

**OREGON CASCADES WEST COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
August 24, 2017**

MEMBERS: Mayor Sharon Konopa, Albany; Commissioner Anne Schuster, Benton County; Mayor Biff Traber, Corvallis; Councilor Bob Elliott, Lebanon; and Councilor Dann Cutter, Waldport.

STAFF: Executive Director Fred Abousleman; Deputy Director Lydia George; Senior and Disability Services (SDS) Program Manager Randi Moore; SDS Program Manager Jennifer Moore; Community and Economic Development (CED) Program Manager Brenda Mainord; Finance Manager Janet Cline; and Executive Assistant Jennifer Kelley.

VIDEO: Commissioner Bill Hall, Lincoln County.

The Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments' (OCWCOG) Executive Committee Meeting was called to order by Chair Sharon Konopa at 9:07 am on August 24, 2017 at the Cascades West Center in Albany.

1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Councilor Bob Elliott motioned to approve the June 22, 2017 Executive Committee meeting minutes, Councilor Dann Cutter seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. OCWCOG Annual Dinner

Executive Director Fred Abousleman stated that nominations for *CelebrateLBL*, OCWCOG's annual dinner, have been slower than hoped, and that nominations are especially needed for people and projects within Lincoln County.

Commissioner Bill Hall stated that Lincoln County would be submitting nominations.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that registration for the event is open, and asked Committee members to inform OCWCOG staff of whether they plan to attend and/or bring guests. Executive Director Abousleman stated that Board member costs will be covered.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that sponsorship asks have been distributed. Currently there is approximately \$13,000 in sponsorships collected, with Barker Uerlings being a major multi-year sponsor, having committed to \$10,000/year for three years. Executive Director Abousleman added that he and staff were in Lincoln County at the beginning of August, seeking sponsorships and also looking for a site for next year's event.

Commissioner Anne Schuster asked whether Chambers of Commerce had been approached for potential sponsorship contacts. Executive Director Abousleman stated that yes, Chambers had been approached, both for contacts, and as potential sponsors themselves.

Commissioner Schuster asked how many sponsors have committed. Executive Director Abousleman stated that there have been six or seven committed sponsors, and that there are approximately ten more expected.

Mayor Biff Traber asked how many people are expected to attend the event. Executive Director Abousleman stated that the goal is to have approximately 200 attendees, and added that once award nominations are in, registration will be pushed more heavily.

Councilor Cutter asked whether the event is open to all ages. Executive Director Abousleman stated that it is.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that the *Tapas and Treasures* event hosted by Rotary of Corvallis has sold out, and that current estimates indicate that the *Meals on Wheels* program will receive approximately \$5,000 in donations from the event.

Mayor Traber asked about parking for *Tapas and Treasures*. Executive Director Abousleman stated that attendees can park in the Garland Nursery parking lot until it fills up, and once full, parking will be available at the Children's Farm Home. A shuttle will be available to bring people to Garland Nursery from the remote parking location, and return them to their cars after the event. Executive Director Abousleman stated that Lee Lazaro would be donating the use of his Dial-A-Bus shuttle for this purpose.

Commissioner Schuster stated that in the past, *Tapas and Treasures* has been a treasure hunt, where you walk around the nursery finding treasures. In addition, there are door prizes based on tickets.

3. Regional Broadband Summit

Executive Director Abousleman stated that OCWCOG is hosting a *Regional Broadband Summit (Summit)* prior to the September Board of Directors Meeting, in order to continue the discussion about access to broadband.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that there is concern among urban and rural communities about access, especially last-mile concerns in south Lincoln County, Halsey, Brownsville, Harrisburg, and parts of north Linn County. Sitting on the *Summit* panel will be public safety experts, a State Information Technology (IT) person, and a Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) broadband person. Executive Director Abousleman stated that invitations would be sent to elected officials, City/County Managers/Administrators, local broadband providers, economic development experts, and other relevant industry people. He added that panelists will report to the Board after the *Summit*.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that the event would likely begin around 10:00 or 11:00 am, and last until 1:00 pm, with the option to attend via video conference from Toledo.

Mayor Traber asked about the format. Executive Director Abousleman stated that there would be panelist presentations, in addition to an open conversation with attendees about the needs of their communities.

Chair Konopa stated that she had received an email regarding a study of broadband needs and capacity. The City of Albany had been reported as being well-served. Chair Konopa suggested that City of Albany Assistant City Manager Jorge Salinas would be interested in the *Summit*, and may still have the study if OCWCOG is interested in viewing it to determine its relevance.

