

## **MEETING SUMMARY- SOUTHERN OREGON REGIONAL SOLUTIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

May 15, 2017

Josephine County Courthouse, Commissioner's Office Board Room, Grants Pass

### Committee members present:

Bill Thorndike, convener\*

Councilor Jonathan Bilden, City of Eagle Point\*

Jackson County Commissioner Rick Dyer\*

Steve Roe\*

Josephine County Commissioner Dan DeYoung

President Linda Schott

\*Executive Committee

### Regional Solutions Team:

Art Anderson, Department of Transportation

Marta Tarantsey, Business Oregon

Kate Jackson, Department of Environmental Quality

Josh LeBombard, Department of Land Conservation and Development

Alex Campbell, Coordinator, Governor's Office

Amy Gilroy, Department of Agriculture (via phone)

### Guests:

Greg Holmes, 1000 Friends of Oregon

Sam Engel, AllCare

Robert Brandes, Josephine County

Brad Niva, Travel Southern Oregon

Jessica Gomez, Oregon Business Commission

### **Advisory Committee (AC) New Member**

The Executive Committee of the AC unanimously invited President Linda Schott of Southern Oregon University to join the AC (Julia McFadden will no longer be representing SOU).

***\*ACTION: Alex will arrange for appointment letter to be sent.***

The agenda was slightly rearranged to allow time for Power Point presentations to be loaded and prepared for display.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Bill Thorndike shared that Governor Brown is seeking to diversify the representation on all state boards and commissions. Suggestions of individuals who might be willing to serve that would support that end are very welcome.

Alex Campbell suggested that diversifying the Advisory Committee itself would be a very welcome move. He has begun outreach and will continue outreach. He would welcome participation from any interested AC members. His goal would be to present several possible additions to the AC at the next meeting. Bill suggested looking, particularly, at Native American Hispanic candidates. The AC agreed that this was a good approach.

***\*ACTION: Alex will search for additional AC member candidates, with input from the AC, to present at the next AC meeting.***

### **Governor Brown's Visit**

Alex provided a brief summary of Governor Brown's recent visit to the area which included several school visits (Eagle Point High, McLoughlin Middle, and Orchard Hill Elementary), business visits (MaskIT and Timber Products), and meetings with community/business leaders (lunch with members of the SOREDI board and a breakfast with the Business Education Partnership).

### **North Valley Industrial Park**

Robert Brandes, Josephine County Public Works Director, shared an update on the recently completed Preliminary Engineering Report on possible ways to improve wastewater treatment capacity to serve future growth at the North Valley Industrial Park (NVIP) and Merlin Airport. The recommendation was to consider a Packed Bed Media Filter. (See attached slides.) The Regional Solutions Team will be setting up a "One-Stop" meeting to discuss possible funding options.

AC members were pleased that innovative treatment alternatives are being considered and that growth at the airport would be accommodated.

***\*ACTION: RST will work with Josephine County staff to arrange a One-Stop.***

### **Rogue Valley Food Systems Network – Cannabis Task Force**

Greg Holmes, 1000 Friends of Oregon, provided an overview of the network's work as a whole, and their recent work on cannabis. (See attached slides.)

Greg emphasized that the work around the cannabis industry, led by Vincent Smith of SOU, is focused on "facilitating coexistence" between the new industry and other agricultural interests.

The top issues they have identified include:

- Labor scarcity due to high wages/demands in cannabis industry
- Water use and run-off/effluent from cannabis growers
- Land availability and/or degradation due to cannabis industry practices (some land purchased and simply left fallow; common growing practices do not utilize native soils, and often compact/degrade quality soils)
- “Boom mentality”; community concerns, particularly in areas such as Williams and Illinois Valley
- Federal laws prevent Extension agents from providing education to cannabis industry regarding better practices

The Task Force will be tackling these issues by trying promote discussion/interaction, particularly between traditional ag and cannabis industry members. On June 20, they will hold a convener facilitator training. On July 19, a public information forum will be held. A series of smaller community-based discussions will be held August to September. The Task Force is hoping to identify the resources (~\$10K) to hold a conference on the fall.

Commissioner DeYoung shared the labor impacts are hitting many employers. He also noted that essentially no revenues are flowing to the counties to support local law enforcement. Would like to explore a production tax. He and the Sheriff recently visited the community of Takilma and noted real community fear of lawlessness.

Steve Roe suggested that Ford Family Foundation’s network of trained community leaders might be a great resource for the effort. He offered to connect Greg with the right folks at FFF.

Greg would like assistance from the AC in identifying resources to support the effort and/or support of communications of the community forums.

Greg said that they expect to make some policy recommendations as one of the results of the work and would welcome additional opportunities to dialogue with the Governor’s Office.

### **Outdoor Recreation/Tourism Efforts**

Brad Niva, Travel Southern Oregon Director, introduced himself. He is a long-time operator in the industry and began as the new Director of Travel So Oregon six weeks ago.

Brad is pleased that the increase in the statewide lodging tax from 1 to 1.8% will increase resources both for core functions and grants. He recently hired the Oregon Shakespeare Festival marketing director to work for TSO.

He recently completed a survey of their stakeholders. Top issues/interests were:

- Improving alignment of regional marketing with state efforts
- Focusing on extending travel season

- Develop/share stories, more work on earned media
- Downtown/Main Street improvements

Brad shared a summary of the recent Travel Oregon economic impact study. Tourism in Southern Oregon is now a \$1 Billion industry with 11,000 jobs. He noted, however, that TSO is significantly under-funded in comparison to other RDMOs in the state, such as Travel Central Oregon. He would like to explore some county-level TLT taxes and/or use of Tourism Investment Districts.

Commissioner DeYoung shared that there has been some dialogue among Southern Oregon commissioners that a 2% sales tax, if consistently applied across the region, could be viable.

The AC encouraged Brad to bring in the RST if/when state rules or regulations are posing barriers to industry growth.

### **Project Status Updates (SO Regional Solutions Team)**

See work plan for updates on all team projects.

The team highlighted support for Rogue River Valley Irrigation District's effort to secure funding for the WISE demonstration project, Bradshaw Drop. The RST will be supporting a new round of public outreach.

Jackson County is developing a proposal to manage the development (and operation) of the planned Gold Hill White Water Park. Any arrangement would have to make financial sense to the County.

The Grants Pass Taxiway project design has been completed and construction should begin this summer.

Kate Jackson shared progress in permitting the emergency repairs to the Grants Pass Irrigation District canal at Sand Creek. RST will engage on longer term planning with GPID and others. Marta Tarantsey introduced herself as the new Business Oregon Regional Development Officer and let the AC know that work continues on Project GoGo and Project Spirit.

### **HB 5025 and SB 5530**

Bill Thorndike shared his invited testimony in favor of the legislature providing additional funding to Regional Infrastructure Finance pool.

### **Additional Comments/Public Comments**

Art Anderson shared the outlines of the new transportation funding package under consideration in Salem.

Councilor Bilden let the group know that progress on the Butte Creek Mill is being made. The Timber Framers of America may participate in construction.

President Schott was glad to hear that Vincent Smith's work with the Food Systems Network was discussed. She also noted that SOU just received approval for establishing their new Master's program in outdoor adventure education leadership, which will be only the 2<sup>nd</sup> such program west of the Mississippi.

Commissioner DeYoung shared his appreciation of Airport Manager Larry Graves and noted the tremendous economic development success at the Madras Airport. The county's airport is seeing a lot of overflow traffic from the very busy Medford airport and will be adding 2,000 feet to the runway soon.

Jessica Gomez shared that she was attending in her role as a member of the Oregon Business Commission. She also shared that design continues on their planned new facility to allow expansion of Rogue Micro-Devices. She also reported that progress continues at Rogue Workforce Partnership in developing better understanding of career pathways and collaboration between industry and the educational system.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Bill Thorndike suggested a next AC meeting in early fall and adjourned the meeting.