

Umatilla County

Board of Commissioners Work Session - Economic Development

9/23/15, Courthouse, Room 121, Pendleton

Attendance: Commissioners Murdock, Givens & Elfering; Dan Lonai, Doug Olsen; and Tamra Mabbott.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. Commissioner Elfering noted the purpose of the meeting is to provide the status of the economic development program. First item, and very important, is Website Set Up. Dan Lonai is developing the website with input from Tamra Mabbott. In addition, Karie Walchli is updating the tourism website.

Tamra Mabbott added the website is not live as yet. Feedback from the Board of Commissioners is requested before making the website live. At this time, a link is posted for information. Various parties will be involved – Chambers, Ports, Cities, etc. Developing GIS and maps are being worked on (including Paul Chalmers for A&T input) for the future. Mr. Lonai had draft website projected – he talked about pictures to be from all over the county. He is working through rights to pull pictures off of the internet. Chair Murdock noted one picture of the line of train engines – he has permission to use it from the photographer. Mr. Lonai went over internet information including specific towns and tabs “usage rights”, search tools, “labeled for reuse”. The importance of quality pictures to illustrate scenes from around the county. Chair Murdock and Mr. Lonai have taken pictures that are available.

Mr. Lonai advised that now on the web page are many links and pictures and basic information about many categories. At this time, the link is not set up; it is a placeholder on the web at this time. He will email the link information to the Board. Regarding maps, they can be accessed by Township/Range. Different types of maps are labeled for access and pictures can be pulled up and be printed. Ms. Mabbott advised maps of commercial and industrial zones outside city limits as well as zones within city limits are depicted. She also noted census information is provided and updated by PSU / Population and also by US Census. Mr. Lonai noted all specific information about properties that is available to the public is accessible on-line. If you type in an address it links to tax statements – this has been done for about a year. Riley Wortman is working on maps and getting them on-line. Umatilla County Census information has breakdown of cities, population, age, ethnicity, education, workforce, etc. Commissioner Elfering asked about a radius from point A as to workforce availability. This is a direct and initial question by businesses looking to locate. Mr. Lonai advised Google has layers of maps for various information. It could possibly be configured as a “radius” set up.

Strategic Plan. Commissioner Elfering noted this has been in process over last few months.

Mission Statement. (see agenda). Commissioner Elfering handed out the draft document. This is his vision for the Economic & Community Development department to be based upon investment as opposed to charity. What is done is to bring dollars back to the county. He is moving more and more away from just giving out money. Creating taxes and putting properties onto tax rolls is a big priority. Community Development contributions over the past are changing over time. The intent ultimately is to involve county parties (i.e. taxation, planning, computer information system, finance/budget). He talked about a “survey” or assessment of businesses in the county for expanding and supporting existing businesses as well as attracting new businesses. Need to invest funds at strategic positions throughout the county. Chair Murdock advised that morning he read that Colby Pipe is looking to expand 40 positions.

Commissioner Elfering noted the need to reach out to other development agencies in the county, including Steve Chrisman at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport (Pendleton), Mark Morgan, City of Hermiston; Kim

Puzey, Port of Umatilla, and etc. He wants a “think tank” atmosphere for ways to be attractive to business ventures looking to locate. And, confidentiality is a factor to consider. Chair Murdock suggested including Greg Smith, CDA, as another good economic development partner. He was impressed with Mr. Smith’s discussion Monday morning about working through boundaries. CTUIR is also a partner. Ms. Mabbott has put together a comprehensive list of partners; she will touch base with them to make good ties.

Ms. Mabbott noted the strategic plan and mission statement are rough drafts at this time. Commissioner Givens suggested the term “Vision” may be changed to “Goals”. Chair Murdock suggested if possible, he would like to include more diversity of the photos – something other than agriculture. Mr. Lonai asked about including industry photos? Ms. Mabbott agreed those were good ideas and again noted at this time all is in rough draft to be revised. All variety of pictures will be taken.

Ms. Mabbott noted many forms of strategic plans; she liked Deschutes County’s plan, which is short and to the point. Regarding focus industries, the list is being refined. She would like all Commissioners to agree to the mission statement and for them to come up with list of focus industries. Commissioner Givens felt that keeping the mission statement simple and to the point is best. Commissioner Elfering had printed several different plans for comparison and information purposes and handed them out for review.

It was felt it would be best to use a formal process with drafts of documents to be routed and to come before the Board to review and move forward. Commissioner Elfering noted Susan Bower has been consulted about economic development, particularly with the Center for Excellence developing workforce resources. It is important for people to be adaptable and able to go to work. He is not sure how this would dovetail with BMCC/Art Hill and economic development. He would like to schedule a meeting with Cam Preus for BMCC direction. Chair Murdock noted that Art Hill is retiring; therefore, he (Murdock) has been working with Susan Bower for a broader concept of a skilled workforce. (Commissioner Elfering noted he has talked with Art Hill about setting up workplace centers throughout the region.)

Ms. Mabbott advised at some time in near future a more refined strategic plan will be available for the Commissioners. Before adoption, #4 (from the agenda), the process for engaging partners – how does this group have that conversation? She would like to see a partnership meeting to provide draft strategic plan with the message to partners being to please think about what they expect from the county. Also to share mutual expectations, the county is there for all partners, the county wants you to succeed. The other purpose (or at some further point in time) – Umatilla County is partnering with BMCC and Susan Bower for a Center for Excellence – need to address skilled workforce. Chair Murdock agreed there is a niche – when attracting a business, present businesses are proprietary.

In terms of next steps and the new center, Ms. Mabbott wants to meet with partners in the next 2-3 months moving forward to train a workforce to be available. Commissioner Elfering noted, the county is a tool to attract businesses providing extra support. Chair Murdock noted the tax base is different from the universality of workforce. Commissioner Givens talked about bringing in jobs and having a place for them. There is an important need to improve livability of communities. Ms. Mabbott noted the first item that Susan Bower would work on would be assessment of workforce. This could be a professional service contract set up.

Commissioner Givens noted the issue of people living in Washington and working in Oregon. Chair Murdock added there are also people who work in Boardman that live in Umatilla County. Ms. Mabbott noted the need to have a balanced work/home place (a planning term).

Discussion continued by Doug Olsen about contract vs. full-time employee. If the duties take 100% of time, that would be considered an employee. If the person has multiple contracts, that would be part of the test not to be

considered a county employee. What about Regional Solutions? Commissioner Elfering advised he would talk with Scott Fairley to see if they could fit somehow into the conversation.

Mr. Olsen noted the need for direction from the Board to meet objectives of a 3-way relationship with the County, BMCC and Susan Bower's Center for Excellence. A concern is the nature of the relationship with the contractor.

Ms. Mabbott also noted the importance of getting good positive information out to the public about good projects and ideas. She noted there is a niche for county economic development and promoting efforts all over the county. It is important to be proactive about communications of positive ideas.

Discussion turned to Milton-Freewater – Commissioner Elfering noted he has reached out to the City, development commission and their chamber that he wants to spend 1 day a month in Milton-Freewater targeting economic development. A schedule has not been determined yet.

Ms. Mabbott noted that after the BMCC meeting, she would like to see discussion at near future Board of Commissioners' meeting for action.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Notes taken by Melinda Slatt, Executive Secretary to the Board of Commissioners.