Councilor Cutter stated that competition and affordability are key issues, and added that Waldport has a service provider that abandoned the City years ago. That service provider is not interested in re-engaging. This leaves the City with a different provider that does have build-out intentions, but due to various reasons, will not let go of certain restrictions that impact affordability. Councilor Cutter suggested that the *Summit* address small communities that may not be as lucrative for large providers.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that Comcast does not provide true gigabit service to Corvallis or Albany, and added that those lines are expensive.

Mayor Traber stated that there does not seem to be an unmet demand for gigabit Ethernet to businesses, and added that a determination should be made regarding how high of speeds homes need. Mayor Traber added that the previous conversation surrounding connectivity had been around more rural communities getting adequate service. Councilor Cutter added that most people do not need gigabit service at home.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that Lane County is providing true cost gigabit access to businesses and homes. Mayor Traber asked whether Executive Director Abousleman was referencing Eugene, or Lane County. Executive Director Abousleman stated that the City of Eugene had won a Gigabit City grant, but now service is expanding into more rural areas of Lane County using nodes.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that our Region could have a similar setup, with gigabit cities that expand out to our rural communities. He added that the system LCOG has implemented has been less costly and more efficient than other services seen, and stated that emergency response systems and government bandwidth changes should also be considered.

Councilor Cutter stated that focus should be on getting adequate broadband access to rural communities.

Mayor Traber asked who is managing and building out the network in Lane County. Executive Director Abousleman responded that LCOG has been doing this, and added that OCWCOG would not necessarily need to manage a network in our Region.

Councilor Cutter stated that the *Summit* should feature discussion on last-mile issues, as well as the differences between serving communities just outside of larger cities, versus a more remote population that doesn't have any cable or high speed network service currently. Councilor Cutter added that for somewhere like Waldport, as you move from the center of the hub, you get slow speeds that inhibit what you are able to do with your connectivity.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that OCWCOG conducted a broadband survey years ago, and received a lot of information, but nothing was done beyond that. Executive Director Abousleman suggested value in reopening that conversation, as connectivity is a driver of economic development.

Councilor Cutter added that broadband connectivity is one of the biggest drivers of economic development, and that a need is to understand what options are available within communities, so that communities have the information and can take appropriate action to improve issues, if needed.

Commissioner Schuster stated that some smaller towns in our Region have broadband. Executive Director Abousleman replied that many communities do not necessarily understand what broadband is, and stated that Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) is often marketed as broadband while not actually providing high enough speeds.

Councilor Cutter stated that there are obstacles to connectivity, and suggested thinking about how citizens can be educated to understand why broadband is so important to economic development.

Mayor Traber stated that he thinks this conversation is important, and suggested moving forward by picking topics to look at in-depth within certain jurisdictions. If some areas have

common problems, collaboration on articulating and solving those problems could be pursued.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that Cascades West Economic Development District has some great work groups, and suggested that at the end of the meeting, further discussion happen on the topic. Executive Director Abousleman noted that other States have invested heavily in broadband infrastructure, but that he is unsure about Oregon's willingness to make broadband an economic development priority.

Chair Konopa asked whether there is an unwillingness to lay fiber underground because of the potential for technology to advance beyond this type of infrastructure, such as through satellite. Councilor Cutter stated that it is a return-on-investment problem.

Chair Konopa asked why an entity would want to invest in underground infrastructure if the potential is for the future to be wireless. Councilor Cutter stated that wireless connectivity is not what most people think. He added that wireless networks can get saturated easily, and speeds are not comparable to wired access. Councilor Cutter stated that, for example, with Hatfield Marine Science Center's new building, it was cheaper to run wires throughout than to put wireless nodes in enough places to cover the entire building.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that to begin, it would be best to frame the issue collectively, rather than focusing on individual needs. Mayor Traber responded in agreement, but added that it is important to think about where within our Region has needs that are most important to address soonest.

Councilor Cutter stated that if you divorce profit centers from more rural areas, you will get stratification, and suggested that the two must be tied together when working with providers.

Mayor Traber stated that internet has become similar to a utility, and stated that other utilities are regulated. He suggested that similar to other utilities, it would be good to set a threshold for level of access, as well as affordability. He added that it may not make economic sense for some rural areas, but the cost will be made up in urban population centers.

