

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2019

9:30 a.m.

DUFUR CITY HALL

175 NE 3RD ST, DUFUR, OR 97021

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Kathy Ursprung, Gary Grossman, Nan Wimmers, Bob Krein, Frank Kay, Megan Thompson, Matthew Klebes

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Tatiana Eckhart

GUESTS: Nate Stice, Steve Kramer, Josiah Dean, Kathy Bostick, Jack Henderson

CALL TO ORDER

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

DUFUR COMMUNITY UPDATES

Jack Henderson stated that enrollment in Dufur School continues to grow, and the School now has up to 336 students. There are also now two preschool programs in Dufur for three and four year olds. Both programs are continuing to grow. The preschool programs are supported by tuition from parents with some scholarship students.

The District also received a \$4 million matching grant from the State for the \$4 million bond they passed last fall. Jack noted that it passed with 70% of the vote. Jack also noted that they sold the bonds at a premium and got an extra \$450,000 through the sale.

Phase 1 projects include reconfiguring the existing parking lot and creating a separated bus drop off/pick up are, leveling the school's football field, remodeling the front entryway, installing electronic locks on all the doors, remodeling the school's bathrooms, and installing air conditioners in the gymnasium. The District will also renovate the Petersburg school, aiming to re-open the school in 2020 or 2021. Currently two head start programs use the school, and there are plans to eventually use the school for grades K-8. The total estimated project costs for Phase 1 of the District's development plan is \$5.6 million. Phase 2 of the plan involves building a new bus barn, two new locker rooms in the upper gym, and installing a new weight and training room for Dufur's high school.

Jack also mentioned that the Dufur School District scholarship funds have approximately \$1.4 million in them. Every year, the scholarship fund gives approximately \$50,000 to Dufur high school students who qualify for the award. Jack noted that the ultimate goal of the scholarship fund is to provide college tuition grant aid for four years.

Carrie asked if the preschool was meeting demand currently. Jack Henderson noted that there is more interest. He also shared that it has been difficult finding qualified staff for the preschool programs, and that they have had to train their own. Jack noted that the preschool costs are covered by tuition but that other community members step up for those who cannot afford it. Jack

also shared that they have started a preschool a program at Celilo supported by \$18,000 from the school district and \$10,000 from the Early Learning Hub. He noted that they are seeing great results from the pre-school students entering into the elementary school.

Steve Kramer asked about the current extent of broadband capacity in Dufur. Jack Henderson responded that Dufur is still struggling with broadband, but after a delay for a few years it appears that Dufur School will be connected with a planned fiber optic project.

Kathy Bostick stated that the City is working through completion on their well pump replacement project. The City is also working on finalizing their plans and funding for their waste water system upgrades. Regarding transportation safety, the City is approximately 30% complete with the design for the intersection by the school with We3 Coffee to improve safety standards for students walking to school.

Josiah Dean stated that the City of Dufur completed its Strategic Plan with support from the EDC a couple of years ago. Josiah is working with the Chamber of Commerce on a new welcome sign project building on the branding project completed for the City. The Chamber and local businesses have also developed several items of branded merchandise based on the project. Josiah also noted that Dufur has been included in the expanded Enterprise Zone for Wasco County.

Steve Kramer stated that Dufur's Recreation District is in the process of looking for a new Parks Manager, and they have submitted a grant application for Dufur Pool as the pool is in dire need of rehabilitation. The Commission is in the middle of the budget process for Wasco County and is moving forward with a master plan for Dufur Park with Mark Seder. The Board of the Recreation District is still seeking one member and the open position is on the ballot. Meanwhile Dufur's Recreation District has been setting funds aside in reserves to use for various capital projects.

Steve mentioned that the Park will present in June to the Oregon Parks Commission regarding the rehabilitation of Dufur Pool. He also stated that he plans on reaching out to MCEDD staff to assist in preparing for the presentation.

