

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2019  
9:30 a.m.  
Via Zoom

**ATTENDANCE**

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Frank Kay, Gary Grossman, Joan Silver, Nan Wimmers, Mike Courtney, Justin Brock, Megan Thompson, Terry Moore, Bob Krein  
EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Tatiana Eckhart  
GUESTS: Michael Held, Kathy Schwartz, Steve Kramer

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. A round of introductions took place.

**DECEMBER 2019 EDC MINUTES**

Frank Kay motioned to approve the December 5, 2019 meeting minutes. Mike Courtney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATES**

Carrie provided an overview of the region's response to COVID-19 and its impacts on the local economy. MCEDD partnered with the Regional Solutions Team to set up a bi-state Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team with partners from the five counties MCEDD serves as well as two additional counties that are part of the North Central Regional Solutions area. The resilience team incorporates approximately 50 community stakeholders and partners from around the region including representatives from investment boards, county economic development staff, Chambers, Business Oregon, Ports, the SBDC, and others. This group meets weekly.

In addition, MCEDD has been compiling and sending out a digest to keep up-to-date with the shifting policy frameworks and resources availability. MCEDD also continues to update its webpage [mcedd.org/ready](http://mcedd.org/ready) with current information, resources and tools for businesses and individuals impacted by COVID-19. Carrie also noted that Nate Stice and she were also asked to support the local emergency response to engage around economic impacts of COVID-19.

**EDC APPOINTMENTS**

Carrie reported that staff has received one interest form to fill Position 9 from Fritz Ellet. Joan noted that she highly supports Fritz' application for the position, sharing that she has worked with Fritz previously and he brings a wealth of knowledge to the table around the agricultural and business world. Frank Kay noted his apparent commitment to economic development. Frank Kay moved to approve Fritz Ellet's application to be recommended to the Wasco County Commissioners for Position 9. Mike Courtney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Carrie Pipinich noted that staff had not received an interest form for Position 2, which represents Central Wasco County and the Dufur area. Carrie asked the group to reach out to potentially interested community members or send interested candidates' contact information to staff. Carrie reported that the City of The Dalles is working to hire a new staff member in the Planning Department focused on economic development that would fill the City's position on the EDC. Staff will work with the City to support this appointment. Frank Kay asked if Greg Price, the

Director of the CGCC SBDC, might be a good fit for the group. Carrie replied that it would be helpful to have Greg's engagement with the EDC but the current openings are focused positions representing specific areas.

Carrie Pipinich announced that MCEDD has a new Executive Director after Amanda Hoey left to take a position as CEO at Oregon Wheat. MCEDD published the open position in December and after conducting a round of interviews, the Board appointed MCEDD's Deputy Director to the position in March. Frank Kay inquired about sending a 'thank you' note to Amanda Hoey to thank her for her leadership at MCEDD and her prior work with the EDC and to wish her well in her new position and the group agreed.

### **2020 EDC WORKPLAN DRAFTS**

Carrie Pipinich provided a brief overview of the Committee workplan drafts and accomplishments over the past year. Several strategies may be added to work plans as the landscape shifts in the face of COVID-19 but overall staff anticipates moving forward. Carrie asked EDC members to consider volunteering for any of the four subcommittees if they have not done so already. These committees typically meet at least once in the interim between EDC meetings and provide additional guidance and support for staff to move projects forward.

Terry Moore acknowledged that significant changes in the social and economic landscape would continue to happen for many months, and asked about the best ways the group could support economic development during this time. Terry pondered temporarily putting the workplans on hold until there is more clarity around the state's response to COVID-19. Joan Silver noted the current hold on many aspects of the regional economy but stated that the workplans should still be utilized when the time is appropriate. Commissioner Steve Kramer stated that projects such as wastewater and water service system developments cannot be put on hold and must continue to move forward for the benefit of public safety and health in the region.

Joan Silver noted that although the current approach to supporting community projects may need to shift, it is generally understood that the EDC's work to benefit Wasco County will not stop. Mike Courtney reiterated the need to keep committee workplan strategies in place to move our communities forward. Carrie noted that the EDC should start thinking about how best to position Wasco County and local communities to rebound from this event and push shovel-ready projects forward once the immediate crisis is over. This includes connecting industries to resources during this crisis and as we move forward. The draft workplan process provides a foundation for the EDC to consider immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19, and Carrie noted staff will be seeking input and feedback as the EDC begins to consider its longer-term response plan.

### **STAFF REPORT**

Carrie reviewed highlights from her staff report. These included:

- The City of Dufur has submitted its application to Business Oregon for funding of the city's water/waste water system.
- In Maupin, staff has been working with the city to support their process of hiring a consultant to conduct a housing needs analysis. Staff will continue to participate and engage in the process as the project moves forward in the coming months.
- Staff continues to work with the City of Maupin, Maupin Chamber of Commerce and other local partners in South Wasco County to support broadband-focused business training and opportunities for students to engage in this sector.