Councilor Cutter added that as much as he would like to see companies focus on rural areas, he understands that unless those companies continue to invest in population centers, they will not have resources to invest in rural communities.

Mayor Traber suggested focusing on public safety in addition to economic development, and added that it may be prudent to bring in a panelist from that sector.

Commissioner Schuster asked whether emergency management personnel would be invited to the Broadband Summit. Executive Director Abousleman stated that he would like to invite emergency management leaders, as there will be a move to the new spectrum and old technology will not be available after a certain date.

Councilor Cutter stated that he thinks there should be care taken to not relate the two issues together, although they have broadband in common, because they are almost entirely separate discussions. Emergency management involves wireless and radio access, which is different than providing broadband internet access.

4. OCWCOG Program Updates

SDS Program Manager Randi Moore stated that SDS hired a new SDS Supervisor, Andrea Smith. SDS Supervisor Smith was previously a trainer for the Medicaid programs. SDS Program Manager Randi Moore stated that as SDS rethinks structure, it has been viewed more Regionally. It was stated that there had recently been an engaging meeting among SDS Supervisors and Managers, with the goal of improving efficiencies, providing more support to programs, and having backups for each supervisor.

Commissioner Schuster asked about the status of InterCommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization's initiative to provide in-home care via telecommunications and monitoring. SDS Program Manager Randi Moore stated that discussions on this are still ongoing.

Commissioner Schuster asked whether broadband may impact these services. SDS Program Manager Randi Moore stated that it would.

Chair Konopa asked about funding in the State budget.

SDS Program Manager Randi Moore stated that the budget on the State level is good this year, however OCWCOG does not have final contracts. SDS Program Manager Randi Moore expressed some previous issues from the Department of Human Services regarding transparency, but suspected that end results would be positive. SDS Program Manager Randi Moore stated that there are some Federal funding concerns, however any major changes to Medicaid would take time to implement.

There was a discussion regarding tax allocations, and the public's need for more services.

SDS Program Manager Jennifer Moore stated that the fundraising strategy for *Meals on Wheels* could be expanded to the *Retired and Senior Volunteer Program* and the *Foster Grandparent Program*, and that pieces of this plan are launching within the next few months. SDS Program Manager Jennifer Moore highlighted Giving Day donations as an example, and stated that this type of donation is a \$1,000 one-time gift with the donor acknowledged on a specific day of the year. It was stated that these types of donations have received positive feedback as a way to honor an event, or a special person.

Commissioner Schuster stated that Benton County leadership has thought about Giving Day, and suggested that other governments may want to follow suit.

SDS Program Manager Jennifer Moore stated that OCWCOG is recruiting to fill vacancies in the *Benton County Veterans Services Office*, and added that by getting veterans connected to these programs, it provides savings to Medicaid.

Mayor Traber asked for clarification on the Medicaid savings. Executive Director Aoulosman stated that the savings to Medicaid comes when a veteran is moved from Medicaid programs on to Veterans Affairs (VA) programs. In addition, some veterans have been told, in error, that they do not have access to VA programs. The more veterans go to VA facilities, the less they go to traditional hospitals and medical facilities. It was clarified that if you are far enough from a VA facility, veterans can use other facilities and have coverage by the VA.

CED Director Phil Warnock stated that the *Business Lending* program has four loans in process, after a great deal of work. He added that one loan is delinquent, with the owner trying to sell his business, and OCWCOG in second position to receive funds when it sells.

CED Director Warnock stated that *Business Lending* is working with Lincoln City on an urban renewal loan portfolio.

CED Director Warnock stated that OCWCOG recently hosted a viewing of the International Economic Development Council's webinar on affordable housing and economic development. CED Director Warnock stated that the webinar did not focus as much on smaller communities, but did cover some tools on incentivizing development of affordable workforce housing.

CED Director Warnock stated that OCWCOG is following developments surrounding House Bill (HB) 2017, which related to transportation. HB 2017 contained funding for a \$25 million intermodal transportation facility for the Willamette Valley. CED Director Warnock stated that more information will be provided as it develops.

Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that the Governor will be signing HB 2017 in Eugene, and our area's Regional Solutions Coordinator Jackie Mikalonis will be sending out notices for anyone interested in attending. Executive Director Aoulosleman added that frontrunners for location of the intermodal facility are Millersburg and Lebanon.

