

MEETING SUMMARY- SOUTHERN OREGON REGIONAL SOLUTIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 30 & July 31, 2018

Rogue Valley Council of Governments Offices
Central Point

July 30

Committee members present:

Bill Thorndike, convener*
Jackson County Commissioner Rick Dyer*
Eagle Point Councilor Jonathan Bilden*
Steve Roe*
SOU President Linda Schott
Commissioner Lily Morgan
*Executive Committee

Regional Solutions Team:

Alex Campbell, Coordinator, Governor's Office
Guy Tauer, Oregon Employment Department
Rob Merriman, SOREDI

Guests:

Dr. Cathy Kemper-Pelle, Ron Goss, and Michelle Moncovich, , Rogue Community College
Commissioner Simon Hare and Larry Graves, Josephine County
Stephanie Dolan, Ryan Wilcoxson, Talen Maker City
City of Talent Mayor Darby Ayers-Flood
Maryanne Pitcher, Butte Creek Mill Foundation
Caleb LaPlante, So Oregon Air Academy
Susan Seereiter, City of Grants Pass
Kathleen Dunham, League of Women Voters

Approval of Minutes

Bill Thorndike requested approval of minutes from the December 11, 2017 meeting. Minutes were accepted by assent as presented in the meeting packet.

Regional Infrastructure Finance Project Presentations

Friends of the Oregon Caves withdrew their dormitory restoration application because of a lack of support by the interim park administrator. Sue Densmore noted that the restoration of the Chateau itself is moving forward as planned.

Historical Rebuild & Restoration of Butte Creek Mill & Ice House, Eagle Point/ Butte Creek Mill Foundation

Presentation emphasized that the mill will be rebuilt to preserve the National Register designation. Project elements include educational, historic preservation, and environmental benefits (due to preserving the non-consumptive water right). The economic impact will come from a fully sustainable business model (with \$650K+ revenue), drawing visitors to Eagle Point, and potentially expanding into on-line sales. \$1.3M has been raised to-date; if the Foundation can secure another \$150K in donations, which will be matched 1:1, bringing total to \$1.6M. Timber framers are here working and the millwright is scheduled for November.

Q. What is the City support for the project?

A. \$100K has been pledged.

Commissioner Dyer noted that he doesn't see a more relevant, impactful project in the County. The County is still considering financial support.

Q. What is the projected employment?

A. 8-10 immediately, with the potential to add a second location for packing and shipping on-line orders

Bill Thorndike noted that the \$200K request matches well with the Committee's adopted priorities and is a reasonable request in terms of the resource available.

Fire Suppression Water Pond Rehabilitation - Illinois Valley Airport , Josephine County

USDA-RD funding paid for the initial construction about 20 years ago, but development was halted. The County wants to revive the project and have an FAA waiver for non-aviation-related uses. The liner of the fire suppression pond has deteriorated. Rehabilitation of the pond would free up development of 12 building sites, with fire hydrants already in place. Current cost estimate has a range, but County has dedicated \$100K to the project and RIF could provide the rest. With a \$250K grant, the County will find a way to complete the project.

Q. How many acres is the park?

A. Approx. 35 acres in the park; additional space for future expansion is available.

Q. What is the water source.

A. Have existing wells. A new well may be needed and/or purchase an additional water right from adjoining property.

Q. Is there any competition, i.e., available industrial land in the area.

A. (Commissioner Hare) This would be the only shovel-ready land.

Q. Length of runway?

A. 5K feet

Q. Budget seems like engineering costs are very high?

A. Because it is at an airport, need high level of civil design & review.

Q. What is the condition of flight infrastructure?

A. Much of it was recently improved.

Grants Pass Airport Facility Upgrade for Southern Oregon Air Academy, Josephine County

In 2016, the academy began with just a summer camp. In 2017, demand was high and began thinking about expansion. In 2018, holding 3 summer camps. Future plans include year-round after-school programming and a plane build program. Are working with RCC on a possible career pathway.

Q. What is the relationship with Alaska?

A. They are offering \$7500 scholarships towards pilot licensing. Still working on formal agreement.

Q. What kind of accreditation would this program need?

A. Had been working with RCC, but with some staff transition, work is on hold. Will be picked back up.

Rogue Innovation Hub, Rogue Community College

Project will support workforce development with access to machines and hands-on involvement. Build-out includes areas for robotics, food processing, advanced metal working, 3-D printing, laser cutting, pottery, and CNC equipment. Multiple partnerships, including the Small Business Development Center, K-12, and library. City of Grants Pass has committed urban renewal dollars; RCC is donating the building; Avista and Pacific Power have made commitments. Future phases of program could include casting, fermentation, woodworking, small engines, and digital/audio production. Grant would pay for infrastructure improvements for air handling, HVAC, ADA access, and fire suppression. RCC is making a commitment to operations.

Q. Are SOU or OSU Extension partners?

A. Have existing alignments with other facilities; will be aligned with adopted career pathways.

Q. What is the financial model?

A. A small facilities rental fees and a membership model for regular access. Some RCC community ed classes will be held. No credit classes. Goals is to generate interest in RCC programs.

Gateway Economic Innovation Center Development, City of Talent / Talent Maker City

Mayor Ayers-Flood introduced the concept as having a potential regional impact in supporting and attracting businesses and developing productive citizens. It also supports downtown Talent development and brand of Talent as supporting innovation.

