings connections and expertise that will be valuable to the Commission. Mary Kramer stated she felt Bob was the best fit for the position, as he best fits the role the position is intended to fill. Kathy Ursprung noted she liked that Amy has financial experience, though any of the three would be excellent. Kathy stated Brian didn't fit the dryland profile in the position description. Terry Moore stated he met with Brian, and though he has no economic development background, he is dedicated. He is not a rancher, as he works with fruit, but if he is not chosen to join the commission, the EDC should keep his application on file or find other ways to engage with him. Joan agreed, stating the Commission should ask Brian to join the Unincorporated Communities Committee. Carrie noted she had engaged with Brian through partnerships with the Columbia Gorge Winegrowers Association and that he was their current Board President. Matthew observed Bob listed many commitments already standing on his application and asked if Bob is comfortable with the time commitment to the EDC and committee meetings. Carrie replied he had indicated that he was.

Motion to recommend Bob Krein for Position 7 on the Wasco County Economic Development Commission to the Wasco County Board of Commissioners made by Gary Grossman. Joan Silver seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2019 EDC STRATEGY + WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT

Carrie Pipinich stated now is a good opportunity to look at the approach the EDC has had over the last few years after updating its role and implementing the committee structure. She suggested the EDC look at how capacity is allocated, its role, and projects it has taken on. Additionally, if there are gaps in how the Commission has been functioning, those can be discussed. Carrie stated the discussion is intended to encourage thoughts on the process and role of the EDC.

Carrie presented the mission and goals of the EDC, which are based on the role outlined in the orders adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. The goals include providing leadership on economic development around the county, as was done with broadband and enterprise zones; community capacity building, including both providing assistance to local entities to gain community capacity for growth and the capacity for those organizations to move projects forward; and to be an information source between the County and communities.

The EDC's current approach to accomplishing its mission and goals include:

1. Capacity building. This focuses on outreach to smaller communities to develop relationships and support projects with additional staff capacity and expertise where needed. It also allows for the bringing in of additional resources from outside organizations, which was recently done when RCAC gave financial management training for smaller water systems and communities.
2. Leadership role: The EDC is currently only able to effectively focus on one long term leadership issue at a time. Recent efforts of this include broadband, enterprise zone designations, and connecting infrastructure funding sources with rural communities. Carrie noted it can be challenging to take on multiple major issues due to the EDC's staffing capacity. The Commission has to balance resource as opportunities arise. The way that this capacity has been further stretched is by adding value to existing efforts. In instances where a city or community has its own capacity to lead its own projects, the EDC has provided support as needed, but not led the effort.

Joan stated each EDC committee should be more involved with outreach to the smaller communities. Carrie should not be the only one reaching out for projects. The EDC should hold smaller meetings during the earlier part of the year so small communities and the EDC can hash out the community's priorities and how the EDC can provide assistance. There should be more contact between the EDC and communities the Commission is trying to serve. Frank Kay stated the EDC currently holds meetings in various communities around the County and dedicates a portion of the meeting discussing priorities with the host community. He stated the EDC has done a decent job over the last few years to geographically spread the messaging and talent of the Commission. Kathy stated the new process worked well, but it would be good to get feedback from the communities.

Terry stated he feels the EDC has a good variety of knowledge and geographic variety. EDC Commissioners can use their connections to bring in outside knowledge and expertise. Terry noted the example of Frank visiting the City of Mosier to discuss fundraising. Kathy agreed, stating the Commission doesn't necessarily know the capabilities and talents of each member. Frank suggested each Commissioner complete a 'resume' highlighting their skills and areas of expertise, and talents. These can be shared within the group.

3. Information Source: The EDC provides information on economic development projects and activities around the County. Examples of this include the Community Enhancement Project List and business siting guides.

Kathy stated advocacy should be added as an approach, suggesting the EDC can become a stronger voice for the County for economic development through advocacy. Carrie asked the Commission if advocacy is the appropriate role for the EDC and how it might fit in. Kathy explained the EDC already does this through letters of support, but it would be good to know the threshold or limit. Gary Grossman stated the EDC should know for certain that a community is in a position to move forward with a project, and the EDC should have enough knowledge about the project to accurately advocate. Kathy stated the EDC can support the Board of Commissioners through this role as well, as it did with the Dog River Pipeline.

Frank noted that the County gets approached by a variety of organizations asking for fund contributions for projects. There is no official vetting process for these projects. Frank has discussed this issue with County Commissioners and suggested the EDC vet the projects presented to the County. The projects would need local support measured in dollars or expertise and would need to be sustainable in terms of management, operation, and momentum. It would be easier for the County to make informed decisions about these projects with guidance from EDC. Matthew Klebes stated it is important to have a process and clear criteria.

