

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2020  
9:30 a.m.  
ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

**ATTENDANCE**

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Mike Courtney, Nan Wimmers, Alice Cannon, Frank Kay, Joan Silver, Meghan Thompson, Justin Brock, Terry Moore  
EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Lauren Hernandez  
GUESTS: Steve Kramer, Michael Held

**CALL TO ORDER**

Megan Thompson called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. A round of introductions took place.

**JUNE 2020 EDC MINUTES**

Joan Silver motioned to approve the June 2020 meeting minutes. Frank Kay seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**2020 EDC OFFICER ELECTIONS**

Carrie Pipinich introduced Megan Thompson as the EDC Chair. Frank Kay explained he agreed to chair the EDC in June, but due to personal circumstances and the need for a focus on local projects, he will not be able to fulfill this commitment as anticipated. He noted he will not be renewing his seat on the EDC and stated it has been a pleasure to serve for the past 12 years. Carrie thanked Frank for his service. She stated Megan, as Vice Chair, was willing to step into the Chair role and asked the Commission to fill the Vice Chair position. Nan Wimmers volunteered to fill the Vice Chair role.

Mike Courtney motioned to appoint Nan Wimmers to the role of Vice Chair. Frank Kay seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**EDC APPOINTMENTS: POSITION 2**

Carrie Pipinich explained an interest form has been received from Tony Brumley for Position 2, which represents the central area of Wasco County. Recommendation from the EDC will go to the County Commission, and the County will make the formal appointment. Carrie noted Alice Cannon will join the EDC as the City of The Dalles representative after formal appointment in October.

Joan Silver motioned to recommend to the Wasco County Board of Commissioners the appointment of Tonya Brumley to Position 2. Frank seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Carrie stated three EDC members have appointments expiring in December. She will reach out to see if those members are interested in continuing to serve on the Commission. This will be an item on the December agenda.

**2020 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PROCESS**

Carrie Pipinich explained the EDC's annual Community Enhancement Project Prioritization Process occurs during the fall each year. The current process for gathering project information focuses on holding local meetings in Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, The Dalles, and at least one

gathering for unincorporated communities and very small cities with additional depending on level of interest. These meetings provide an opportunity for attendees to give an overview of their project and discuss local community priorities. After the local meetings, staff develops brief project descriptions based on the overviews provided at the meetings and gives project owners an opportunity to review for accuracy. This information is the foundation for the EDC's prioritization discussion in December. Carrie stated she would like to keep the process similar while using a virtual format.

Joan Silver stated there should be a backup plan on how to allow outlying communities to participate in online meetings. Carrie replied staff will do direct outreach if necessary, and emphasis can be put on areas where connectivity may be more challenging. Nan Wimmers stated many communities are familiar with virtual meetings, and virtual meetings might allow for more input from outlying areas.

Carrie summarized the ranking criteria including focus on: projects that addresses an economic development challenge; critical infrastructure; readiness to proceed; and the impact and timeliness of ranking. Carrie stated the EDC could explore a focus on improving longer term economic resilience or opportunities to address impacts of COVID-19 in this year's process. Carrie stated she anticipates the traditional types of projects will be presented to the EDC, but she won't know until she conducts more outreach. Frank stated that for Maupin, most projects will be traditional, though Pine Grove may different needs this year due to fire impacts. Terry Moore stated the EDC doesn't need to consider emergency projects separately, as most of the projects the EDC assesses end up in the categories of ready to proceed or technical assistance. If a community needs assistance with specific funding issues, EDC staff or commissioners can assist with that, but there is no need to redo all of the ranking criteria. The group agreed.

Carrie summarized EDC prioritization steps include staff working with the Chair to develop a countywide prioritization list. This list will be provided to the EDC for discussion at the December meeting. The draft list developed by the EDC will be presented to the County Commission for input and acknowledgement in January or February. The list then moves to MCEDD, where it is incorporated into the regional economic development strategy. The EDC will also be asked to discuss projects that will benefit from technical assistance, which will inform the proposed work plans to be developed in the new year.

### **STAFF REPORT + COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATES**

Carrie Pipinich reviewed highlights from her staff report, including:

- Staff has continued to engage with local and regional stakeholders through the Mid-Columbia Economic Resilience Team (MCERT) and Unified Command structure supporting response in Wasco, Sherman, and Gilliam Counties to address economic impacts and engaging with the business community. Additionally, the EDC has continued to work with Northern Wasco County PUD to support their business grant program focused on utility bill relief as businesses reopen.
- Business Oregon has awarded \$100,000 to MCEDD to support business grants in Wasco County.
- Staff supported an application for the City of The Dalles and Wasco County for an additional \$200,000 to the City and County that will be matched by \$150,000 from the City and \$50,000 from Wasco County.

