

## **Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

November 13, 2015

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center

Hermiston, Oregon

Advisory Committee attendees: Cam Preus, Convener, Tim Mabry, Don Rice, Phil Houk, and Mike McLaughlin. Bill Elfering called in.

Other attendees: Scott Fairley, Regional Solutions; Melisa Drugge, Business Oregon; Tawni Bean and Shanna Bailey, Infrastructure Finance Authority; Craig Sipp, ODOT; Judy Moore, Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation; Byron Smith and Mark Morgan, City of Hermiston; and JR Cook, Northeast Oregon Water Association. Peggy Lynch, League of Women Voters; Jeremy Rodgers, Oregon Business Council; and King Williams, Iron Triangle; called in.

### **Oregon Business Council Leadership Summit Update--Jeremy Rogers, Oregon Business Council**

The summit will be held December 14 at the Portland Convention Center. The goals for the summit include increasing opportunities for international trade, STEM education, resources for rural Oregonians, and utilizing our natural resources. The agenda is available online at <https://www.eiseverywhere.com//ehome/142515>

### **Hermiston Update--Mark Morgan, City of Hermiston**

Water development in the Umatilla Basin is a significant economic development opportunity for the city. The City is currently working with Pioneer Seed to increase natural gas capacity at the Cook Industrial Park. Hermiston is growing in many ways, including the expansion of Shear's Foods, the creation of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center, a pending 90 room hotel in the downtown area, and the expansion of both the schools and hospital.

### **ODOT Area Commission on Transportation Update--Craig Sipp, ODOT**

Reminder that the Governor's Vision Panel and the kickoff for Enhance It and Connect OR Fund will be January 25 at the John Day Regional Airport. The deadline for Enhance It and Connect Oregon projects was November 20. Regional Priorities will be used to evaluate Connect Oregon projects. The road between Burns and John Day was closed to install a new culvert that can handle increased water flows.

### **J.R. Cook, Regional Water System Upgrades**

Contracting is underway to use Regional Solutions funding to purchase a pump and upgrade piping to allow transfer of the Port of Umatilla water right for downstream agricultural use. Construction is anticipated to be complete by January, 2016. Work on the Central Project, which will allow utilization of the transferred Port of Umatilla water right, is anticipated to be complete in June, 2016. Funding for the Central Project includes state funding from the 2015 session and private financing.

### **King Williams, Biomass Breakdown Project**

Progress is being made on a proposed torrefaction facility that could utilize biomass processed at the biomass breakdown facility. Chip markets continue to be volatile. Work on a contract with the Infrastructure Finance Authority to utilize Regional Solutions funding is underway.

### **Melissa Drugge, Juntura Cutoff Road Update**

The Juntura Cut-Off road provides access between the Eagle Picher processing facility in Vale and their mine in Harney County. EP would like to expand adding 48 new jobs but the poor condition of the road has delayed expansion plans. Total road repair cost is \$6.5 million. \$2 million has been obtained from the Federal Lands Access Program. Business Oregon and ODOT have tentatively committed to \$2.75 million. EP and Harney and Malheur Counties have committed to \$500,000. State funding is tied to the proposed expansion. EP is evaluating opportunities to fund the remaining \$1.25 million.

### **Scott Fairley, Grant County Fire Response**

44 homes were burned in the fires this summer. Regional Solutions helped connect homeowners to resources to rebuild including waived on-site fees from DEQ, expedited permits to work in the floodplain from DSL, and assistance from the Insurance Commission. ODFW funded the removal of the Canyon Meadows Dam removal after state and federal dam safety engineers determined the impacts to the dam from the fire significantly increased the risk of downstream flooding. Regional Solutions is working with the county on short and long-term flood mitigation efforts on Canyon Creek.

### **Cam Preus, Regional CTE Strategy**

Regional Solutions completed a study of high-wage/high demand jobs projected for the region in 2015. This information is being used by CTE partners to access funding opportunities.

### **Bill Elfering, Columbia Development Authority Update**

The CDA is charged with managing the employment lands associated with the transfer of the former Umatilla Army Depot. While there has been significant interest in development opportunities at the site, the CDA has said they will not accept transfer until adequate water rights have been identified and all clean-up issues have been addressed by the Army. There are significant infrastructure needs at the site (road, water, rail, etc.) but funding of these needs will not be pursued until transfer is more certain.

**Melisa Drugge, Regional Business Retention and Expansion**

Melisa has visited with 46 major employers in the region to assess their retention and expansion needs as part of Business Oregon's effort to reach out to 550 major employers statewide. Issues identified include skilled workforce availability, regulatory concerns, difficulty working with government contracts, and concerns over \$15/hour minimum wage and carbon tax proposals. Information is being shared with state and regional economic development partners.

**Regional Priority Review**

Due to time constraints review of regional priorities was postponed until the next meeting in late February/early March. Additional economic data will be incorporated at that time.