



**Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Representing Wheeler, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, Grant, Harney, and Malheur Counties

Tuesday, March 29, 2016

11:00am – 1:00pm

Harney County Community Center, 484 N Broadway, Burns

Advisory Committee attendees: Cam Preus, Convener, Tim Mabry, Don Rice, Mayor Phil Houk (phone), Mayor Mike McLaughlin, Commissioner Bill Elfering (phone), Bob Levy, Dave Tovey, Fred Flippence, Judge Steve Shaffer, Judge Steve Grasty, and Judge Chris Perry.

Other attendees: Senator Ted Ferrioli (phone); Randy Fulton, Harney County; Annette Liebe and Scott Fairley, Regional Solutions; Melisa Drugge, Business Oregon; Tawni Bean, Infrastructure Finance Authority; Sean Maloney, ODOT; Randy Jones, DEQ; Karen Wagner, Senator Merkley's Office, Tillman Carr and Susan Christiansen, GEODC; Lena Varley, Regional Solutions RARE member (phone); and Dallas Fridley, Oregon Employment Department (phone).

General Action Items

Based on member discussion, Scott will send revised draft regional priorities to Advisory Committee members for review. There will be a chance for public comment prior to revised regional priorities being finalized.

Meeting

Randy Fulton, Harney County Economic Development, provided an economic development update for Harney County. Joseph Juniper (juniper processing) is doing well and currently has nine employees. A new rough-cut juniper and pine saw mill is operating with three new employees. Pacific Foods is continuing to invest in the county. They hope to begin process carp from Malheur Lake soon and are planning on opening an organic meeting processing facility that will require 40 employees to begin and will likely grow from there. Randy is also working on an equine rehabilitation center and veterinary clinic that would be located in Burns. Light Speed Network intends a high-speed internet system via fiber optic interties linking all Oregon County courthouses to the State Archives Building in Burns which will serve as an information repository and data archive (server back-up).

Judge Grasty discussed the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupation, impacts to Harney County, and lessons learned. The Bundy's and other occupiers took advantage of the welcoming attitude of Harney County citizens. Nineteen Oregon counties provided assistance. The county received \$2 million in the 2016 legislative session to offset the cost of law enforcement during the occupation. Every federal employee that lives in the area, and those that responded, were

directly threatened by statements or gestures by the occupiers. There is a social interest in public lands, not to mention a positive economic impact in counties whose economies rely on public land utilization without being burdened by the cost of management (i.e. a small fire could bankrupt a county, let alone managing the scale of fires the region has recently experienced). The value of the High Desert Partnership and their history of collaboration on federal land management issues played a large role in the general rejection of the occupation agenda. The FBI Hostage Response Team was mobilized and federal officers worked well with state and local law enforcement. Federal land managers need to empower local managers to work with local partners similar to the partnerships with the High Desert Partnership and keep focused on all legs of the three-legged stool – economy, ecology, and social impacts. Federal land managers have done a good job of analyzing economic and ecological issues, but they have not done as well on social impacts. The refuge occupation was the result of ignoring social impacts.

Dallas Fridley, Regional Economist for the Oregon Employment Department, provided a review of economic data for the region. Umatilla County has 50% of the jobs in the region. Government is the largest employer followed by manufacturing. Over 50% of the jobs in Morrow County are in manufacturing and the county has the highest wages in the region. The region has an unemployment rate of 5.7% due to a declining labor force – the region's workforce has declined by 4500 since 2008. Few new homes are being built and housing availability is an issue in much of the region. Rental housing is less affordable than owner-occupied homes. Agriculture is adding jobs while health care related jobs pay the highest wages.

The Advisory Committee discussed revised regional priorities including:

- Skilled workforce to meet current and future industry needs
- Workforce housing and attractive communities
- Water management and development
- Increased productivity from federal lands
- Infrastructure for marketable industrial land
- Support for current and emerging businesses

Discussion on priorities also included targeting potential industries that could locate in the region to determine their siting needs. It was proposed that Scott send revised priorities to the Advisory Committee for review.

Sean Maloney, ODOT, provided an Area Commission on Transportation update. ODOT Region 5 has received \$3.4 million in Enhance-It (primarily bike/ped projects) proposals and \$4.5 million in Connect Oregon (non-highway projects) proposals. Projects will be finalized in August 2016.

Annette Liebe, Regional Solutions Director, provided a brief overview of the Governor's 2016 priorities, discussed rule making for the Regional Infrastructure Fund, and the proposal to request funding for Regional Solutions priority projects in the 2017 session. Annette also

thanked the Advisory Committee and Regional Solutions Team for their work to identify and advance regional priorities.

There was no public comment. The meeting adjourned at 1:20pm.