

# **Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes July 5, 2016**

The Advisory Committee met at the Eastern Oregon Higher Education Center in Hermiston. The meeting began at 1:00pm.

Members present: Tim Mabry, Mayor Phillip Houk, Don Rice (phone), Judge Steve Grasty (phone), Fred Flippence (phone), Judge Chris Perry (phone), Commissioner Bill Elfering, Dave Tovey, and Mayor Mike McLaughlan (phone).

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

Also attending: Peggy Lynch, League of Women Voters (phone); Jeremy Austin, Oregon Natural Desert Association (phone); Karen Wagner, Sen. Merkley's office; Tamra Mabbott, Umatilla County; and Susan Christensen, Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation.

## **Regional Priorities and Expected Outcomes**

Mayor Houk 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 related and important to advancing the regional economy. Don Rice suggested combining attractive communities and infrastructure for industrial lands. Tim Mabry and Dave Tovey suggested leaving the priorities separate but removing hard infrastructure as an amenity for attractive communities. Tim Mabry moved the priorities be accepted with the change that hard infrastructure be removed from attractive communities. Dave Tovey seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Dave Tovey mentioned the CTUIR has expressed their thought that each Advisory Committee should have a member appointed by the Governor.

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. Peggy Lynch noted recreation was not included in the outcomes for natural resource utilization. Scott noted that was an oversight. Judge Grasty noted the need to provide predictability of timber supply. It was clarified that "at the caliber of Perry Tech" means providing skilled technicians and certifications to support industry needs.

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

## **Priority Project Updates**

Tawni Bean provided an update on the Port of Umatilla and City of Hermiston Water Improvement Project. The project is complete and water is being certificated to be used

as mitigation water for downstream irrigation. Irrigation infrastructure should be in place by spring 2017.

Scott Fairley provided an update on the Grant County Biomass Breakdown Facility. The project is on hold pending the potential of a biomass torrefaction facility to locate in Grant County as the feedstock needs and location of the torrefaction plant could drive land and equipment purchases for the biomass project. Randy spoke about long-term opportunities for torrefaction if the Grant County torrefaction project is successful.

### **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.

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, 5<sup>th</sup> Street to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. sidewalks in Ontario, a Safe Routes to School project in Vale, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Umatilla. The OTC will make final funding decisions this fall.

### **Advisory Committee Roundtable**

Tim Mabry discussed efforts at OCF to move from reactive to proactive grant making and the need for foundations to work together to meet the needs of rural communities. He reminded the Advisory Committee to keep OCF in mind as a potential partner for projects. OCF generally engages where there are not other funding opportunities. Judge Grasty mentioned efforts to withdraw 1.9 million acres of BLM land in SE Oregon from mining opportunities for 20 years and stated it is important to keep partnering with federal agencies. Dave Tovey talked about the benefits of the Umatilla County Economic Development summit and said it could be a good model for other counties. Commissioner Elfering talked about economic development opportunities at the Umatilla Army Depot and noted the site should be conveyed to the Columbia Development Authority by Spring 2017. Tamra Mabbott discussed the DLCD funded US 395 TGM project which identified opportunities for road improvements to serve industrial land off 395 and to make landscape improvements on 395. The full report is available on Umatilla County's website.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm.