

Director's Message

Date: May 13, 2008

To: Partners of Oregon Housing and Community Services

From: Victor Merced, Director

I'm sure you've heard the news: Oregon Housing and Community Services may be expanding—taking on the Community Development Division of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department.

OECDD will be split into two functions—community development and business development—Governor Kulongoski announced at a news conference yesterday.

Governor speaks. “I believe that ultimately,” the Governor stated in his official remarks, “community development should be housed within the Oregon Housing and Community Services agency. This organizational marriage will help communities provide a solid foundation from which people and businesses thrive.”

The Governor tapped Rep. David Edwards of Hillsboro to shepherd the proposed restructuring through the 2009 legislative session.

“We had one agency trying to do two very distinct functions,” Rep. Edwards said. “Now, with this restructuring we can achieve greater results from efforts to help communities improve their infrastructure while also doing a better job of helping Oregon businesses and attracting new industry and jobs throughout the state.”

Process. The first step in the process occurred yesterday when the Governor signed an executive order separating OECDD into two entities—community development and business development.

The next step, now underway, is creation of workgroups to fully analyze how the separated divisions can work most effectively and efficiently to maximize the realignment into OHCS or other state departments. This will be an arduous task involving the best thinking that OHCS, OECDD, as well as our key partners and stakeholders can bring to the table.

Following analysis by the workgroups, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Commission will make recommendations to the Governor. He will, in turn, present this to the Legislature for approval.

Tim McCabe. Governor Kulongoski announced that Tim McCabe, who has been his policy advisor on matters including our own housing and community services, will move to the role of director of Economic and Community Development. Tim will assemble a team that will travel the state collecting advice on the realignment from partners and constituents.

The Governor's executive order explained: "OECDD's realignment will provide an essential, strategic framework to address the challenges facing Oregon and position the state for long-term success in the 21st Century and provide clarity, accountability and viability for the department's distinct missions."

Rural policy. In his news conference Monday morning, the Governor stated: "Oregon has a very bright economic future." The realignment of OECDD is designed to take best advantage of that future.

In addition, the Governor emphasized the importance to Oregon's economic development of the role of infrastructure improvements to stimulate job creation in rural areas of the state.

He cited the importance of this restructuring given the recent elimination of Oregon's Office of Rural Policy. "This reorganization will be a voice for rural Oregon," the Governor said, later adding, "It is what we do as cornerstone for investment in small communities through the state"

The incorporation within OHCS of this part of OECDD is an excellent fit, blending the infrastructure planning and development work of OECDD with the housing finance and social services expertise of OHCS.

OHCS will continue to work hard in achieving its current goals and objectives. Be assured that as the department prepares itself for the 2009 legislative session, homelessness, preservation and expanding resources for housing and community service programs will continue to be top priorities for OHCS.

More information will follow as the workgroups are formed and begin their work in the weeks ahead. We will keep our employees and partners informed as the process moves forward.

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