

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021

9:30 a.m.

ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Alice Cannon, Nan Wimmers, Megan Thompson, Tonya Brumley, Keith Mobley, Fritz Ellet, Rich Mays, Mike Courtney, Bob Krein, Steve Kramer, Lisa Farquharson

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Jane Allen

GUESTS: Commissioner Steve Kramer, Kelly Howsley-Glover, Mayor Rich Mays, Angie Brewer, Michael Held, Keith Mobley

CALL TO ORDER

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

DECEMBER 2020 MINUTES

Nan Wimmers motioned to approve the December 2020 minutes. Fritz Ellet seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

OPEN POSITIONS

The EDC has two open positions. Position 3 for South County that Frank Kay vacated at the end of his term in December. The EDC received three interest forms for Position 3. Position 1 is also open, Terry Moore notified staff that he had to step down from his seat for personal reasons after the December meeting. The EDC received one interest form for position 1 from Brian McCormick.

Nan Wimmers moved to recommend appointment of Brian McCormick to Position 1. Bob Krein seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Keith Mobley introduced himself and shared that he is a former member of the commission. He is interested in economic development work but offered to concede to anyone who may have a particular interest in the position.

Nan Wimmers offered a recommendation on Amy McNamee's behalf. Nan thinks Amy would be a good fit for this position as she is a longtime cattle producer, president of the North Central Livestock Association and grew up in the South County area. Nan also added that she brings a banking perspective, which the EDC does not currently have. Keith Mobley added that Amy used to be the manager of AmeriTitle in The Dalles and recommended her for the position.

Carrie shared some information on Josh Thompson with the group. She noted he is on staff at the Soil and Water Conservation District as well as serving on the South Wasco County School District's Board. He resides in the Wamic area.

Fritz Ellett made a motion to recommend appointment of Amy McNamee to Position 3. Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EDC WORKPLAN

Carrie introduced the annual workplan discussion update. She noted that she has been working to incorporate the priority issues outlined in the Community Enhancement Projects list into the committee work for this year. However, she feels there are some priority areas that are difficult to fit into the four-committee structure. Carrie welcomed any recommendations on how to best address these priority issue areas with the current EDC workplan framework or different approaches that might work. Carrie suggested that the EDC invite experts on priority issue areas such as childcare and housing to help the EDC determine how best to engage those topics.

Carrie discussed each of the committees and related workplans for the coming year and asked for feedback.

- There was consensus that the Open for Business committee should focus on getting the businesses open and supporting them as they recover from the pandemic.
- The Unincorporated Community workplan for coming year will be a continued focus on districts with active projects. This includes working with Wamic and the Tooley Water District on their water source compliance efforts. The EDC will continue outreach with smaller communities to assist with their water districts.
- The Small Cities in talking about infrastructure challenges. Large investments will be needed to address these needs; therefore, it is important that the EDC supports communities in accessing these resources.

Tonya Brumley commented that she is interested in assisting with the Small Cities committee given her background. She also expressed interest in the Open for Business committee with targeted support for the Dufur region. She wondered if there were opportunities for the committees and their work to overlap. Carrie noted that in past, the EDC has framed the Small Cities committee around a common theme for the year, and that given the current climate, the group may want to consider a theme that focuses on supporting small businesses. Lisa Farquharson also expressed interest in the Small Cities and the Open for Business committees, adding that it relates to her work with The Dalles Chamber of Commerce.

Carrie asked the group if they are interested in supporting specific priority areas. Meghan Thompson expressed interest in the Broadband committee as it relates to agriculture needs. Nan Wimmers shared that she would like to participate in discussions around housing. Alice Cannon and Angie Brewer also offered to participate in conversations around housing.

Lisa asked if the group will be pulling in specific partners related to childcare, such as Nancy Patten and Christa Rude. Carrie shared that EDC staff has engaged with those partners as well as CGCC who is exploring opportunities for a childcare center in the region. Lisa commented that the Regional Solutions office pulled in local Chambers to engage around childcare efforts in the past as well. Alice added that Clackamas County has done work in this space and might have

some examples of best practices. Tonya recommended that the EDC connect with childcare professionals themselves who can share their firsthand experiences.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The strategic plan is an opportunity for the EDC to think its direction for the coming five years. She noted that the EDC's strategic action plan was last updated in 2017 and it was intended to provide a five-year strategy. Carrie also added that MCEDD is beginning to update the region's economic development strategy, which involves data analysis for Wasco County that can be leveraged to help inform the EDC's work for the next five years. Carrie also noted that there is an opportunity to work with the Center for Rural Innovation (CORI) to conduct a needs assessment and strategy development around digital innovation opportunities in The Dalles and Wasco County that could be leveraged in the strategy development process. Carrie shared a proposed timeline leveraging EDC meetings. There was consensus to move forward with the update.