- Staff has been participating in The City of The Dalles' Economic Opportunity Analysis Buildable Lands Inventory process. The process has slowed but staff is working to develop comments on that process and providing feedback on inventory mapping to ensure it reflects conditions on the ground. Mike Courtney asked to be added to the Open for Business Committee; Carrie affirmed that she would add him to the subcommittee.
- Carrie also informed the group that MCEDD was awarded a Rural Opportunities Initiative (ROI) grant from Business Oregon to support business training, particularly in Wasco County but also throughout the region to an extent. Training topics will focus on three main areas including adaptation for resilience, access to capital, and leveraging broadband based tools.

Carrie noted that these pieces may shift to become more applicable to the local business community given the current situation. Business Oregon has confirmed that this program will continue to move forward and the grant's resources will remain available for use by MCEDD.

### **COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

Mike Courtney stated the Port continues to operate though staff members are generally working from home. Their biggest undertaking lately has been engaging with the Columbia River Gorge Commission to coordinate an effort to expand The Dalles' UGB. Mike noted concerns with the consultant's draft report regarding the Buildable Land Inventory in The Dalles.

Frank Kay reported that the City of Maupin issued an RFP for its old City Hall and Library site.

Megan Thompson shared information regarding a petition to OSHA being considered that would require significant shifts to housing and sanitation protocols. There is a lot of uncertainty around what harvest season will look like and many agricultural producers are exploring strategies to accommodate safety concerns.

Justin Brock shared that Wasco Electric Co-op and the PUD continue to operate. Both utilities are waiving disconnect and late fees for all customers during this time. After holding a special Board meeting session, the Board unanimously decided the PUD will defer the rate increase that was approved in December until May 2021. Some of the capital infrastructure projects have slowed down as well. Justin also shared that the PUD is developing a feasibility study focused on installing solar panels in and around one of the sites near the aluminum plant. The PUD is exploring the option of establishing a community solar program where customers can subscribe to blocks of panels that the installation would produce.

Terry Moore noted that he has been working to support Mosier Center, and given the current pandemic he thinks it's likely that any localized funding campaigns will be held off for now.

Bob Krein provided an overview of the impacts of COVID-19 in Maupin and the South Wasco County economy. Bob shared concerns about lack of funding for projects as revenue streams dwindle moving forward. Camping and recreation sites along the Deschutes River are currently closed, with the busiest parts of the year coming. Many of Maupin's most vulnerable community members are being hit the hardest as tips decrease throughout the community with many businesses closed or operating in a limited fashion. Maupin's seasonal workers might not come to Maupin at all this year, impacting multiple facets of Maupin's economy moving forward. Bob noted that while he agrees with current precautions, he worries for the future of Maupin's economy the longer the stay home orders remain in place. Carrie Pipinich stated that staff would

continue to engage with Travel Oregon and local Chambers of Commerce to support messaging around appropriate visitor outreach as restrictions shift.

Commissioner Kathy Schwartz thanked the EDC for their work in this time. A primary issue lies around capacity for our rural healthcare systems as officials want to ensure that our rural healthcare systems are not overwhelmed if an outbreak were to occur. She noted the County is engaging in discussions around how to support orchardists and the farm workers that typically travel to the region to work during harvest season. Kathy thanked the PUD for working to support its customers in need. Kathy thanked Bob for his report on the recreation industry, and noted that although camping and outdoor recreation is generally safer than being in more crowded spheres, the County's concern is that a large number of visitors could potentially overrun our region's limited healthcare system with an influx of patients from other areas and impact local communities as they use services. The more everyone abides by the state's stay-at-home orders, the sooner we will be able to resume typical life more quickly.

Joan Silver reported that the Mid-Columbia Senior Center is currently closed, though the Meals on Wheels program is still operating out of the center.

Commissioner Steve Kramer reiterated Kathy Schwartz' sentiment around the need to continue social distancing measures to flatten the curve. He noted that while the region as a whole faces negative impacts, the health and safety of the region's communities is the highest priority for the County. Officials are working hard to support efforts throughout the county, and Steve encouraged the group to reach out with any additional questions or concerns. Bob Krein clarified that his initial statement was directed more for future purposes, and he hopes that after stay-at-home orders are lifted Maupin can establish a marketing campaign to attract visitors to the area to support local businesses.

Michael Held reported that Business Oregon has repurposed funds from its flexible programs towards response efforts. To support getting the needed personal protective equipment for medical providers, Business Oregon has acted as liaison between OEM and 130 companies across Oregon to coordinate manufacturing and production processes for PPE. Business Oregon has also provided \$700,000 to be distributed by Oregon Community Foundation to local lenders that can quickly direct funds toward businesses in immediate need. Michael noted that infrastructure programs are still in place to support communities.

Carrie shard that MCEDD has several financing programs available, including a small stop-gap loan capped at \$35,000. MCEDD is also working to complete an application to OCF for additional resources to support existing loan clients.

### **OTHER NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

### **ADJOURN**

Meeting Adjourned at 10:49 am.

*Respectfully submitted by Tatiana Eckhart, MCEDD Project Coordinator.*