

# MINUTES

## Lane Economic Committee

Lane Council of Governments – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Large Conference Room  
99 E. Broadway, Suite 400 – Eugene

November 21, 2005 – 11:30 A.M.

PRESENT: John Tamulonis, Chair; Mike Blommé, DeAnn Cherbas, Chuck Forster, Anna Morrison, Jim Ramseyer, John Sullivan, Ellen Teninty, Lynnette Wikstrom, members; Jay Bozievich, Philip Hudspeth, Deb Schmidt, *ex officio* members; Mike Galvin (for Hal Reed), Robin Onaclea, Howard Schesser, alternate members.

Steve Dignam (LCOG); Peter Thurston (Lane County).

ABSENT: Tim Black, Glenda Poling, Hal Reed, Mike Sullivan, Rob Scoggin, Members; Kari Westlund, *ex officio* member.

GUESTS: Tom Kartrude, Noa O'Hare, Linda Sarnoff, Shawn Winkler-Rios.

Mr. Tamulonis called the meeting of the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) Lane Economic Committee (LEC) to order at 11:30 a.m. He invited those who were present to introduce themselves.

### 1. Public Comment

Shawn Winkler-Rios stated that he was Director of the MicroBusiness Program at Lane Community College. He said its Micro Enterprise Project had successfully assisted in the startup or refinancing of 75 small businesses in Lane County and that a recently received grant would allow its further expansion. In response to a request from Mr. Sullivan, he said he would be happy to make a presentation to the LEC regarding the program.

### 2. Comments from the Chair and Staff

Mr. Tamulonis avoided making any comments regarding life or economic development.

Mr. Dignam reported that Mitch Wilkinson was unable to continue as a member and that he had been so far unsuccessful in recruiting a replacement. He solicited suggestions from members. He said Mr. Wilkinson had represented the interests of East Lane County and the University of Oregon, and that he had contributed to the cultural/racial diversity of the LEC.

Mr. Dignam reported that Peter Thurston had announced his intention to retire as Lane County Community and Economic Development Coordinator in the Spring of 2006. He said it could present a challenge and an opportunity to the LEC to provide additional economic assistance to

Lane County government. He invited the LEC to discuss its willingness to expand its participation in matters such as the ranking of video lottery grant applications.

Members discussed the possibilities:

- Is Mr. Thurston to be replaced or other staff changes to be made? (*Teninty*)  
The Board of County Commissioners is seeking input regarding that question. (*Dignam*) County Administrator Bill van Vactor has asked the Lane County Economic Development Standing Committee (EDSC) to provide input regarding a position description. LEC suggestions would be welcome. (*Thurston*)
- Would January LEC meeting be soon enough? (*Tamulonis*) LEC representatives could attend the December 8 meeting of the EDSC and report current developments for discussion at the January meeting. (*Thurston*)
- LEC could easily extend its role in economic development with additional input to the Board of County Commissioners. (*Tamulonis*)
- It would be helpful to have the current job description for the position at the January meeting. (*Ramseyer*)

Mr. Dignam reported that LCOG was applying for a \$500,000 loan from the United States Department of Agriculture for its Rural Development Program. He said he believed chances for receiving it were good and that he was seeking the support of area elected officials. Mr. Hudspeth reported that he had secured letters of endorsement for the application from Congressman Peter DeFazio and Senators Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden.

### **3. Minutes Review**

*Mr. Forster moved, seconded by Ms. Cherbas, to accept the minutes from the October 17, 2005, meeting. The motion was adopted unanimously, 10:0.*

### **4. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Mr. Dignam referred to copies of a document entitled Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies and noted that LEC comments and suggestions regarding a previous draft made at its October meeting had been incorporated. He said the document would be considered for final adoption at the January 12 meeting of the Cascades West Economic Development District.

