

WASCO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2009
Dufur City Hall, 175 NE 3rd St, Dufur, Oregon
10:00 A.M.

ATTENDANCE:

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Andrea Klaas, Donella Polehn, Gay Melvin, Joan Silver (Chair), Keith Mobley, Rob Miles (Vice-Chair)

GUESTS:

Robin Cope (PubTalk™)

EDC STAFF:

Jessica Metta, Layne Sylvester

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Joan Silver called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Andrea Klaas arrived at 10:20 due to road construction. A quorum was then present.

INTRODUCTIONS

APPROVAL OF JUNE 18, 2009 MINUTES:

Keith Mobley moved to approve. Gay Melvin seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

EDC PROJECT DISCUSSION:

Joan Silver opened the discussion as a follow up to the last meeting. The EDC vision statement was rewritten (insert vision statement). As a Commission and being the arm of Wasco County how can we move the vision along with the limitations of (1) no money (funds available) and (2) each of the commissioners having other obligations. Based on the previous discussion in June, Joan Silver, Jessica Metta and Amanda Remington put together a brief list of "Suggested Project Ideas for the EDC". This list contained 7 project ideas and was distributed prior to the meeting. Keith Mobley stated that he thought choosing a project was a good idea and would help the commission be informed and actively engaged in the County. Jessica Metta said that she would be able to assist with Needs and Issues projects as well as work on a couple of these projects with help from the Commissioners.

Project 1: Better Tourism through Signage Improvements – a good example is the recently installed "Food, Gas" sign along Highway 197 for Tygh Valley which has increased the amount of traffic pulling off the highway and stopping in the town. The project would include a survey of the county with each commissioner taking an area and determining what signage is needed. Along with highway/ODOT signage, this could include private signage such as crop identification and information. Keith Mobley suggested contacting Travel Oregon and Andrea Klaas asked if there were any scenic loops or routes in the county that could be better promoted or developed. General discussion about places in the county followed.

Project 2: Jobs – what things are needed and what is offered. Should we be pursuing some of the things we are missing professionally and expertise and services. Is there enough demand to justify working to bring them to area? Are there cottage businesses that are not listed in the phone book or advertising effectively? Example: Sherman County website has a Sherman County business

directory. Wasco County has a larger population base, would this be effective? How would this fit in with the Chambers?

Project 3: Young Life - what could the EDC do to involve them more with the County? Joan Silver suggested that the Commission contact Young Life and if they are interested, designate one of the WEDC meetings next spring as a field trip to Young Life in Antelope. There are approximately 90 staff and 700 kids a week during the summer sessions.

Project 4: Informal SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) - Joan Silver indicated that although she isn't keen on the formal SWOT process, this type of analysis hasn't been done in the county for a long time (last SWOT was in 1999).

Project 5 and 6: Pub Talk and Juicy Ideas – hold off discussion until later during meeting.

Project 7: Industrial Land Readiness Program – Joan Silver said that she wasn't sure if there is a current county wide analysis of what industrial land is available and status of infrastructure. Andrea Klaas added that an inventory of "certified" industrial land is available on Oregon Prospector (www.oregonprospector.com). These are Oregon sites which are ready for construction within six months or less and are certified "project-ready" for a specific industry profile.

Certification notebooks contain documentation about utilities available at a site, local workforce availability, easements and liens, and any improvements on the site, as well as state or local development incentives. The certification process itself demands extensive local and state government collaboration. The Port has information about industrial lands within the Port district; elsewhere in the County this might be lacking. Jessica Metta added that there are industrial zone maps at the MCEDD office which were produced by the Wasco County GIS department for The Dalles, Maupin, Mosier, Dufur and Tygh Valley Area. Not sure of the status or extent of the inventory. Donella Polehn asked about the status of the destination resort overlay and Joan Silver indicated that it was on hold due to legislative activity regarding the Metolius.

Project 8: Renewable Energy – Andrea Klaas suggested that this be added to the list although she wasn't sure in what capacity the EDC would get involved – it's just such a hot topic. The EDC could investigate how to tie renewable energy potential into needs and issues –for example, determine the feasibility for increased energy transmission in the existing lines.

Tour Idea: If the EDC is an advisory board to the county on economic policy decisions, how do we learn about community issues? The idea of taking the Commission on a bus tour of the county was suggested in order to hear from the communities about their issues. Also, this would help the Commission actually see some of the projects on the needs and issues list. Joan Silver suggested trying to put a tour together by the November 19th WEDC meeting. The Commission decided to hold off on choosing a project until after the tour.

PUB TALK:

Robin Cope gave an overview of the Oregon Entrepreneur Network and PubTalk™ and that she has been working with Mary Merrill and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District to hold PubTalk events in Hood River and The Dalles. In the past, there were "Biz Talk" meetings in The Dalles but not any longer. Hood River has contracted with OEN to hold PubTalk events in Hood River. PubTalk ties into the Gorge Angel Investors Network (GAIN) and the Angel Conferences. There have been two Angel conferences and a third is planned for April 2010. PubTalk events happen usually six times a year and each event takes about 10 - 20 hours to prepare. Robin provided a sample PubTalk event notice.

General discussion followed regarding how the area would be defined for business presenters, i.e. could business presenters be from Klickitat County and south Wasco County? This would be a

question for GAIN. The Commission asked if Jessica could handle the time commitment of 20 hours for this event; she said she could. The Commission decided to help sponsor one event and see how it goes.

Keith Mobley moved to have the EDC help sponsor a PubTalk™ event in The Dalles on November 17, 2009. Andrea Klaas seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

EDC PROJECT DISCUSSION (continued):

Project 6: Juicy Ideas – Jessica Metta explained the Juicy Ideas competition held last year in communities with a Google site. The basic concept was college student teams had 10 days to create a marketable product from a throwaway item determined by a local committee. Each team also created a short video about their product and uploaded it to YouTube. There were local prizes donated by area businesses. A national panel judged the top teams from every region. The final winning team was flown to Mountain View, California to spend a day in Google Headquarters. The national competition was organized by AdvantageWest Economic Development Group in North Carolina. Feedback from Google after last year’s competition was that they would like to see a more technology focused competition. AdvantageWest is uncertain about how they might change this year’s competition based on Google’s feedback but is waiting until next quarter to hold the competition. In the Gorge, it worked best when some CGCC teachers tied the competition into their curriculum and there was a concern that no teachers could do that if it gets too technical. If the revised competition is too technical, the Gorge could still put on its own local competition using the model from last year. Andrea Klaas asked if there was an understanding of what Google meant by a more “technology” focused competition. Jessica noted that it could mean using technology to solve a community problem but that it hadn’t been defined. The Commission generally agreed to wait until AdvantageWest decides how the competition will look at the national level to determine if this region will participate. At that time, we could decide to hold our own competition or participate in the national one again.

NEEDS AND ISSUES PROCESS REVIEW:

Prior to the meeting, Jessica Metta emailed a summary of the 2009 Needs and Issues Process Review to the Commissioners which included feedback received during 2009 process. General discussion followed among the Commissioners about process: Infrastructure vs. Technical assistance – project should be either/or but not on both lists, projects should be current issues rather than future needs, we might modify the process to highlight issues more than needs and reporting on success. Keith Mobley added that communities seem to be aware of the process but do not always engage, perhaps because they don’t know the value of participating. The EDC could share the value during the bus tour. Andrea Klaas added that a timeline and shovel readiness of project is important with selection of the top two priorities from each community. Joan Silver added that projects need to be ready to proceed within that year and encourage communities to list issues separately, i.e. what the issues are that are keeping projects from happening. Joan also suggested limiting the amount of time that a project could be on the list before it gets removed if nothing is happening.

Jessica summarized that the projects need to be ready for funding, able to proceed in the next year, could be listed as community issues (why some projects aren’t getting done), and that we should clarify the difference between technical assistance and infrastructure projects. Projects that are a lower priority for the communities can be on a separate list that is not reviewed by the EDC.

STAFF REPORT AND REGIONAL REPORTS:

(See staff report by Jessica Metta prepared September 10, 2009.)

Staff report included: **EDC Projects:** Discovery Center/Oregon Solutions business plan completed, Jessica Metta attended economic development training opportunity, helping with funding for Wasco County Fairgrounds well. **Information Local/Regional:** Mobility Management, Mt Hood Economic Alliance, Oregon Investment Board and Mid-Columbia Economic Development loan activity, Wind Power for Communities Workshop at Discovery Center, Gorge SCORE Chapter. **Funding Opportunities:** Workforce Training Grants, Oregon Safe Drinking Water Loans, Preserving Oregon Grants, Oregon Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants, USDA: Value Added Producer Grants program.

REGIONAL REPORTS:

The Commissioners provided updates on economic development initiatives throughout the County (see attached for copy of regional updates submitted prior to meeting).

NEW BUSINESS:

Andrea Klaas asked if a logo for WEDC existed and none was known to exist, so Andrea and Jessica Metta will check with Wasco County and see what needs to be done to develop a logo.

Joan Silver reported that both the Oregon Investment Board and Washington Investment Board need letters of support to Congress to get funding for the National Scenic Area back into the budget to continue entrepreneurship within the National Scenic Area.

NEXT MEETING:

Scheduled for November 19, 2009, 10am, Maupin but may be changed based on the proposed bus tour.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Layne Sylvester, EDC Staff*