Mayor Traber asked about the Port of Newport expansion, and whether there had been progress. CED Director Warnock stated that he had not heard of any new developments or progress.

Councilor Cutter stated that at the Port's last election, there had been a leadership change with a new Port Director being elected. Additionally, at the last meeting, the lumber shipment deal was halted, which had been a large driver of the expansion. There is new focus on the fishing fleet. Councilor Cutter stated that there are still some legal issues to be determined, as well as other unknowns.

Commissioner Schuster asked whether Lincoln County was taking any action.

Commissioner Bill Hall stated that it is not a Lincoln County issue, but a Port Commission decision, and that the County is encouraging cooperation.

Councilor Cutter asked about the beverage cluster noted in the CED Program Update, specifically with regard to any efforts to solicit additional partners for growth. CED Director Warnock stated that Oregon Liquor Control Commission policy has some prohibition-era regulations that make development more difficult, but that there is work taking place to see how individual companies can be better supported.

Mayor Traber asked what geographic area the "cluster" was referencing. CED Director Warnock stated that there is an industry cluster within the Region, which has also been identified at a State level.

Councilor Cutter stated that Waldport has been pursuing efforts to identify where government regulations may be getting in the way of development, so that there can be efforts to reduce this effect. Mayor Traber expressed interest in discussing this topic.

Commissioner Schuster stated that as Co-Chair of the Housing Subcommittee for the Association of Oregon Counties, she would also like to be involved in discussions regarding getting "out of the way" of development.

Executive Director Aoulosleman suggested that a study on this topic could be a good project for the *Special Projects Fund*. Councilor Cutter agreed.

There was a discussion on mutual housing development problems. Commissioner Schuster asked how Lebanon has solved their housing development problem. Councilor Elliott stated that the City has not done anything, but the development of the College and other large facilities has driven growth.

There was a discussion on land use.

Commissioner Shuster asked how the Amtrak bus to Corvallis has been going. CED Director Warnock stated that he was unsure, but would reach out to gather information. Commissioner Shuster asked whether brochures for service were available yet. CED Director Warnock stated that CED typically has brochures for transit services, but has not received the new Amtrak brochure yet.

5. September Full Board Agenda Items

Finance Director Sue Forty stated that there will likely need to be a Budget Committee meeting, as there will be a supplemental budget due to additional Veterans Services funding. Finance Director Forty stated that based on the State's budget, the meeting will likely need to happen in January.

There were no changes to the September Board of Directors meeting agenda items as presented:

1. Consent Calendar

- a. Approval of previous Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
- b. Approval of Senior Services Advisory Council (SSAC) Membership
- c. Approval of Disability Services Advisory Council (DSAC) Membership
- d. Financial Update for the period of July 2016 – June 2017

2. Regional Broadband Summit

3. Celebrate LBL Award Nominations

4. Program Update Question and Answers

5. Topic of Regional Interest – Eclipse Debrief

6. Other Business

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Schuster suggested an additional Topic of Regional Interest could be how the government impedes housing development.

Executive Director Abousleman suggested that, due to having a full agenda for the September Board of Directors meeting, the Topic of Regional Interest be limited to only one item. There was agreement.

Councilor Cutter stated that when looking at business clusters, information could be gathered on what regulations may get in the way of development. This could be an economic development issue. Councilor Cutter stated that he did not want to dismiss housing as an important discussion, but suggested focusing on a more localized area as a sample.

Chair Konopa stated that it would be difficult to view these issues regionally, as they are very community-specific.

6. Other Business

Mayor Traber stated that the next Regional Economic Development meeting occurs prior to the next Board of Directors meeting. Commissioner Schuster asked whether information had been sent out yet. CED Director Warnock stated that it would be happening following today.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that it was his impression that there was already Board approval for this, but he wanted to notify the Executive Committee that OCWCOG needs a release of funds to backfill the Business Lending program.

Mayor Traber asked whether a motion was needed. Executive Director Abousleman stated that it may be prudent to make a motion, although it was his understanding that there was prior approval by the Board.

Finance Director Forty stated that OCWCOG is closing the books for the Fiscal year, and an internal transfer needs to happen as the last piece. It would only impact one program's ending fund balance. However, the audit is happening soon, so timeframes are important.

Mayor Traber motioned to approve necessary dollars be transferred to the rolling loan fund, Councilor Cutter seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:38 am.

Minutes recorded by Jennifer Kelley.