

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2012
MOSIER GRANGE
900 4th Street, Mosier, Oregon

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Chair Joan Silver, Carina Schmidt, Mary Kramer, Frank Kay, Dan Spatz and Andrea Klaas via phone

GUESTS: Denny Ross, Rod Runyon, John Roberts, Chip Wood, Bruce Sorte via phone

EDC STAFF: Jessica Metta

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 10:01 am. A quorum was present once Andrea Klaas was on the phone.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 21, 2012 MINUTES: Frank Kay moved to accept minutes as presented. Mary Kramer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PROGRAM: Jessica called Bruce Sorte on the phone for this one agenda item. Joan noted that since Mike Zingg was not present, she suggested the EDC just decide whether to pursue a program at this time and form a committee to work on it. Dan Spatz asked if the Port's new business recruiter position would have a retention component. Andrea responded that the person will focus on the traded sector and not the downtown businesses. She wasn't sure who would follow-up with those businesses. She participated in a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program in Hood River a few years ago and found it to be a lot of work and volunteer time and it wasn't followed up well. Bruce suggested postponing the discussion until Mike was available. Joan stated her concern that the effort would take away from Maupin's new Economic Development efforts and The Dalles Main Street's efforts. She thinks the program needs to be county-wide and would first want to meet with the communities to get their buy-in to work on it.

Bruce said he agrees with Joan and the program will fail without significant buy-in and commitments across the County. He is doing research for the University of Minnesota to measure changes in 60 communities that have implemented a BRE program. He anticipates the results will show that breadth of participation results in success. He noted that the two current projects that Joan cited will hit a very narrow slice of the economy, primarily retail and restaurants. He also noted that the nonprofit sector will be hit hard in the next 5 to 10 years which will decrease the capacities of organizations like his to offer expertise/ support for these types of projects – in other words we might want to start sooner rather than later. We could also not do the project county-wide to be more successful.

Jessica passed out a handout with information collected since the last BRE discussion, including cost updates and notes from a conversation with Charlie Mitchell, a seasoned BRE program leader in Oregon.

Frank noted that right now he is not taking the project to the City Council or Economic Development Task Force to approve. He thinks it would be a great role for Maupin's new business support person. He has no personal objection to pursue the project but no official capacity to approve for Maupin. He does think it needs to be county-wide. Mary asked when the streamlined toolkit will be available. Bruce replied quickly, whenever we'd need it. He suggested we learn more about the program over the next year if we have concerns. Mary asked if we had funds to cover the program. Joan replied not at the moment, that would be part of the long term plan. Dan Spatz said he agrees the project needs to be county-wide and to make sure we're not duplicating information, such as the work done by Mary Merrill and the research that Cheryl Park is conducting for Insitu. The information Cheryl is collecting could benefit Wasco County and our businesses. Carina suggested we get a toolkit first and see where we might focus, that more homework is needed before we decide to do the program. Andrea said there are lots of similar efforts and we need to package those to use their existing information and experience.

Joan suggested that the EDC add the BRE program to the 2013 Needs and Issues List, to give it a full hearing, identify funds and partners, and present it to the County. If it rises to the level of desire, then the EDC will have the support to move forward. Frank said we need to learn more and this proposal would give us the time to do that. We can use future EDC meeting agendas to pursue more information.

Carina made a motion to not proceed with purchasing the BRE program, to place it on the 2013 Needs and Issues list and educate ourselves to like programs prior to proceeding. Frank seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

COUNTY PERMIT ACTIVITY: Jessica said at the last EDC meeting, Fred Justesen suggested hearing a presentation from the Planning Department on permit activity to know where and what is happening in the County. She had therefore invited John Roberts to present the following. John presented information about unincorporated Wasco County only. He noted there are two sets of numbers: land use decisions from the Planning Department that aren't necessarily developed right away and building permit activity from the MCCOG's Building Department which shows current activity. He visited the Building Department to collect some information. They issue structural permits that cover a wide range of activities, from new buildings to small projects on existing buildings. 2011 and 2012 structural permit numbers are pretty similar. If the EDC wants more information, we can ask Stephanie to run data for the last few years.

The Planning Department tracks three numbers: (1) Counter Activity, or phone/email/office visits. They average 3800 per year and about 800 of those go to the code compliance officer. They average 18 per day at about 20 minutes each, so it is a large part of what they do. He doesn't have good data for previous years but believes it has been more consistent across the months this year. (2) Development Review Fees. Annual target is \$75,000 and they are on target to previous years. (3) Land Use Applications Submitted. They average 120 to 130 per year and have received about 70 through June, so they are on track or might be a little higher.

