

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Thursday, December 2, 2021

9:30 a.m.

ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Megan Thompson (Chair) Tonya Brumley, Amy McNamee, Jennifer Toepke, Justin Brock, Lisa Farquharson, Rich Mays, Brian McCormick

STAFF: Carrie Pipinich (EDC)

GUESTS: Michael Held (Business OR), Nate Stice (Regional Solutions), Natasha Blaircobb (MCEDD/RARE), Kathy Schwartz (Wasco Co Commissioner)

CALL TO ORDER INTRODUCTIONS

Megan Thompson called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. A round of introductions took place.

SEPTEMBER 2021 MINUTES

Amy McNamee moved to approve the minutes; Justin Brock seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

2022 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

Carrie began by discussing significant updates to several of last year's projects. She noted that it was nice to return to communities for the list development every year and to hear that project were completed or moving on to their next phase. Carrie shared that the Fifteen-mile Water Below Ground Storage Pilot Project received feasibility funding, thereby moving the estimated million-dollar project into the next planning phase. The City of Mosier received funding for their tertiary wetland wastewater treatment project through the state legislature. The City of Maupin worked with ODOT to be included in the Federal Lands Access Program grant to support some pedestrian improvements to Donkey trail as well as Maupin's riverfront. NWCPRD was successful in their application to ODOT to support the building of a significant segment of the Mill Creek Greenway Trail.

Carrie Pipinich proceeded to outline some of the projects being conducted now that address last year's priority issues in the County. The priority issues in the area continue to be Housing, Child Care, Broadband access and infrastructure, and Urban area expansion.

Megan asked Carrie to review/explain the overall process of community enhancement project prioritization for the new commissioners present. Carrie explained the process timeline, which started about a month ago with scheduled meetings in the different communities in the county including The Dalles, Mosier, Maupin, Dufur, and several of the smaller unincorporated communities. The purpose of these roundtable meetings was to identify key community projects and then set local project priorities. These community lists were used to create the draft county-wide priority list that is presented for discussion at today's meeting.

Carrie shared the proposed priority projects and the additional unlisted projects that were included in the packet, and Megan invited the members to share their perspectives on the draft list.

Mayor Mays noted that the MCMC moving to Kramer field would open a conversation about using the site for new housing. Carrie responded that the hospital project was still in the feasibility assessment stage and that this project would be appropriate to include in a future list for The Dalles area ranked projects.

Brian asked if there were any projects that were not on the list that could be. Carrie replied that the South County Fiber Expansion could be added.

Megan commented that she had hoped Dog River was completed so that a new project could be placed at the number one priority spot, but she understood the need for Dog River to remain high priority to fill the newly identified funding gap.

Lisa asked if there were any projects that could be considered “quick wins” to place as number #2 that could be completed and removed from the list this year. Carrie asked the group to consider moving the Deschutes Rim Clinic to number #2, due to high need, and suggested that the Cascades East Interconnection Colocation Facility be moved lower on the list.

Megan asked if the Kramer Field project could be removed from the top 10 for now and move the South County Fiber Expansion up. In response, Lisa stated we need to enhance our broadband infrastructure if we want to appeal to professionals and to increase quality of life. Lisa suggested moving the Kramer Field project out of the top ten this year due to the timing and move South County Fiber Expansion to #9. Carrie asked for consensus and the EDC agreed.

Megan asked for any other input in list ranking. Jennifer asked why the City of Mosier’s Joint Use Facility was ranked higher than the Dufur Drinking Water System Improvements. Carrie replied that it is tied to timeliness and project development, the Dufur water project is still in the feasibility stage. Lisa asked if the Cascades East Interconnection Colocation Facility could be moved lower to allow projects that are more directly affecting communities to be higher on the list.

Lisa motioned to approve the following Community Enhancement Project ranking; Amy seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

1. Dog River Pipeline
2. Deschutes Rim Health Clinic Expansion
3. Mosier Joint Use Facility
4. Dufur Drinking Water System Improvements
5. Cascades East Interconnection Colocation Facility
6. Columbia Gorge Childcare Center (CGCC)
7. Deschutes Rim Athletic Complex
8. Sorosis Park Redevelopment
9. South County Fiber Expansion
10. Dufur Rural Innovation Hub

EDC STRATEGIC PLANNING: STRATEGIES

Carrie introduced the focus on strategies and action development for the meeting’s planning session. She asked the group to brainstorm potential changes or additions to strategies or actions and noted that the Committees would further develop actions under each strategy.

