

Forest Grove Economic Development Commission
Thursday, March 3rd, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: Don Jones, Guy Storms, Jeff King, Elena Uhing, J.J. Johnston, Mike Mallory, Ralph Brown, Teri Koerner, Cindy Sturm, Hope Kramer, Kati Mayfield, Lois Hornberger, Yvonne Curtis.

City Staff: Michael Sykes, Jon Holan, Dan Riordan.

1. McMenamins Host Update

Clyde Fulkerson stopped by the Alice Inkley Room to greet the EDC, and to give a brief update. He stated that McMenamins Grand Lodge was currently gearing up for summer. Ruby's birthday celebration is this Saturday, 03/15/2011, and they are preparing for their usual St. Patrick's Day celebration. Elena Uhing thanked Clyde for the wonderful on-going service that McMenamins provides to the EDC by hosting the monthly lunch. Clyde responded by saying he truly appreciates all that The City does for The Grand Lodge.

2. Call to Order:

The meeting was officially called to order @ 12:16 by Don Jones.

3. Citizen Communication:

NONE

4. Additions / Deletions & Staff Summary:

Jeff King gave another brief update on the Business Stimulus Proposal. He recently gave a presentation at a City Council Worksession. The Council was very interested in what the financial impact would be to The City to implement this proposal. After reviewing past City records, just as a gauge of what type of fees might be waived if businesses did participate in this program, the largest fee was \$800.00. To the larger businesses in the community, the advantage of implementing this program would be the positive PR that The City supports them. To the smaller businesses, the advantage would be a monetary savings.

5. Business:

A. Tourism

Jeff King stated that the Tourism Committee has been working on a grant application to be submitted to Washington County Visitors Association (WCVA). The grant would be in the amount of \$17,000.00, and would be used to develop and print a marketing brochure for the Forest Grove area and would focus on the new branding. There would also be an electronic version developed, along with a distribution strategy. The application will be submitted on March 15th, 2011. Jeff asked if the EDC would be willing to write a letter of support. Don Jones asked if the EDC supported writing a letter. Ralph Brown motioned to pass the writing of a letter. Lois Hornberger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Membership Update

Jeff King reported that there are now 3 vacancies to fill within the EDC membership. Preston Alexander has resigned as an EDC member. This leaves an opening in the category of “Citizen/Business @ Large” which is a more flexible position to fill. Also vacant are the timber/value added wood products seat and the developer/builder/property owner slot.

6. Approval of EDC Meeting Minutes from February 3rd, 2011

Teri Koerner moved to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. J.J. Johnston seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

7. Education Summit / School Board Update

Ralph Brown reported that the community interest and participation has been wonderful at the Education Summit Meetings. 104 people signed up, and all 104 have attended the first 4 meetings. Funding of the public schools is the focus of the summit. Yvonne Curtis took over for Ralph and explained that she is pleased as well with how involved the community is within the summit meetings. She is also pleased that there has been a very diverse group of people apply to be a part of the summit. She reported that every work day more information comes in to the school district of further budget cuts. The district’s goal is to make sure that every child graduates and has the skills to either continue on to

college, or become a contributing member of the work force. The district has asked the community what their priorities are, as well as creative ideas.

Budget cuts are inevitable, but the district did not want to make the cuts without knowing what the community deems as important or as their top priorities. She stated that the picture is pretty bleak right now, the district has already cut 18% of their budget in the past 2 years, and more was cut prior to that, which leaves them at 20% or more having been cut overall. The effect of these cuts will begin to become evident within the next 2 months or so. Yvonne also pointed out that there will be an additional \$4 million shortfall for this year due to a drop off in enrollment. They will be asking for staff to give up 5 more days, and they will be taking from there reserves which are down to 1.5%, which is dangerously low.

On the bright side, Forest Grove High School has just been recognized as *The* High School in the United States, which means that FGHS will be used as the example of *the* model high school in The Model Schools Conference in Tennessee, and they will receive an award for this honor. The high school has also received, for the 5th year in a row, The Continuing Success Award from The State Department. Also, 70% of the Latino children & 69% of Caucasian children graduate last year. This is important because there isn't another high school in the country where more minority students are graduating than white students, while increasing graduation and improvement for all students.

Jeff King asked Yvonne if she knew what the cause of declining enrollment was due to. She stated that at first the district speculated that it was due to families going to Mexico to visit during the winter months. However, it has come to light that a lot of people chose not to go to Mexico due to the fact that they didn't have enough money, they were afraid to visit Mexico with the current problems caused by the drug cartels, and also some families were afraid they would not be allowed entrance back into the United States. What the district is realizing is that the decreasing enrollment is mostly due to people losing their jobs, which in turn causes them to lose their homes. A lot of people are forced to leave Forest Grove and move in with relatives in other Oregon cities where work may be more readily available. The poverty rate in the district is very high.

8. City Comprehensive Plan

Jon Holan reported that the Planning Commission is at the beginning of the phase where policy alternatives are developed. They are deciding what array of options can be considered at this point. Right now they are looking at ideas and broad categories rather than having exact wording and pinpointing each goal.

Dan Riordan went on to reiterate that they are at the very beginning of this project, trying to develop goals and policies for economic development. Due to time constraints, Dan just touched on the main goals that have been developed, and it was stated that at a later date, Dan & Jon could appear before the EDC with a more thorough presentation. They were more interested in getting the EDC’s feedback at this time. Dan explained that they want to wrap up planning by May or June 2011.

9. Subcommittee Reports

Don Jones apologized that time had run out, and that there would not be time to hear the subcommittee reports during this meeting. He stated that the EDC would resume the subcommittee reports next month and that there would be a Oregon Department of Agriculture presentation next month as well.

10. Council Communications

Elena Uhing, who was filling in for Tom Belusko who was unable to attend, stated that The City Council had their retreat last Saturday and they established their new goals. The goals are now published and able to be viewed. The results from the yearly City survey are back and economic development was rated a high priority by the citizens of Forest Grove. Elena asked the City Manager to issue protocols on e-mailing so that members of the EDC and other commissions are in compliance with this form of media.

11. Announcement of Next Meeting:

The next EDC meeting will be held on April 7th, 2011.

12. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned @ 1:40 p.m. by Don Jones.

Approved by the Forest Grove Economic Development Commission:

Date April 7, 2011

Signed: _____