Mary Kramer stated the EDC is doing great work, but one missing piece is working more directly with local businesses. The EDC could be facilitating outreach to businesses to bring in new opportunities into the County. Mary explained she is not sure what this might look like, but this area is the one area where there is opportunity for additional focus. She also noted that this maybe an issue around available time. Gary added individual cities have processes to determine the logical businesses that could work in their communities. The EDC could help make known that these communities are looking for those kinds of businesses and that they have the capacity for them. Frank explained Maupin contracts with the Small Business Development Center. Rick Leibowitz with the SBDC has created a list of businesses he believes Maupin has the capacity for; however, there is no mechanism in place to get the word out. Kathy stated the EDC supports businesses through informational booklets about how to start businesses in different communities around the County. Mary asked how to best reach business owners interested in locating in a rural community. Carrie stated that because Maupin supports the additional capacity through Rick, Maupin may be a good place to start figuring out what this role for the EDC might look like. Mary stated Dufur would benefit from this opportunity as well, but as Maupin is further ahead with the process, it could be a good place to start.

Matthew stated that taking into account the current funds the EDC receives from Wasco County, the EDC has to decide if it is going to address lots of little things, focus on one large issue, or do a mixture. It is good to tackle issues that impact the entire County, like last year's enterprise zone work. This year the focus could be business retention and expansion. It is easy to spread too thin, so capacity should be considered. Carrie agreed, stating the EDC could focus on a theme, though the Commission should consider how to balance this with the capacity building role.

EDC COMMISSIONER AND STAFF UPDATES:

Carrie Pipinich – Carrie explained that the Ford Family Foundation approached the SBDC about additional resource opportunities. One project Rick from the SBDC included in the application was to look at a businesses in communities where there have been large investments in broadband to help those businesses take advantage of the resource. Maupin is on this list, and Carrie will discuss with Rick what this will look like. Economic Opportunity Analyses are also moving forward, and Carrie will get that information out as it becomes available.

Tatiana Eckhart – Tatiana noted she is working on developing the small cities committee and identifying strategies to address shared problems.

Megan Thompson – Megan gave background about herself, including that she worked for Oregon Cherry Growers for 18 years. She now works for Cascade Cherry Growers with the goal to make sure growers get returns and remain economically viable.

Frank Kay – Frank stated the Civic Center project is being built and major construction should be completed in September. The project still needs \$600,000, which the City is prepared to cover through a loan if fundraising efforts are unsuccessful. The health clinic has had setbacks. Neither of the recent bond measures for the supplemental levy passed.

Matthew Klebes – Matthew noted the City of The Dalles started the Local Government Academy with 12 participants. Sessions focus on the role of local government. The Brownfield grant work is slowly moving forward. A survey will be done to see if any tanks are buried as well as doing an inventory of potential sites. The City may enter into an IGA with the County and the College to provide funding for the CGCC skills center match. The City of The Dalles Economic Opportunity Analysis has begun and is led by the Planning Department.

Carolyn Meece – Carolyn noted much of her time is focused on infrastructure. Business Oregon is in discussion about a pilot project around working with Travel Oregon and rural communities and tourism-type businesses.

Gary Grossman – Gary reported the new owners of the old bank hotel are in the preparation stages of opening the restaurant portion of the building. Gary will likely be re-appointed to the Urban Renewal Agency next month.

Mary Kramer – Mary reported the Dufur school bond passed and will support student safety focused changes to the school. The skills center for CGCC hopefully will come together with the City of The Dalles and Wasco County IGA. If the project moves forward, it gives the opportunity for the college to offer more work force training looking at trades and general skills students can use to find entry-level jobs.

Kathy Ursprung – Kathy stated the veterinary building is moving along. She also shared that the school district will have a work session to discuss recruiting for a new superintendent. The financial officer is also retiring.

Terry Moore – Terry stated the Transportation System Plan in Mosier is moving along. They have almost completed the site selection for the joint-use facility as well, and are developing a fundraising plan that will be finalized soon. The RFP for design help has already been written.

Joan Silver – Joan noted this is a legislative year, and there are bills that may be introduced that may impact small cities in the County. It will be worthwhile for the EDC to keep awareness of these bills.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Frank stated he will put into writing the EDC's suggestions for vetting projects that are presented to the County Commission. This draft will be on the next agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be March 7, 2019.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Submitted by Lauren Hernandez, EDC Staff