JANUARY 2019 EDC MINUTES

Motion to approve the January 10 2019 meeting minutes made by Frank Kay and seconded by Megan Thompson. The Motion passed unanimously.

2019 EDC WORKPLAN FINALIZATION

Carrie Pipinich noted that she has been working with Joan Silver on the Unincorporated Community efforts. She noted that they would like to approach one community about targeting efforts to really move forward rather than spreading thin across many systems this year. They have been focusing on providing support to address infrastructure challenges in particular.

Nan Wimmers asked about the infrastructure inventory and Carrie noted that that was done as time was available in order to better understand the needs of the various systems and identify opportunities to share resources or approaches. Matthew Klebes made the observation that many of the communities in the region have been addressing similar issues around infrastructure needs.

Carrie stated that the Broadband Committee is working with partners in exploring opportunities to increase community access to broadband, and has also been working to identify potential funding sources to invest in broadband to support strong communities and expand current broadband efforts. The Broadband Committee is also planning to work with Maupin to support utilization of the fiber system in place to support economic and community goals.

Carrie informed the group that the Open for Business Committee has been working on updating Business Siting Guides to incorporate changes in permitting, service provision, and the Enterprise Zone expansion. The Committee will also reach out to Mosier to explore the possibility of developing a Mosier Business Siting Guide. Matthew noted that one challenge has been determining the most effective strategy for getting the guides into the hands of business owners at the time they need them and that the Committee is working on strategies to do this. Kathy Ursprung mentioned that the business guide helped one of the businesses she has worked with recently.

Frank Kay stated that he likes that the EDC reviews its Committee structure annually to ensure it continues to meet key needs.

EDC COMMITTEE + STAFF REPORTS

Carrie Pipinich reviewed her staff report. She shared that Wamic Water & Sanitary Authority received \$20,000 to study strategies for addressing infill and infiltration issues in its wastewater system. Carrie also noted that staff and the Small Cities Committee have been working with the City of Dufur on developing signage for the city as a part of current branding efforts. She noted that the three communities in Wasco County that applied for Safe Routes to School grant funding were not funded. Moving forward, staff has been looking for opportunities to engage with the program to ensure that communities in Wasco County are set up for future success in accessing this grant funding.

Carrie also mentioned that Maupin is currently moving through an Economic Opportunities Analysis to identify needs for employment lands for the next 20 years. Matthew Klebes asked for additional documentation relating to Maupin's Economic Opportunity Analysis. Carrie replied that she would share the documents she had and noted that The Dalles was going through a similar process but taking a phased approach.

Carrie shared that the Broadband Committee has been working on developing training sessions in Maupin and other areas beyond Wasco County including Hood River, Sherman County, and Condon. The overarching goal for these sessions is to increase opportunities to share information and lessons learned between businesses regarding broadband resources and tools available to rural communities. Staff has also been exploring opportunities to assist local cities in accessing grant funds from the USDA RD Reconnect Pilot Program to address broadband needs.

Tatiana Eckhart stated that she has been working with the Wasco County Fair Board on developing a strategic plan for their organization, the Fairgrounds and Hunt Park to address organizational and facility challenges and opportunities. Staff interviewed community stakeholders and members of the Fair Board and hosted two planning retreats with the Fair Board. The first retreat focused on developing a mission, vision, and guiding principles for the organization and the second planning retreat focused on developing a series of goals, strategies and actions for the Board to take to achieve its overall vision for the Fairgrounds and Hunt Park.

Carrie Pipinich noted that MCEDD submitted another community application to the AmeriCorps RARE program to continue having additional capacity for EDC projects.

EDC COMMISSIONER + STAFF UPDATES

Gary Grossman – Garry stated that he is back on the urban renewal agency.

Nan Wimmers – Nan noted that housing prices are not affordable for many of the residents living in the area who are looking to purchase homes. Of the current available homes on the market, about 84% of them are listed over \$285,000. Since the beginning of the year, only 30% of houses on the market have been sold at prices over \$275,000. The current market has made it difficult for first time homebuyers and the region’s workforce to be able to afford housing prices. Nan also noted that this trend has had other effects too, as it’s hard to attract new businesses to the area if there aren’t any affordable options for them to live.

