

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019
9:30 a.m.

MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
515 E 2ND STREET, THE DALLES OR 97058

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Frank Kay, Gary Grossman, Joan Silver, Nan Wimmers, Mike Courtney, Justin Brock, Mary Kramer, Megan Thompson

EDC STAFF: Carrie Pipinich, Tatiana Eckhart

GUESTS: Michael Held, Steve Kramer, Kathy Schwartz, Nate Stice

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. A round of introductions took place.

MINUTES

Gary Grossman motioned to approve the September 5, 2019 meeting minutes. Mike Courtney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Nan Wimmers moved to approve the November 19, 2019 work session minutes. Mike Courtney seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

2020 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PROCESS

Joan provided an overview of the history of the project prioritization process for new Economic Development Commission members. She noted that the process is focused on supporting efforts to enhance the potential for economic growth in communities throughout the County.

Carrie reviewed the CEP process for the EDC, mentioning that staff held local project prioritization meetings in The Dalles, Dufur, Maupin, and Mosier as well as a meeting in Tygh Valley for the unincorporated communities. Carrie noted that the initial ranked list provided in the packet was a draft meant to serve as a starting point for discussion by the Commission based on the criteria and alignment with the EDC's Strategic Action Plan and its goals. Staff also passed around a memo Terry Moore provided with his input on the draft rankings since he was unable to attend the meeting. Carrie also clarified some of the information within the memo.

Carrie highlighted the staff's proposal to include process around The Dalles Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and Urban Area Boundary (UAB) as the EDC's top priority issue to better capture the variety of steps and processes involved in that effort being undertaken by the City, the Port, and other partners. She noted that it was challenging to categorize it as a specific project but that this approach could convey the importance of the urban boundary for local economic development. Carrie noted that if the EDC agreed with this approach it would move forward to the County in the same manner as the project list.

Mike Courtney and Joan Silver both concurred with Carrie's suggestion. Joan Silver noted that with the lack of real process for UAB expansion with the Columbia River Gorge Commission (CRGC) that this is a critical issue to support at this time.

Nan Wimmers mentioned she wanted to hear more about the Deschutes River Athletic Complex. Frank Kay stated that the facility would be a community-based project located on the South Wasco County School District's property. The current track does not meet regulatory standards. The project aims to build a new track as part of a multi-purpose athletic facility and community event space. The project idea originated from a high school track athlete in Maupin and has been moving forward with the support of various local partners.

Carrie asked if the group had any other questions regarding any of the other projects on the list. Nan asked about the progress of the Deschutes Rim Clinic "We Care" Campaign. Carrie noted that the clinic had experienced delays in their funding campaign as they worked through a feasibility study process required by USDA RD who will be doing a significant chunk of the project. Carrie also shared that since the project's last status update for the EDC, the clinic had passed their operating levy and hired new doctor full time and this step is already positively moved the clinic's financials forward. Steve Kramer noted that the Clinic had just received a positive indication of funding from one of their foundation grant applications.

Frank Kay mentioned that he was glad to see the Mosier Center project ranked highly on the project list.

Joan stated that the Dog River Pipeline project owners felt it was important to keep the pipeline project high on the prioritized list in order to demonstrate County support as they obtained the last funding pieces for the project. Nate Stice noted the project is also working through their second round of environmental review which includes opportunities for public comment. He noted that this process could provide an opportunity to show local support during that review.

Nan asked about the Q-Life Cascadia Internet East Route Interconnection project. Carrie Pipinich provided updated information regarding the project and shared she hopes it would have a positive impact not just on network resiliency but the cost of providing transport to local internet service providers.

Nan asked if moving the Tygh Valley Fire District project up to the ranked list would strengthen its case or if project owners were still too early in the planning process to begin making significant movements forward. Carrie stated that the Fire District has a strong strategy in place for obtaining funding with local fundraising well underway, an award from Wy'East RC&D's Fire Recovery Fund and an application to the Ford Family Foundation in development. Carrie also shared that they had shifted the size of project to meet needs at a more affordable cost.

Nan commented that while she felt the Q-Life project was important, but she would suggest moving the Fire District project high on the list if doing so would give them a boost forward with project implementation.

Joan suggested including the Tygh Valley Fire Station project on the list at #9, noting that she had doubts the project currently listed as #9, upgrades to Wamic waste water systems, was ready to move forward in 2020. Joan also suggested moving Mosier's tertiary treatment wetland to a spot on the list.

