

MINUTES

Lane Economic Committee
Lane Council of Governments
859 Willamette Street, 5th Floor
Eugene, Oregon

May 17, 2010 – 11:30 A.M.

PRESENT: Rob Scoggin, Chair; Pat Albright, Mike Blommé, Mike Galvin, Jacque Morgan, Greg Rikhoff, Robin Scott, John Sullivan, Mike Sullivan, Ellen Teninty, Lynnette Wikstrom, members; Jay Bozievich, Deb Schmidt, Kari Westlund, *ex officio* members; Barry Miller, Jack Roberts, alternate members.

Steve Dignam, George Kloeppe, Milo Mecham (LCOG); Mike McKenzie-Bahr (Lane County); Bob Warren (Oregon Economic & Community Development Department).

ABSENT: DeAnn Cherbas, Bill Fleenor, Chuck Forster, Philip Hudspeth, John Tamulonis, members; Howard Schesser, alternate member.

Chairperson Rob Scoggin called the meeting of the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) Lane Economic Committee (LEC) to order at 11:35 a.m. He invited those who were present to introduce themselves.

1. Public Comment

Pat Albright commented on the construction of a proposed downtown Eugene campus for Lane Community College (LCC). He said its Board of Directors took no position on the use of Urban Renewal funds by the city to support the project, but noted that current economic conditions provided labor and material cost benefits. He described contributions the campus would make to the area and the college. He solicited the support of members for it. He reported that a public forum about the project would be held on May 25.

Jack Roberts, Mike McKenzie-Bahr, and Mike Sullivan added supportive comments about the development.

Chairperson Scoggin determined that neither he or staff wished to make any special comments.

2. Minutes

Mike Blommé moved, seconded by John Sullivan, to accept the minutes of the April 19, 2010, meeting. The motion was adopted unanimously, 10:0.

3. Small Business Loan Program

LCOG Staff Steve Dignam reported on the Business Assistance Loan Program. He described how it used resources of local banks, and local, state, and federal resources such as the Small Business Administration to enable attractive rates of interest, higher loan-to-value, and easier access to capital. He said the involvement of private sector banks was the key to the success of the program.

Mr. Dignam debunked what he said were “myths” of government loan programs – lots of paperwork, slow turnaround times, and changing bureaucracies. He reviewed eligibility requirements for the LCOG program – small business, owner occupied, real estate and equipment only, and job creation. He displayed pictures and described examples of businesses for which current and recent loans had been arranged through the program.

Members discussed the program – the participation of banks; the number and size of loans facilitated each month; additional local, state, and federal loan resources; and use of the program by businesses outside Lane County.

4. Climate of Prosperity Task Force

LCOG Staff Milo Mecham distributed copies of a May 17 memorandum in which he described the efforts of an Economic Enhancement task force of the LCOG Board of Directors. He explained that it recommended that “the profile” of the LEC be raised to become a regional voice for economic development. He reviewed relevant actions endorsed by the Board:

- Put elected officials on the LEC.
- Develop a regional economic development vision.
- Develop a regular program of informational discussions or debates on economic development issues.
- Consider opportunities to express a regional voice on economic development issues.

Members discussed the proposals, expressing divergent opinions regarding the value of adding elected officials to the LEC; recognizing LEC experience with preparing economic goals and visions; citing the value of using LEC as a forum for discussing/debating issues; indicating interest in serving as advocate for regional and local concerns with the State Legislature; suggesting that changes in LEC purposes and restrictions would be required in its bylaws to enact suggestions; and appearing to reach consensus that further discussion was desirable.

In response to a suggestion of Chairperson Scoggin to form a subcommittee to develop an official response, Mr. Dignam said staff would work through the “good input” of committee members, report it to the LCOG Board Executive Committee, and bring feedback to the June meeting of the LEC. He said decisions/recommendations made at that meeting could be presented to the LCOG Board meeting held later in the month.

5. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

John Sullivan distributed copies of information regarding a “Building Our Future Economy” symposium sponsored by Cascades West Economic Development District on June 2, 2010, in Albany. He reviewed its program that included a Keynote Address by Congressman Peter DeFazio. He said the event was an example of how the LEC could increase its influence.

Oregon Economic & Community Development Department representative Bob Warren stated that an important purpose of the symposium was to provide input in the preparation of the state-wide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) which would be adopted in July. He said it was important for Lane County and LEC interests to be present. He emphasized that inclusion in the CEDS was of paramount importance in securing federal Economic Development Administration funding.

Chairperson Scoggin announced that the next LEC meeting was scheduled for June 21.

Jay Bozievich suggested that discussion of funding for the LCC downtown campus project and/or the importance of regional water supply issues be considered at the June meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

(Recorded by Dan Lindstrom)