Carrie encouraged the group to think about any stakeholders they might like to see involved in this process. Carrie also welcomed the group to participate in the update of the regional economic development strategy as well.

EDC MEETING TIME

Carrie asked the group if the current meeting works for the current membership. No members had conflicts. Nan Wimmers commented that the group should make an effort to engage with communities throughout the county again, either virtually or in person. Meghan Thompson agreed.

STAFF REPORT

Carrie gave highlights from the staff report. These included:

- Staff supported Wasco County in distributing the \$728,320 they received from the State of Oregon to distribute to businesses. 238 applications were submitted but were only able to fund 60 applicants.
- Staff worked with Northern Wasco PUD to support their COVID-19 Small Business Assistance program. There have been 73 requests since January of this year. Justin Brock shared that the PUD has provided \$34,000 in relief for businesses.
- Staff has been developing an economic needs assessment via interviews with regional stakeholders to better understand the short and long-term actions that will be needed to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19.
- Staff worked with Tooley Water District to support applying for funding to address the high nitrate levels in their water source. Staff is continuing to engage with Wamic Water and Sanitary Authority to discuss next steps on funding water source protection related projects.
- Staff supported Maupin in applying for Travel Oregon's Destination Ready grant program. This would support improvements to Kaiser Park. Staff is also working with Maupin to support their Housing Needs Analysis.
- Staff also participated in North Central Regional Solutions Team outreach meetings focused on priority projects for Mosier and Maupin.
- Staff and Q-Life met with CORI to discuss opportunities for a broadband needs assessment.

- Staff has been working closely with Port staff to develop a public involvement plan for the brownfields project and have been reviewing materials with City and County representatives. Implementation of phase one of this project will begin soon.

EDC MEMBER AND PARTNER UPDATES

Fritz Ellet commented that he has been focused on the legislative session. He encouraged the group to stay engaged on bills that could negatively impact businesses, especially the agriculture industry.

Mike Courtney echoed Fritz's comments. Mike shared the Port of The Dalles established a real estate committee to identify available developable land.

Bob Krein shared that the solar farm project is beginning both phases of development and that it will have a positive impact on the area. In Maupin, housing and services in will be significantly impacted. Bob echoed concerns about bills proposed in the Oregon legislature.

Megan Thompson shared that she has been working with The Dalles Chamber and Business Oregon to use her receiving station for PPE supplies. In the last round, they served 100 businesses. There will be a pickup on March 19th and a last call for supplies soon thereafter. Megan noted that all businesses can apply for PPE, they do not have to be a chamber member.

Lisa Farquharson shared that the chamber needs help spreading information about available PPE supplies. Lisa gave praise to Business Oregon for providing the funding for PPE supplies. Business Oregon will have one final shipment on March 19th.

Tonya Brumley shared that Dufur school district is continuing the hybrid program. Spring sports will be starting soon, which the community is very excited about. She also shared that the local fire chief for Dufur will be retiring soon.

Keith Mobley shared that LS Networks has fiber running from Dufur school to The Dalles and is interested in providing competition for broadband in Dufur. This could be a great asset and very beneficial for the Dufur community.

Rich Mays shared that the local Google project has received a lot of headlines. 58 people attended hearing and 21 people testified. There were questions about the water supply and fire district. The meetings thus far have been informational and action items will come in the future for the City and County. The Land Use Board of Appeals overruled the City Council and ordered the City to allow a subdivision to be approved for southeast The Dalles.

Michael Held thanked Lisa for her work with the chamber to distribute PPE to businesses. Michael shared that the Dog River Pipeline project application has been submitted and is currently being processed for IFA funding. That project will be before the Infrastructure Finance Authority Board in June. Michael also shared that Business Oregon is launching a commercial rent relief program to help businesses with under 100 employees. Michael encouraged the group to share this information out to their network. The application opens next Tuesday and will be a lottery system.

Steve Kramer reminded the group that he sits on the legislative committee for the Association of Oregon Counties and will advocate on behalf of Wasco County residents and their concerns for the upcoming legislature. Steve also thanked the group for their work to support economic development in Wasco County.

Alice shared that the City is working on updates in reference to House Bill 2001. This bill requires medium sized cities to accommodate zoning for duplexes on single-family lots. This will open potential for bare lots or homeowners that would like to add an additional unit. The City Council will be having a work session at the next council meeting. Alice expects housing will continue to be a topic of discussion to understand how the City can best accommodate the future workforce. Alice shared that the Urban Renewal Agency Board has given direction to staff to prepare bid documents for downtown development opportunities in The Dalles. The Agency is planning for the Tony's building to be demolished to make way for a shovel ready site to provide downtown housing opportunities.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 11:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Allen, MCEDD Project Coordinator