Carrie noted that the City of Mosier is working through the feasibility processes for the tertiary treatment plant in the coming year and had noted that they felt there was not a lot of value in inclusion this year. Carrie noted that the second priority project in Mosier's was the Mosier Community School. They were discussing a variety of projects ideas for the school, including infrastructure planning and building upgrades to support a new Art Center annex or classroom space at the old gas station property. Nan suggested it would be more beneficial to have Mosier Community School on the countywide prioritization list once the school has a greater sense of direction in moving forward with improvement projects. Frank Kay agreed.

Carrie also shared that the Wamic waste water system is currently out of compliance with DEQ and they have obtained funding from Business Oregon to work through an alternatives analysis to address the issue. Wamic authorities anticipate completing the study in the summer of 2020 and will begin looking for funding for the project in fall of 2020 hopefully but that they often move through these processes slowly. Mary Kramer noted that she feels it's important to keep the Wamic wastewater project on the EDC list. A group consensus was made to keep Wamic on the list at either slot #9 or #10.

Joan suggested moving the Tygh Valley Fire Station upgrades project onto the prioritized portion of the list, keeping Wamic's project where it is, and move DRAC down to #10 while shifting others up one slot. Joan asked the group to vote to approve the top 10 countywide project prioritization list as follows:

1. Dog River Pipeline
2. Mosier Center
3. Dufur Waste Water System Upgrades
4. Deschutes Rim Medical Clinic Expansion
5. Columbia Gorge Regional Airport (CGRA) Fuel Farm Expansion
6. Tygh Valley Fire Station Improvements
7. CGRA Aviation Maintenance Training Hangar
8. Wamic Waste Water System Improvements
9. Mill Creek Greenway Segment 2
10. Deschutes River Athletic Complex

Group unanimously agreed.

2020 WASCO COUNTY EDC OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Carrie noted that annually during this process the EDC also discusses broader opportunities and challenges to provide additional direction for its annual work plan. Carrie reviewed the memo provided that outlined broader processes and site specific efforts that were underway or being explored. Carrie also asked for any additional items that should be noted.

Nan stated that she thought these broader issues were very valuable for the EDC to consider. She thought the EDC group should continue discussing them to keep up to date and identify any ways that the EDC can provide assistance or support around efforts to address them. She noted that housing continues to be a huge challenge and that she was concerned about where the workforce for new or expanding businesses could locate in the current housing market. Frank noted that the issues that were highlighted are critical pieces to be aware of and impact areas throughout the County. Mike stated that it's important to examine the reasons for the lack of affordable housing in the community. Nan mentioned she has been a part of conversations about

housing at the state level and has realized that a lot of small communities in the state are facing similar issues in regard to housing shortages.

Joan noted that Carrie did a great job of bringing awareness of projects occurring countywide to the EDC group, reminding the group to keep an eye out for new opportunities to engage in community projects and issues.

Joan revisited how the EDC could engage around the Urban Area Boundary discussion with its ranking as the EDC's top issue. She suggested that the EDC members should consider personally writing to the CRGC regarding the Urban Area Boundary. Mike noted that the Commission does hear from many individuals but engagement is often from one perspective.

Nate noted that the UAB process is important for the future development of the community of The Dalles, but there are opportunities to support infill development as the Commission further develops its UAB process. Specifically, around planning for workforce housing and building on the work the City has done to encourage development of ADUs and other tools. Nan noted that most current development is focusing on larger lot homes that sell for more than the average worker can afford. Gary Grossman stated that there needed to be an effort to better articulate why The Dalles wants to expand its urban boundary as that message could be helpful for the discussion at the Gorge Commission.

Joan noted that she wanted the Gorge Commission to have a process for expanding an urban area boundary that provided clarity to the community about how to move forward. She noted that the EDC could support advocacy around developing a process through individual Commissioner actions. The group discussed communication strategies and agreed that staff should further develop draft language outlining the EDC's position before taking any additional actions individually. The group discussed what should be included and Carrie noted that it sounded like inclusion of language on attainable, workforce housing and employment lands were important.

Carrie asked Mike Courtney if there was anything he'd like to add to the discussion. Mike stated that growth in the community has been stymied without land for businesses to locate, and that there are some common-sense changes that could be made to support uses of land in urban areas that are not allowed.

Steve Kramer stated that he thought this approach was a good idea. Steve agreed with Joan that what is needed is a local, grassroots effort to engage with the process at the Gorge Commission. Kathy Schwartz agreed with Steve, noting that the Gorge Commission should develop a more formal process so that Cities can move forward.

Steve Kramer thanked the EDC for their work to support communities in Wasco County.

EDC VACANCIES

Carrie thanked Mary Kramer for her service on the EDC . Carrie shared with the group that Mary has decided not to seek reappointment and that the EDC will be looking for a new member to represent the Dufur area.