Talent Maker City was founded in 2016 with a mission of providing skill-based training. Have been in a small space (under 1KSF), currently making transition into a 3700SF space. Grant would support build-out of a 7500SF space in the Gateway Development. Project would be an anchor for the Gateway development and offer business services as well as classes/work space. Goal is to fill gaps between education and industry; support rapid proto-typing and small production runs. Current success is partnering with a local company to bring in industrial sewing machines to train a workforce.

Public Comment. Caleb LaPlante noted that there were a lot of exciting projects, exciting for the region's future.

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Guy Tauer and Ainoura Oussenbec, Oregon Employment Department
Rob Merriman, SOREDI
Kate Jackson, DEQ
Art Anderson, ODOT
Marta Tarantsey, Business Oregon

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Regional Infrastructure Finance Project Staff Review

Alex reported the staff scores, which are only intended as a guide for discussion, and described the criteria by which the projects were scored. The scores for the projects came out fairly close.

Bill Thorndike encouraged the Committee members to declare any conflicts of interest that they might have. Bill noted he serves on the Butte Creek Mill Foundation Board. Commissioner Morgan noted that two applications are from Josephine County. Councilor Tilden noted that he is involved with the Butte Creek Mill project in several ways. Alex noted that none of those relationships would raise to even a “Potential Conflict of Interest” under Oregon ethics guidelines.

Alex reminded the Committee of their assignment: selecting up to three projects, prioritized, with a request of no more than \$1M. Commissioner Dyer asked about funding recommendations that were below the minimum requested. Alex responded the applicants had been invited in case the Committee wanted to discuss exactly that with the applicants.

Opportunity for Public Comment on RIF projects

Ryan Wilcoxson noted that while they do have a large request for Talent Maker City, it meets the regional priorities well. The building is essential to their success. Any amount would be strongly leveraged. Stephanie Doland suggested a \$200K grant would get the project through architecture and design.

Regional Infrastructure Finance Project Recommendation

Commissioner Morgan spoke in favor of the two airport projects. The SOAA project will serve the entire region and the Illinois Valley project is important to bring hope to that area.

Commissioner Dyer noted that the education and historic values of the Butte Creek Mill project were significant and should be recognized. There is the potential for the Mill to be profitable and, in turn, fund other projects. He also supported SOAA due to the very strong connection to an immediate workforce need. There was some inter-change with the Talent Maker City proponents.

Dr. Schott noted that the scorers awarded no “outstanding” ratings and suggested that perhaps the Butte Creek Mill deserved one in terms of the Sustainable Business Plan. Alex agreed a good case could be made for that. The maker space projects are a long-term play; Talent made a good case. The IV project seems like a “no brainer.” Sees value in all projects.

Steve Roe saw a potential for SOAA to impact kids and offer a path to jobs in the community. The IV project could really complete something. Also like the Mill project

Jonathan Bilden noted more money was needed. He supported the airport projects and the mill.

Bill Thorndike liked how ready to move forward the mill project is. The SOAA project aligns well with plans to expand CTE education I the state.

Bill asked if there was consensus that the IV airport, SOAA, and mill projects were the three best. There was. There was also a consensus that IV was #1. The committee struggled with ordering #2 and #3. Ricky suggested that the urgency of the mill project brought it higher for him. There was a consensus for IV, BC Mill, and SOAA at their requested levels, in that order.

Project Reports

Ainoura shared some recent data on employment and population projections for the region. Although job growth in Josephine County has been strong recently, projections suggest continued challenges with workforce participation rates.

Kate reported on a regional brownfield project, managed by RVCOG, that can pay for characterization work, both Phase 1 and Phase 2 studies. Regional Solutions and SOREDI are working with the manager to assist in site prioritization.

Art reported that the new welcome center should be complete in spring 2019; Highway 62 bypass is also on track for early 2019 completion. ODOT is developing contracts for the seismic “triage” work funded by HB 2017. Statewide ODOT is looking for strategies to accelerate and lower the cost of needed ADA curb ramp and related improvements.

Marta reported on the selection four Opportunity Zones in the region. She also shared the progress that has been made with the planned Dutch Bros expansion in Grants Pass.

Rob Merriman reported two new initiatives for SOREDI are a regular dinner to bring the chief elected officials in the region together regularly and a virtual scavenger hunt to “gameify” learning by high school students about local businesses.

Alex shared some information about the Governor’s recent visit to Medford to engage with local business leaders about the state’s fiscal condition and related issues. He recently briefed the Oregon Tourism Commission on the Gold Hill Whitewater project and the Emigrant Lake Boat House, both of which are continuing with design work. He also introduced a possible new project: a land acquisition/community forest project with City of Butte Falls.

Committee Roundtable

President Schott reported that enrollment numbers are a bit soft, but she is encouraged by the University’s new strategic plan which will hopefully drive more community engagement. SOU is exploring more corporate partnerships with their on-line MBA. On-line is their area of growth.

Steve Roe noted from multiple angles, including his role with Asante, housing of all types continues to be a major limitation.

Jonathen Tilden echoed the housing issues, particularly for rental housing. Guy Tauer noted that the current cycle is driving up rental costs relatively more than purchase costs, as opposed to the prior cycle.

Commissioner Dyer expressed concern about the workforce participation rates that Ainoura reported.

Regional Solutions Office Relocation

Alex announced the RST will be moving to new offices, still in downtown Medford, this fall.

Public Comment. None

Meeting adjourned at 3 PM.