- MCEDD received funding from EDA to recapitalize its small business lending program to support additional local small businesses as they being to reopen and to support additional economic response and recovery work related to COVID-19.
- The Unincorporated Communities Committee worked with Wamic Water & Sanitary Authority to provide input for their engineering study. Next steps focus on a one-stop meeting to review funding opportunities and exploring if an income study may be needed.
- The Small Cities Committee organized a planning meeting with the Cities to both discuss COVID-19 impacts, as well as determine a topic that will be a good fit for a training session in the fall. Staff worked with the City of Dufur to support their waste water project and application for the Safe Routes to School Infrastructure grant program. Staff worked with the City of Maupin and local partners to discuss next steps with the Deschutes Rim Athletic Complex. Staff also met with the City to discuss a funding gap in their water system master planning, upcoming visioning process, and consultant selection for their housing needs analysis.
- The Broadband Committee worked with Q-Life and Mosier WiNet to support submission of grant applications for infrastructure funding. While these applications were unsuccessful, it did provide an opportunity to check in with communities in South Wasco County around connectivity. Staff has continued to engage with Q-Life around the East Cascades Interconnection project as well. Staff has also begun discussions with representatives from CRITFIC and The Next Door regarding connectivity needs at the in lieu fishing sites where there are year round residents and students as well.
- Staff is working to support hosting trainings on digital marketing, taking your business online, and cyber security for small businesses.
- The City of The Dalles and coalition partners are working on finalizing necessary agreements for EPA to support implementation of the Brownfield Assessment Grant program between the City, County, and Port.
- The City of Antelope's water system construction has been completed. MCEDD staff is working with the City to finalize the grant requirements.
- MCEDD is excited to welcome a new RARE AmeriCorps member, Jane Allen. Staff thanks Tatiana Eckhart for her service with MCEDD and the EDC!
- Staff worked with EDC Commissioner Joan Silver to support development and submission of comments to the Columbia River Gorge Commission on the 2020 management plan updates as directed by the EDC at our June meeting.

### **COMMISSIONER UPDATES**

Joan Silver reported expenses continue at the Mid-Columbia Senior Center, but no fundraising events can be held due to COVID-19. Joan is proud of community support, and the center has had over 120 individual donors step up. The center is still loaning out durable medical equipment, but scheduling is required.

Frank Kay reported Maupin's economy is better than anticipated. The grocery store is doing well but is struggling with supply issues due to distributors. Fishing and rafting are doing well, and the RV park is open. The clinic continues to struggle and has seen high staff and board turnover. This is detrimental to south Wasco County. The Civic Center will require an additional \$1 million to cover the final cost of the building. Frank noted fundraising for this will take a considerable amount of time.

Nan Wimmers reported prices for real estate continue to rise. Numbers show sales are similar to previous years, even with the pandemic. The Dalles Chamber has done a good job figuring out how to continue support businesses through the pandemic.

Mike Courtney reported the Port has a new RARE AmeriCorps member who will be focusing on planning and policy issues. The results of the buildable land inventory completed by the City of The Dalles were disappointing, as the results show there is plenty of ground available but do not take into account that most buildable land is controlled by one or two entities. The Port has decided to look into acquiring unused or under unutilized industrial ground.

Alice Cannon reported that next steps with the buildable lands study include presenting the results to the City Council for final action. The City will address also address a land use appeal for the 72 unit residential subdivision on the east side of town.

Justin Brock thanked Carrie Pipinich and Tatiana Eckhart for assisting with the PUD's small business assistance program. The board is determining how to use the remaining amount of economic development money. There are many energy assistance funds through MCCAC for residential customers to help manage past due amounts as well. The PUD and the Co-op continue to help neighboring utilities support efforts to keep utilities on for customers with the significant fires. The Tygh Valley Sub Station is actively being rebuilt.

Terry Moore reported that for the most part, Mosier's economy has not effected by COVID-19. The grocery store and post office are still open. Fire issues have been a challenge. The joint use facility is on hold. Fundraising was set to begin in March, but did not move forward due to the pandemic. Terry noted the difficulties of students in rural areas with poor connectivity as well as the struggle for parents without child care.

Michael Held reported the State's COVID-19 Small Business Relief Program grants have been given to intermediaries like MCEDD to get out locally, though the funds were fairly restrictive. Business Oregon is working with the legislature to reducing restrictions. There is \$17 million still remaining to be allocated by November. Carrie stated MCEDD is trying to figure out how to message the changes in eligibility so those who applied and didn't qualify look at it again to see the new criteria. Michael reported the Dog River project may see positive movement depending on the Forest Service's decision of the special use permit. A conversation will be held around a potential Community Development Block Grant with a focus on childcare.

Steve Kramer reported the County continues to provide core services and will continue to do so.

Megan Thompson reported the orchards had few cases of COVID-19 during harvest. Overall, it was a good harvest, but the orchards are waiting on returns. Pear and apple picking was minimally impacted by fires in south Wasco County.

### **OTHER NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

### **ADJOURN**

Meeting Adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Lauren Hernandez, MCEDD Office Administrator.*