

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2020

9:30 a.m.

ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

**ATTENDANCE**

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Alice Cannon, Mike Courtney, Nan Wimmers, Frank Kay, Joan Silver, Meghan Thompson, Justin Brock, Terry Moore, Tonya Brumley,

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Jane Allen, Alice zaWitt

GUESTS: Commissioner Scott Hege, Michael Held, Commissioner Steve Kramer, Kelly Howsley-Glover, Mayor Rich Mays, Commissioner Kathy Schwartz, Dan Spatz, Isaak Staats, Nate Stice,

**CALL TO ORDER**

Meghan Thompson called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. A round of introductions took place.

**AUGUST 2020 EDC MINUTES**

Frank Kay motioned to approve the August 2020 minutes. Mike Courtney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**OPEN POSITIONS**

Carrie Pipinich thanked Joan Silver and Frank Kay for their years of service with the Wasco EDC. Frank and Joan are stepping down from their positions with the EDC at the end of this year.

Frank currently holds position 3, which is focused on representing South Wasco County, particularly the Maupin area. MCEDD staff has started to conduct outreach for this position and recently received a note expressing interest after the deadline. MCEDD staff is working to get forms processed and will return back to the EDC before the next meeting. Frank offered to support outreach.

Staff noted Nan Wimmers currently holds position 6, which she started when she was on the The Dalles Chamber of Commerce Board, but she is no longer on their Board. Nan would still like to participate with the EDC. Carrie noted that she appreciates Nan's perspective coming from the real estate industry and is requesting a recommendation that Nan be moved to Joan's current at-large seat, position 10.

MCEDD staff conducted outreach to Maupin Chamber of Commerce and The Dalles Chamber of Commerce for interest in Position 6, and received interest from the CEO of The Dalles Chamber, Lisa Farquharson.

Mike Courtney made a motion to recommend appointment of Lisa Farquharson to Position 6 and Nan Wimmers to Position 10. Frank seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

## **2020 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PROCESS**

Carrie reviewed the annual CEP process. She that staff met with organizations in Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, and The Dalles during November to discuss local projects and the community's priorities for the upcoming year. Outreach occurred to Antelope, Shaniko and the unincorporated communities but there was no attendance at the meeting so staff outreached individually to several entities with ongoing projects. After the meetings, EDC Chair Meghan Thompson and Carrie sat down to create a rough draft of the top ten ranking prioritization, keeping in mind local priorities, a geographic balance for the region, and paths forward for projects.

Terry Moore asked why there were projects from The Dalles and Maupin that were not identified as number one that ended up in the top 10 project list. Carrie discussed the thought process behind the current ranking noting:

- The City is currently working on the final funding components for the Dog River Pipeline so ranking it number one would help carry this project to completion.
- The Fifteen-mile Watershed Storage Facility pilot project was placed in second because of the impact it would have on agriculture, which is a key industry for Dufur, and the greater Dufur community at large, who uses the aquifer to support it.
- The Q-life project has been hard to prioritize locally since it will have a very broad impact, but felt it was important to rank in the top ten because of the widespread broadband issues facing the County, especially in light of recent connectivity challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- DRAC has received strong, unified community support and has some positive momentum. There are currently two health clinic projects proposed in Maupin with divided local support, staff felt that forward momentum this year would be challenging.
- The Aviation Maintenance Training Hangar project is a joint partnership between Columbia Gorge Community College and the Columbia Gorge Regional Airport and will have a significant impact on employment for the region. Carrie noted that if the current application with the EDA for this project is successful, the ranking might not be as valuable, so that is something the group should keep in mind.
- The Wastewater Treatment Plant project in Mosier is farther along than some of the other Mosier projects discussed, such as the Comprehensive Plan Update. This, coupled with the impact it would have on development in the community, staff felt the ranking in the top ten would be valuable.
- Carrie shared that the Donkey Trail project was included in the top ten ranking because of the importance of having a transportation connection in Maupin for emergency services and overall project readiness. Maupin is currently working through their Parks Master Plan, which may cause the City to shift their priorities related to the parks projects. Carrie noted that during the CEP meeting with Maupin, the group agreed that

the acquisition of additional RV sites near the City Park would also have a great impact due to the high volume of tourists in this area during the summer season.

- The Mill Creek Greenway project in The Dalles did not meet the cutoff to make City's prioritization discussion but staff worked with Scott Baker, Executive Director of Northern Wasco County Parks and Recreation, to get more details. The NWCPR has funding applications in progress, as well as the funding to match, so prioritization could be the final push to get this project to break ground.

Terry Moore commended Carrie for focusing on the impact the proposed projects will have on economic development, as well as project readiness, when making considerations for prioritization. Frank Kay provided additional context for the two health clinic projects currently proposed in Maupin.

Terry commented that the City of Mosier has been negotiating with Union Pacific to shift surplus funds allocated for Rock Creek Park to be used for the Joint Use Facility. Because of these additional funds on the table and considerations with the Fire District exploring bonding capacity, Terry believes that the Mosier facility should be ranked in the top three. Frank Kay noted that the DRAC facility in Maupin is farther along and already has wide funding support, so the ranking may not be as valuable for this project.