When asked for the initial thoughts around participating in the subcommittees Lisa shared, she needs direct tasks and actions to be most effective in meetings. Preferably with deadlines and calendar invites available. Megan agreed and stated her need for task-oriented meetings as well.

Carrie asked people to interact with the different goal areas using Jamboards, and then reviewed the current strategy goals and requested input. The following were discussion points from each goal area:

- ***Vibrant and diverse local economy***. Brian asked for clarification on what “creating a support system for local businesses” might consist of. Lisa clarified that the purpose of the support system is to connect and support businesses, create interconnection between organizations such as the chamber and the SBDC, and making the area more “business friendly” in general. Megan asked if there were different resources for the different communities in the area, Carrie confirmed there were.
- ***Robust infrastructure*** goal. Megan asked if the communities could bring in new or different partners from around the region, Carrie agreed that this would benefit local communities and strengthen the relationships with existing partners. Lisa asked to move the strategy of “Supporting development of workforce training” to the *Vibrant and diverse local economy* goal. She shared that workforce training opportunities are important to businesses and would give incentive/be more appealing to businesses to relocate here.
- ***Community Capacity*** goal. Lisa asked if identifying new partners should be a part of this goal. Carrie agreed and added “identify partners to develop additional capacity” as an action for this goal.
- ***Information source and advocacy*** goal. Megan asked if the development of a strong web presence for business and economic development is more of an action than a strategy. Carrie agreed. Lisa discussed the need to involve advocacy in the goals and strategies including information about how that community can interact with elected officials. Lisa and Megan agreed and recommended adding an action item of “share information about local elected officials to increase engagement and understanding” to this goal. Tonya asked if there is an opportunity to involve The Dalles Main Street. Carrie thinks they could be helpful for local business input and needs assessment. Brian recommended updating the goal statement to reflect advocacy, Carrie added this as an action item.
- ***Strong and Sustainable EDC*** goal. Brian asked to add connecting EDC’s work to strategies grounded in community and economic development best practices. Carrie agreed and added this as a strategy.

Carrie invited members to edit the jamboards over the next few days and asked who was interested in participating in subcommittees for each goal. Lisa shared her interest in the *Information source and advocacy* and *Vibrant and diverse local economy* Goals. Tonya was interested in the *Vibrant and diverse local economy* goal. Brian was interested in the *Vibrant and diverse local economy* goal. Megan was interested in *Information source and advocacy* goal. Justin was interested in the *Robust infrastructure* Goal. Mayor Mays was interested in being involved in *Vibrant and diverse local economy* goal.

STAFF REPORT

Carrie shared highlights from the staff report. She noted that the Broadband committee was able to meet the last week of November 2021 and talk with Q-Life staff about establishing the next steps to form a Broadband Action Team (BAT) for the county. Carrie presented several funding sources that were secured including funding from The Rural Opportunity Initiative (ROI) for business resiliency training and Oregon Community Foundation focused on entrepreneurship. She has also worked with partners from a larger region, all the way to Pendleton and the Tri Cities on an EDA related to expanding the ag tech industry. Lastly Carrie shared that the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy draft is almost complete and will soon be available for public comment. She invited the committee members to give their feedback when the draft becomes available.

COMMISSIONER & PARTNER UPDATES

Lisa encouraged/requested people to shop local and reminded people about the “Explore The Dalles” gift cards that are available in preparation for the holiday season.

Megan shared that she has been attending meetings for the Ag Tech program CGCC is working on. She appreciated Dan Spatz’ contribution to CGCC and the greater community.

Nate Stice shared that on December 8th at 8:30 AM there will be a virtual summit for the CGCC childcare center.

Tonya shared that the Dufur projects were all discussed in the project priority discussion.

Kathy discussed the MCMC’s proposed move to Kramer field, which she noted was still in the concept/planning phase. She also shared that the county recently approved the purchase of several digital platforms to support public engagement. Additionally, Kathy shared that the City of The Dalles approved developing a climate action plan, and Wasco County is exploring engaging in this effort with a citizen-run task force. Brian asked how the funding for Kramer field would work. Kathy was unsure and stated that the project is still in the early concept and feasibility stages.

Mayor Mays was optimistic about the MCMC Kramer field project being completed in the future. He is working on setting up a committee to participate in the climate action plan. He discussed the online Visioning survey for the City and encouraged all to participate. Additionally, the city will be looking for a new city manager starting in the spring of 2022.

Nate suggested contacting youth community members to participate in the climate action plan/task force.

Michael shared with the group the projects that Business Oregon was working to finalize funds disbursement on. He noted that *Maupin Works* co-working space received \$100,000 to complete its build-out.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 AM. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 3rd, 2022.