### **5. City of Florence Economic Development Report**

Linda Sarnoff stated that she was Community Services Director for the City of Florence. She distributed copies of a document entitled "Needs and Issues – 2004/2005" dated March 26, 2004. She explained that it contained a prioritized listing of needed City infrastructure development. She reviewed the current status of several projects – North Florence Local Improvement District, repairs to stormwater system, and Downtown Green improvements/Visitors Center. She identified additional high-priority projects that had emerged since national publicity had highlighted

the desirability of Florence as a retirement location – Senior Center, affordable housing, extension of municipal sewer service to the Three Rivers Casino.

Ms. Sarnoff described the status of other economic developments in Florence:

- *Industrial Park:* It is being mostly utilized by re-locating businesses, not new businesses, as had been anticipated.
- *Airport Sand Dune:* A \$1.9 million grant had been used to remove a dune, allowing development of additional runway services. Sand was relocated to the Port of Siuslaw where it serves to enhance its development.
- *Change in Demographics:* Increased number of retired residents has affected the balance of needs and services required. Family wage jobs are being eliminated because of the lack of available housing for workers. The cost of existing and new housing is increasing rapidly. Household size is growing smaller. Need for service sector jobs is increasing. Schools are affected by reductions in the number of students and increases in the percentage of below-medium income families.
- *Urban Development District:* Focus is not on affordable housing, but on downtown area as a tourist attraction.

Members discussed the report.

## **6. Recreation Vehicle Cluster Report**

Ms. Onaclea distributed copies of a document entitled “The Lane County RV Manufacturing Workforce and Training Consortium: Creating a Center of Excellence for RV Manufacturing Training.” She said transportation equipment manufacturing was one of the largest industries in Lane County and second only to Elkhart, Indiana, in the nation. She described the work of Lane Workforce Partnership in the collaborative development of worker training programs and career pathway models for the industry.

Ms. Onaclea explained that the long-term goal of the program was to make Lane County “a manufacturing center of excellence and the recreation vehicle training hub for the state.” She said connection would be made with other regions with similar training needs. She said a Best Practices model to share with other businesses and industries would be developed.

## **7. Needs and Issues List**

Mr. Dignam said discussion of the Needs and Issues List of the Oregon Economic & Community Development Department at the October LEC meeting had highlighted the value of the process. He said he had solicited evaluation of its continuation from a number of persons and had determined there was near-agreement that “if the Feds use it, it should continue.” He invited members to discuss what part the LEC could play in filling the identified need.

Mr. Tamulonis said that prior to development of the State of Oregon List, Lane County had created a process to identify priorities for development. He said needs related to the University of Oregon and the Eugene Airport had been primary drivers of the program. He suggested that it

could be useful to raise the issue with the Board of County Commissioners as part of considering expansion of LEC involvement in economic development issues.

Mr. Sullivan said he agreed that countywide cooperation should be solicited. He said he was concerned that the State process had become too cumbersome and time consuming. He said he supported having LEC move forward with a more useful and manageable prioritization process.

Ms. Morrison said she agreed that a process to identify the economic and infrastructure development priorities in the county should be maintained. She suggested that the number of options a community could submit for prioritization be limited, as was done in the successful "United Front" federal lobbying effort. She also suggested that information about funding already committed to a project be requested and that the levels of information requested be better explained.

Mr. Tamulonis suggested there might be value in considering prioritization only of projects that would require federal funding.

Mr. Kartrude said the Port of Siuslaw had found the prioritization listing of the Needs and Issues process helpful in the past in securing federal grants. He said he believed the LEC should attempt to facilitate its continuation in Lane County, even if its scope was more limited.

Mr. Schuessler said he believed Cottage Grove economic development interests would be neutral about the process. He said the Oregon process had not been beneficial and had been time consuming to complete.

Mr. Tamulonis suggested there might be value in limiting the number of projects a community could submit to only its top one or two. He said projects submitted in the past seemed to have fluctuated with funding that was available. Mr. Thurston said he believed there was value in having a community submit its top ten projects.

Mr. Dignam said he believed there was agreement to report to the Lane EDSC and State of Oregon that the LEC recognized the importance of a Needs and Issues List prioritization process.

Mr. Tamulonis determined there was agreement to change the next scheduled meeting of the LEC to January 23, 2006.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

*(Recorded by Dan Lindstrom)*

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