Megan Thompson inquired about the fuel storage enhancement project in The Dalles and Alice Cannon noted that the project had been scaled back to meet immediate needs and funding was still needed to move forward.

Terry asked about the status of grants for the Fifteen-mile watershed project. Carrie noted that economic development is not a huge factor for current funding streams for this project, so a higher ranking may not be as impactful.

Mike expressed a concern about capacity to support maintenance requirements for the Mill Creek Greenway project. Alice noted that the Urban Renewal Board in the Dalles recently approved match funding for an application that will be completed in early 2021. The Parks District will contribute some match funding for the project as well.

Terry asked about UGB/UAB discussions. Alice noted that a recent meeting had been held with the Dalles Port Commissioners, City Commissioners, and The Dalles City Council to discuss outcomes from the processes over the last year and next steps. Rich Mays noted that the City is committed to developing strategies to work with CRGC in the future.

Dan Spatz gave an overview of the childcare facility project. He noted that the Washington State Department of Commerce recently allocated \$100,000 for a feasibility study to develop a childcare facility in Goldendale, WA. Dan agrees it is too early for this project to be prioritized, but asked the EDC for support to start pushing this project forward. Dan noted that lack of childcare is a barrier for businesses, students, staff, faculty of CGCC and for the Gorge at large. CGCC currently houses the Childcare Partners program but stressed that the college would not be able to run a facility like this on their own and would need community support.

## **SPECIFIC SITES OR PROJECTS MEMO**

Carrie gave an overview of the memo to the EDC covering upcoming projects, planning processes and focus areas for consideration as the EDC scopes their work out for the coming year. Carrie asked the group for input on additional opportunities that the EDC should consider in the future.

Alice Cannon noted that housing access and affordability remain a top priority issue in The Dalles. Meghan Thompson and Mike Courtney agreed with a framework that includes adding priority issues focused on housing. Tonya Brumley commented that broadband should remain a priority for the EDC.

Mike Courtney moved to adopt the ranked list of projects and four priority issues as noted below and Frank Kay seconded. Motion carried and was approved unanimously.

1. Dog River Pipeline
2. Cascade East Interconnection
3. Joint Use Facility/Plaza with Bike Hub
4. Fifteenmile Watershed Underground Storage
5. DRAC
6. Fuel Storage Enhancement Upgrades
7. Aviation Maintenance Training Hangar
8. Mosier Tertiary Wastewater Treatment
9. Donkey Trail
10. Mill Creek Greenway

Priority Issues:

- UGB/UAB in The Dalles
- Childcare Access
- Housing
- Broadband

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

Carrie reviewed highlights from her staff report and shared that staff has been working with the County to support a plan for granting a recent allocation of approximately \$730,000 of remaining CARES Act funds to small businesses by the end of this year. MCEDD is working with the County to get the grant program finalized and applications sent out in the coming week. Carrie asked for support from the group in outreach. Carrie acknowledged the EDC members for their continued support to help the communities of Wasco County.

Justin Brock gave an update for the Northern Wasco County PUD, which has been assisting local businesses with the Utility's small business assistance program. To date, this program has credited \$14,100 back to small businesses through their electric service. In response to recent Executive Orders, PUD has decided to extend funds for this program for an additional month and redistribute funds from their annual economic development program both to residential and commercial customers.

Frank shared how much he has enjoyed working with the EDC over the last 12 years and how the group has made Wasco County a better place to live and work.

Mike shared that the new building in the Port area is almost completed. He also noted that Integrated 3D has recently moved to Redmond. He mentioned that the Port's current RARE placement, Anna Shank-Root, has been studying local developable land to identify opportunities. Mike emphasized the importance of continuing to pursue UGB as a top priority issue.

Joan Silver shared that working with the EDC has been an adventure and that she will continue to offer her assistance when needed for EDC related work. Joan noted that on January 9th, the Mid-Columbia Senior Center will be having a book, puzzle, and miscellaneous sale in their Deschutes Room. The group thanked Joan for her years of service.

Tonya Brumley shared that the Dufur school is on the second phase of its bond project. The school has spent \$7.1 million on phase one. The second phase will address asbestos and wall bracing. This project is expected to break ground in Summer 2021. Tonya also noted that there has been a rise in Dufur school registration, which is only expected to increase as other community projects move forward, such as the subdivision and wastewater projects. Additionally, Tonya shared that the Dufur Park District will be resurfacing the pool and the project should be completed next Spring.

Terry Moore thanked Joan and Frank for their leadership and helping to guide the EDC over the years.

Meghan Thompson shared that the FSA is doing their second COVID-19 assistant program that takes in a variety of agricultural crops. She encouraged any agricultural producers in the area to engage with the FSA, as they provide a variety of resources.

### **OTHER NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

### **ADJOURN**

Meeting Adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Jane Allen, MCEDD Project Coordinator*