

Northeast Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

July 6, 2016

The Advisory Committee met at the Regional Solutions Conference Room at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande. The meeting began at 2:00 pm.

Members present: Tim Seydel, Mayor Dennis Sands, Commissioner Mark Davidson, and Troy Little.

Regional Solutions Team members present: Scott Fairley, Randy Jones, Tawni Bean, Melisa Drugge, and Ken Patterson.

Also attending: Peggy Lynch, League of Women Voters (phone); Tom Wolf, Trout Unlimited (phone); Dan Stark, Union County Economic Development Council; Lisa Dawson, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District; Lena Varley, RARE; Kathleen Cathy, Sen. Wyden's office.

Regional Priorities and Expected Outcomes

Tim Seydel convened the meeting. Scott introduced the draft priorities and how they are used and the request that they be ranked by order of importance. The Advisory Committee discussed proposed priorities and noted all are interconnected and important to advancing the regional economy. Commissioner Davidson moved the priorities be accepted as presented with the addition of a statement recognizing the interconnectedness of the priorities. The motion was unanimously approved.

Scott stated the Regional Solutions Team will be creating a workplan based on the regional priorities and draft expected outcomes and asked if there were any comments on the outcomes. None were forthcoming.

Priority expected outcomes and a workplan for each priority will be discussed at our next meeting.

Priority Project Updates

Dan Stark provided an update on the Baum Industrial Park project. Infrastructure upgrades including roads, sewer, water, and utility work are anticipated to be complete by next spring. Rail improvements will be addressed in a later phase pending funding opportunities.

Regional Coordinator Update

Scott Fairley provided updates on the following:

Regional Infrastructure Fund rules – out for comment until August 1. Under the proposed rules funding will be requested and awarded before projects are solicited. Five percent of funds allocated will go to each region. The remaining funds will be competitive across all regions. A committee consisting of OBDD and IFA commission

members will make final funding decisions. The Advisory committee requested that Scott submit a comment on behalf of the Advisory Committee requesting that the project review committee have a representative from each region as it is important to have a regional presence when projects are being considered.

Regional Solutions Team Open House – The RST toured Heinz Frozen Foods and held their annual open house in Ontario in June. Approximately 40 attendees participated. Agency members are following up on issues.

Regional Solutions Survey – The annual survey is sent out to businesses, cities, counties, and other customers. The survey ranks timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness, expertise, and information provided. The goal is 90% good or excellent. The overall ranking was 92% good or excellent.

Joint Committee on Transportation Maintenance and Preservation – The committee held meetings in Hermiston and Ontario in June. The committee is trying to get a sense for the support for a transportation package in the 17 session, how big a package should be, and how it should be funded. There seems to be general support for a package. Cities and counties have identified the need for additional funding to maintain the local road network.

New RST Member – Ken Patterson is replacing Craig Sipp as the ODOT RST member. Craig was selected to be the Region 5 (Eastern Oregon) Manager.

Area Commission on Transportation Update

Ken Patterson provided an update from the Area Commissions. The ACTs have recommended Connect Oregon funding for airport projects in Baker City, La Grande, and Burns and for rail upgrades for the Wyoming Colorado shortline serving Elgin. They also recommended Enhance It funds for Division Street in Irrigon, 5th Street to 5th Ave. sidewalks in Ontario, a Safe Routes to School project in Vale, and 6th Street in Umatilla. The OTC will make final funding decisions this fall. Kathleen Cathy had a question on the status of a proposed population cap of 35,000 to receive bike/ped funding. Ken will follow-up.

Advisory Committee Roundtable

Mayor Sands talked about the Rails with Trails project. There have been a number of meetings with adjacent landowners and several public meetings. Funding efforts are underway and there is strong community interest. Commissioner Davidson mentioned the project will help the railroad authority and that there has been a Federal Lands Access Program application to build the first 6.3 miles of the project from Joseph to Enterprise. Peggy Lynch suggested Commissioner Tony Hyde is a good funding contact as he is working on a similar project. Randy Jones discussed the proposed torrefaction project in John Day and the potential benefits to the region if it is successful. Kathleen Cathy stated Sen. Wyden is working on a bio-energy bill to incentivize biomass treatment close to the source. Lisa Dawson talked about a brownfield assessment at the Lime site. Two wooden structures are being removed and the county is looking for

funding to remove concrete structures. Lisa also mentioned an entrepreneur development center is opening in La Grande at the old fire station. The center is intended to be an entrepreneur development hub.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.