

Forest Grove Economic Development Commission
Thursday, July 9, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Mark Frandsen, Pete Van Dyke, Janet Lonneker, JJ Johnston, Dave Rasmussen, Lois Hornberger, Guy Storm. Dick Stenson, Teri Koerner
Cindy Sturm, Ali Brown.

City Staff: Jeff King

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called at 12:18 PM by EDC vice-chair Lois Hornberger.

2. Citizens Communications

There were none.

3. Approval of June 4th EDC summary minutes.

JJ Johnston noted one change in the June minutes. He was listed as in attendance when in fact he was not at the meeting. Mark Frandsen moved to accept the minutes as amended. Cindy Sturm seconded. The minutes passed unanimously.

4. Additions/Deletions to Agenda

There were none.

5. Business

A. Mcmenamins- Host Update

Lois Hornberger thanked Mcmenamins for use of the meeting space and lunch.

B. Highway 47 Access Management Plan Report Update

Staffer Jeff King gave an update. He said Jon Holan and others attended a meeting with ODOT on the access plan. The key areas of discussion are 19th Ave extension to Hwy 47 and the degree of access; Martin Rd/Porter Rd and how it will intersect with Hwy 47 and intersect with a new extended and 26th Ave; and David Hill/Purdin Rd connection to Hwy 47. The locally preferred plan which does not have the Holladay connection in it will be voted on at Council meeting of July 13th. It is expected a final plan will not be completed until the end of the year.

JJ Johnston asked if there would be other opportunities for EDC input. King said there would be updates brought to EDC to keep on top of this. Mark Frandsen asked if any councilors will try to make changes to the plan. Jeff King said that the mayor is opposed and wants the Holladay extension. Lois said this is a sign that the recommendation of the EDC and other businesses has an impact.

C. Strategic Plan: Sub-Comm presentations & final prioritization

Ali Brown gave the presentation for the Small Business & Retention Subcommittee. She identified two priorities. The first was to support business retention and expansion. She said it was important to build relationships and support with existing businesses. Part of this goal is to understand current needs and to help provide tools to address needs. This would include a database of the needs cited by business. She also described how Adelante Mujeres works with the Latino community and to help integrate into the broader business community is also part of this goal.

Lois Hornberger presented for the Workforce & Training Subcommittee. She listed three priorities. The first was to determine the needs of the local workforce. This included a basic survey. It may have different areas-such as retail, industrial, tourism to determine what the workforce needs of business are. The second priority was for access to employment and training for businesses. This includes the opening of the Workforce Express Center and creating an exchange network –like an unemployment listing –pairing up people with jobs. The third priority was to inform employees of local businesses and local businesses of training opportunities. Goals 2 and 3 go hand in hand. Goal 2 is for employees and goal 3 is for businesses to help train their existing staff.

John Johnston asked if getting access to state and federal money including stimulus funds for workforce also included. Lois said she will add this section to the goals. Staff Jeff King explained that a couple of examples of accessing stimulus funds. The first is the opening of a Workforce and Employment Center in Forest Grove. The second is the City hiring of a number of youth for summer employment. Both are funded by stimulus monies. Mark Frandsen asked what are some examples of training. John Johnston said it will promote better applicants for positions. Lois said that this is why a survey is needed. Ali Brown said that stimulus funds are on a time frame, so we should look at soon.

Staffer Jeff King said that as a result of scanning current economic practices and the issues with the current recession, he saw two important goals that he recommended be added to the EDC strategic plan. They are: 1. Support Competitiveness of the Forest Grove Traded Sector, and 2. Business Finance – Seek Adequate Financing for Local Business Needs.

Dave Rasmussen said that these goals were very important in today's environment and next few years of recovery. We have lost so many financing sources, he added. Mark Frandsen said it is good to put this goal in there. It is why more sophisticated governments and Oregon Business Plan put focus on business clusters and to move them forward. Teri Koerner said that there is a cluster association established at OECDD to promote clusters. Mark Frandsen said food processors did a cluster study. Mark explained the cluster concept. He said that is industry sectors where we have a competitive advantage due to built

up networks and resources. He said this includes vendors, cold storage, suppliers, pest control, packaging companies, low power costs are all items that make up the food processing cluster. Portland also has a cluster for outdoor and recreation apparel. JJ Johnston said he supports the competitiveness goal but questions the finance goal. Do we have the ability to find all financing sources and then put financing together for businesses? Janet Lonneker was concerned that we might be biting off more than we can chew. Dave Rasmussen said that each bank does different specialized loans and products. Teri Koerner said she agreed with Jeff, We need to identify what is out there and to recognize it as integral to companies.

JJ Johnston said that the wording should be changed to “being a resource”. The board discussed this and agreed that wording should be less aggressive. The goals will be wordsmithed so that we will serve as a resource and identify financial resources but not actively seek financing for individual businesses or working on loan packages, as this is beyond our capacity.

Sign and Right of Way Code Update

Staffer Jeff King explained that in their packet were the proposed code and ordinance changes for these two issues. King also provided a summary of some the key issues to consider –mainly that it would ban pole signs and require they be taken down and replaced within eight years and would not allow traditional directory pole signs at shopping centers or other multi-tenant centers.

JJ Johnston asked if this is an issue that should be before the EDC. It is not a core economic development item he added. Dick Stenson said that this is the wrong time to make code changes and add costs and new requirements. Cindy Sturm said that signage is a key element for retail businesses, particularly a directory sign. She added that aesthetically pole signs are not as good as monuments but to require existing businesses to pay to remove signs and build a replacement is onerous. Dick felt that this would be an unfunded mandate. He said that existing enforcement could deal with a lot of the right of way signs. Dave Rasmussen agreed that a lot could be resolved with existing code enforcement.

JJ Johnston was again concerned if this fell under economic development. Lois responded that she has three business owners approach her stating that the Sign/ROW ordinance is going to “kill us”. So perhaps it should be sent to a subcommittee but I believe that it does belong before the EDC she added. Rasmussen said to send to sub-committee and let them do their review. Frandsen added that the subcommittee could bring to EDC and whole EDC could vote on it. Koerner said that this will be a long process. The City boards are just starting to look at the sign code but nothing concrete yet. Dick Stenson said that from an economic development standpoint, City needs to grandfather in existing and enforce current rules. Lois Hornberger said to send the issue to the

Commercial/Retail Subcommittee and to the Chamber for comments and review and to email any comments to ED staffer Jeff King

6. Council Communications

There were none.

7. Staff Communications

Staffer Jeff King stated that a site for the Workforce Express Center should be selected in July and opening of the center expected some time in late September. There are 2 sites being considered –one on Main Street and the other in the former pharmacy building at the Forest Grove Shopping Center

8. Announcement of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be August 6th, 2009 at our normal time on the first Thursday on the month.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:36 PM

Approved by the Forest Grove Economic Development Commission:

Date: _____

Signed: _____