Carrie also noted that Matthew Klebes had moved on from the City and that she would work with the City to identify a new appointment. Kathy Schwartz noted that Matthew Klebes moved into a new position with Wasco County focusing on facilities and adding capacity for the County's administration.

Carrie shared that Gary Grossman has expressed his willingness to stay on as a member of the EDC but is also open to allowing someone else to step into his position if there are any interested parties. Frank noted that Gary's perspective within the EDC has been wholly holistic, and a valuable addition to the group.

Carrie noted that staff would share out the open positions in January and anticipated bringing a interest forms to the March meeting for consideration. She requested that the EDC members mark the next meeting on their calendars as quorum would be challenging.

EDC COMMITTEE + STAFF REPORTS

Carrie Pipinich reviewed highlights from her staff report, including:

- She has been working with Wamic Water & Sewer Authority to review responses to their engineering request for proposals and working with RCAC to develop a proposal for bringing additional technical assistance capacity to the District's efforts.
- Staff hosted a training focused on Infrastructure Planning and Finance with training provided by RCAC staff and the major funding agencies present.
- Staff has been working closely with Dufur to support a submission of funding applications to finalize their financing package for waste water system improvements.
- In Maupin, staff has been working with the City in developing an application to DLCD's Technical Assistance program for a Housing Needs Analysis to create a full picture of their land supply and designations. Working with the local partners and the SBDC a WebWorks training was held in November to discuss how local businesses can leverage the enhanced broadband connectivity to support improved business opportunities The planning group also launched a survey to gather additional information on training needs and is in discussion about opportunities to develop a series of training sessions.
- Outreach around the updated Business Siting Guides has begun.
- Carrie also thanked Megan Thompson for participating as a panelist at the symposium. The symposium was well attended and staff received positive feedback from attendees.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Mary Kramer shared that Dufur's Hometown Christmas event is coming up. Dufur School District is also implementing the approved bond projects quickly.

Megan Thompson has been attending D21 facilities planning meetings and listening sessions.

Gary Grossman shared that the Urban Renewal Agency is in the process of developing a DDA for the Tony's building. Gary noted that there is a buyer that would like to develop a health facility. He shared that the remaining roof of the Recreation building should hold for this winter and that so far the purchaser is still planning to move forward with projects. The URA will also have a planning meeting in 2020 to discuss the direction of the agency. The agency has some bonding capacity if they identify valuable projects or can consider sunseting the URA early.

Kathy Schwartz noted that she had read The Dalles Economic Opportunity Analysis and it highlighted items the emerging workforce was interested in. One of those things was downtown housing. Gary agreed that vertical housing and a vibrant downtown was an important area for investment. Gary also shared that there was an RFP out for the downtown utility undergrounding project feasibility study that could impact future downtown development.

Frank Kay shared that the old Maupin City Hall was put on the market through an RFP process. They received an offer and are exploring it. He also noted that there is a lack of office space in Maupin, and some want to see the property developed into a mixed use facility with office spaces on the main floor and apartments above. Frank passed around a brochure announcing the ribbon cutting ceremony for Maupin's new Civic Center, as well as a fact sheet outlining the funding breakdown for the South Wasco County Library portion of the project and reviewed the information with the group. Frank thanked the EDC for their support for the Civic Center.

Michael Held noted that he continues to work on supporting business expansion and retention projects in his role with Business Oregon. He also noted that Business Oregon has begun the hiring process for a new agency director.

Nate Stice shared that Maupin was awarded the DLCDD TA grant for their housing needs analysis. He noted that regionally housing continues to be a major issue. He shared with the group that the Regional Solutions/MCEDD Attainable Housing Revolving Loan fund has supported two projects in The Dalles now, the Federal Street Lofts and a multi-family building located along the 4th Street grade.

Justin Brock noted that Wasco Electric Cooperative is working to increase capacity of an electric line that supports Orchard View Farms to continue to support their business and allow for growth of their operations. He noted that the PUD is working with a large customer to explore additional capacity and noted that they are making good progress on their meter conversion project.

Kathy Schwartz thanked the EDC for their work and thoughtfulness in ranking projects.

Joan Silver shared that there is a lot of positive activity in Wasco County. She also shared that the Senior Center is very busy and they continue to have good support from the community and local businesses. She also highlighted the upcoming short session for the Legislature and encouraged the EDC members to keep an eye on what's happening in Salem during the session.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

ADJOURN

Meeting Adjourned at 11:21am.

Respectfully submitted by Tatiana Eckhart, MCEDD Project Coordinator.