Bob Krein noted that the lack of affordable housing has been a huge challenge for Maupin as well; workers come to Maupin for seasonal employment or construction projects but have nowhere to live during their time there. He noted that because of the major construction projects it has been busy even over the winter in town. Matthew Klebes asked if the City of Maupin could partner with the Wasco County Fairgrounds and Hunt Park to provide RV campsites in the off season for people working in Maupin. This could be mutually benefit both the Fairgrounds and Hunt Park in terms of revenue and for the City of Maupin, which would then have an additional housing option for the city’s short-term workers.

Bob also noted that with the planned solar farm this would likely continue. Bob also noted that the Oasis Resort was also back on the market.

Bob shared that he is also part of the newly formed Bakeoven Rural Fire Protection Association, which is a 501(c)3 made up of the land owners in the area. Because they have created this association, they have now accessed additional firefighting equipment for free or very affordably. He also noted that he would like to have a discussion in the County about ways to create improved fire breaks and other strategies to reduce impacts of wildfires moving forward.

Steve Kramer noted that the Governor’s Oregon Wild Fire Council now has a full Board and will hold its first meeting on April 23. The focus of the meeting will be on wildfire mitigation, suppression and recovery.

Kathy Ursprung – Kathy stated that the Port of The Dalles is currently working on Gorge Works. They have interns lined up for the summer and anticipate finalizing placements in the coming month. The Port will also be bringing on a lead intern to coordinate the cohort. So far a number of strong candidates have applied for the program. The Port advertised these internships throughout colleges in Oregon and Washington, and Kathy mentioned that it has been exciting to see the program continue to grow.

Kathy shared that the Port of The Dalles has received many inquiries regarding the remaining industrial land, which is quickly dwindling. The Port’s workplan involves exploring opportunities to locate more land to utilize for industrial growth. Dufur has also been a part of that discussion but infrastructure access and capacity is an issue for Dufur’s industrial land.

The Port is also working with a consultant familiar with the food industry to refine ideas for a food business center.

Northern Wasco School District received a grant to complete a facilities master plan. The Board anticipates scheduling a public meeting in the near future to discuss facilities planning. Six out of the seven Board positions are up for reelection this year, and there are many candidates.

Frank Kay – Frank stated that construction for Maupin’s new Civic Center is well underway. The City is planning on having an event called ‘Hardhats and Hors d’oeuvres’ that will be open to new residents of Maupin and others that the City hasn’t yet asked for fundraising support. The City’s goal is to raise \$50,000 to put towards completing the project. The City is currently about \$500,000 short of completing the Civic Center project, but made the decision to begin construction to avoid continued increases in overall project cost. They will borrow any remaining funding to complete the project.

Frank stated that many of Maupin’s small businesses are now using the new fiber optics broadband. The City spent \$4,000 for a national press release about the project, and OPB picked up the release and might come do a more in-depth story regarding broadband efforts in rural America with a case study on Maupin to be distributed nationally.

Frank also mentioned that there are currently no vacant storefronts on Maupin’s Main Street.

Frank stated that the City of Maupin has launched an effort to find a city manager. The City currently has 12 staff members, a \$2 million budget, and operates an RV park that generates between \$200,000 and \$300,000 per year. With the level of activity in the City Maupin needs a City Manager to continue building capacity instead of leaving the majority of city operations to the Mayor.

Megan Thompson – Megan stated that annual cherry blooms are 2-3 weeks behind schedule. On The Dalles Chamber of Commerce side of things, the city’s annual Cherry Festival is coming up at the end of April from April 26-28.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS

Frank Kay asked about where conversations are regarding the EDC’s Community Enhancement Project process playing a role in vetting projects for potential funding from the County with Enterprise Zone Funds. Steve noted that the County is still exploring options for the use of those funds.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:02am.