John asked Senior Planner Dawn Baird for her sense of how activity compares to previous years. She believes they have seen more single family dwelling applications in 2012 so far than in 2010

and 2011 combined. He reports the three measures monthly to the Board of County Commissioners and can dig deeper if the EDC would like. Rod Runyon pointed out how the Planning Department's website is a wealth of information. John agreed and said they are working to improve the mapping component and links people use to get property information.

Dan Spatz said John is a pleasure to work with. He has received good support from him and his Department, for example with the Squally Point trail. Dan gives his compliments to the Board of County Commissioners on choosing him. Carina seconded and added that Dawn Baird is wonderful.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT RECAP: Jessica Metta reviewed her actions since the summit: she sent a press release to the Chronicle, typed up notes for review, updated the project list and packet of agency summaries and added those to the EDC website, and sent out a survey to meeting attendees. Eighteen responses were received. She summarized them by saying most people agreed it would be helpful to have another meeting perhaps every 6 or 12 months and the open-ended comments about the event were all over the place: some people found the meeting very useful and others thought it didn't accomplish enough.

Frank suggested repeating the agenda annually would not be useful but to annually focus on what is topical that would generate high interest in attendees. He suggested some big picture overview with specific meat for others. He agreed a quarterly meeting would be too much and felt the packet of agency summaries will encourage collaboration. Dan Spatz suggested that anything we can do to more closely align all the different economic development initiatives at the end of the day would be good, but how do we do that? This is a big issue that even Insitu's research has identified. For the good of the order, he announced that he will be suggesting the Outreach Team reassess their purpose and see how to realign efforts.

Denny Ross suggested that two meetings might be held: one in the spring set up the summer projects to be accomplished and one in the fall to recap what was done. He also suggested inviting Wy'east Resource Conservation and Development to the next meeting to bring in their focus on our important ag community. Joan stated a subcommittee needs to be retained to work on and plan the next meeting. She feels the next one needs to focus on specifics, and perhaps a hands-on activity rather than just talk. If the EDC can get the Needs and Issues process done in a timely way, we could host the next one right afterwards in spring. Jessica agreed to email the EDC the survey results and ask who would like to be on the committee which would likely meet in September. Joan suggested this event might be held semi-annually, depending on what else is going on, but we don't need to be too rigid now. She thanked Rod for the County's support. Rod stated that he saw the meeting as a starting point to move forward and as a way to encourage people to meld and share resources.

STAFF REPORT: Jessica had previously sent out her staff report for review. There were no updates or questions from the Commissioners.

REGIONAL UPDATES: Frank reported that Maupin's Splash for Pink, a breast cancer fundraiser, was successful in its 3rd year. He thinks they met their goal of raising \$20,000.

Maupin City Council just approved making the transient lodging fee year-round rather than 6 months.

Mary reported that the Dufur Threshing Bee is the second week of August and the Chamber's recruitment event went well.

Dan Spatz reported that the Readiness Center will be complete in October 2013. **The Workforce Center is also scheduled for construction, pending final state approval.** Dock and Festival Area celebration is Sept. 6. The SET process has been very valuable and one great outcome will be bi-state legislative discussions in the Gorge.

Carina reported The Dalles Area Chamber has been very busy with the search for a new Executive Director and the rodeo.

John Roberts reported that next Friday is What the Festival in Tygh Valley. They are doing a tour on Thursday and are anxious to see how it plays out. Sheriff and Environmental Health have been most involved. 3000 – 4000 people will be attending. The County is hoping the event can be tied into the Fairgrounds in the future.

Joan reminded everyone the County Fair is coming up soon. She also reviewed the SET program. July 26 is the final session of seven. It has generated positive ideas to move forward, allowed her to meet new people and learn new needs/ ideas in the Gorge. The bi-state legislative group will be a great offshoot and she expects there will be more good outcomes. It has generated a lot of good information for MCEDD and highlighted for her our regional common needs and interdependency. We need to find ways to make Insitu's presence in the Gorge an absolute and maybe should invite Cheryl Park to a future meeting. Dan Spatz said the Outreach Team will be meeting with a USDA Senior Advisor in September and he can coordinate with Amanda Hoey on expressing regional appreciation for the program. Joan finished by announcing that Coastal Farm and Ranch is opening July 26 or 27.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 11:20am for an on-site tour of Mosier's Bike Hub Project.

NEXT MEETING: September 20, 2012

*Submitted, Jessica Metta
EDC Staff*