

**OREGON CASCADES WEST COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES
September 20, 2018**

MEMBERS: Mayor Sharon Konopa, Albany; Commissioner Anne Schuster, Benton County; Councilor Bob Elliott, Lebanon; Mayor Biff Traber, Corvallis; Councilor Greg Chamberlain, Halsey; Mayor Jim Lepin, Millersburg; Councilor Debbie Nuber, Scio; and Councilor Diane Gerson, Sweet Home.

VIDEO: Councilor Susan Wahlke, Lincoln City; Councilor Max Glenn, Yachats; Commissioner Stewart Lamerdin, Port of Newport; Councilor Dean Sawyer, Newport; Councilor Deanne Dunlap, Toledo; and Mayor Billie Jo Smith, Toledo.

STAFF: Executive Director Fred Abousleman; Deputy Director Rachael Maddock-Hughes; Finance Director Sue Forty; Community and Economic Development (CED) Director Phil Warnock; Senior and Disability Services (SDS) Director Randi Moore; Community Services Program (CSP) Director Jennifer Moore; Technology Services Manager Brian Chytka; CED Planner Nicholas Meltzer, and Administrative Assistant Terri Sharpe.

VIDEO STAFF: SDS Program Supervisor Carrie Corson.

GUESTS: Mike Volpe and Cathy Savage.

The Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments' (OCWCOG) Board of Directors' Meeting was called to order by Chair Sharon Konopa at 2:06 pm at the Cascades West Center in Albany.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Introductions were made.

Executive Director Fred Abousleman welcomed the new Port of Newport's Commissioner Stewart Lamerdin.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Consent Calendar

Mayor Billie Jo Smith motioned to approve Consent Calendar items b. and c. as presented, Councilor Debbie Nuber seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Consent Calendar items b. and c, as presented were:

- b. Transportation Brokerage Advisory Committee (TBAC) Membership Appointments.
- c. Financial Update for the period of July 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018.

Mayor Smith motioned to approve Consent Calendar item a. with the corrections of: page four, paragraph seven of the July 19, 2018 meeting minutes, the spelling error "Cred" to "Credit"; and Councilor Max Glenn, Yachats was present by video rather than in Albany. Councilor Bob Elliott seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Consent Calendar item a, as presented, was:

- a. Approval of previous Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes.

4. **Financial Management Policies and Procedures Manual**

Finance Director Sue Forty presented OCWCOG's new *Financial Management and Procedures Manual*.

Councilor Elliott motioned to approve the Resolution to adopt OCWCOG's *Financial Management Policies and Procedures Manual*, Councilor Diane Gerson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

5. **Special Projects Funds Approval - Housing**

Executive Director Abousleman stated two years ago the OCWCOG Board of Directors created a Special Project Funds to which the Board could dictate the use of the dollars for special projects or projects of Regional significance. Over the course of the last year, there has been communication on the role of the Councils in the overall discussion of housing.

OCWCOG's Planning Staff put together a proposal for release of Special Projects Funds dollars to provide value-added support to the housing discussion. OCWCOG can collect and analyze data for understanding the Region's housing issues with the ultimate goal of possibly becoming a housing authority. OCWCOG has also identified several obstacles and opportunities.

The first phase is the collection of data to help better predict indicators in the future. If the Board of Directors chose to move forward, OCWCOG Planning Staff would be looking at policy and code review, and market strategies. Potentially, as they get into the last part of the plan, they will be talking about land banking, housing funds, and housing authorities.

Executive Director Abousleman reminded the Board that they have, in the past, allocated a lot of resources locally for a project that did not come to fruition. They need to be cautious, so he proposed to take the first \$5,000 and determine if the communities, collectively, are interested in OCWCOG doing this work. OCWCOG Planning Staff will look to see if there is any other funding available to build out this capacity. Everything OCWCOG does is contract or grant driven. He feels this is an excellent proposal.

Commissioner Anne Schuster commented that the Oregon Housing and Community Services have collected data on every County in Oregon which is available on their website. Executive Director Abousleman said he has already talked with them and they are on board with the project.

Mayor Jim Lepin stated the proposal was well written and asked what the first step would look like. He thinks the project is the right thing to do; there is a significant issue in housing, which contributes to the lack of labor. Executive Director Abousleman stated the first step would be talking with the members of governments. He recognizes that each city has their own needs and their own issues, but housing is probably the most significant issue in the Region now. Through research OCWCOG Planning Staff discovered that housing costs are almost equal across the Region.

Mayor Biff Traber stated this is a significant issue and not well understood. He asked about intermediate steps and if there is a long-term role for OCWCOG in helping with the issue.

Commissioner Schuster stated housing might be key, as it does tie in with transportation and jobs, and it's important to look at all these things.

Chair Konopa stated Albany housing has peaked. Homes are staying on the market longer with reductions in the asking price.

CED Director Phil Warnock pointed out that envisioned in the proposal is not just home sales, but some consideration of the rental market and other demands. Having resiliency and policies that address the housing market analysis for the Region will better prepare OCWCOG and local elected officials for any eventuality.

Commissioner Schuster is concerned that if there is such a need for housing that the Region may accept any housing development which may not be for the best. Councilor Elliott stated most of the building in Lebanon is apartments. Chair Konopa said Albany has about 1,000 apartments in the works, citywide, and none for low income. She specified that anyone making minimum wage cannot afford the market rate rents in Albany.

Executive Director Abousleman made clear that OCWCOG does not have housing dollars or authority to do this work. This proposal will set the stage to decide, as a Board and as Community members, that this is something they want OCWCOG to take on.

Mayor Lepin clarified that OCWCOG would spend the first \$5,000 doing an assessment of all of the communities and then come back to the Board with a summary. At that time, the Board of Directors can decide whether to go forward or not. Executive Director Abousleman agreed.

Mayor Traber supports doing the first phase of the assessment for \$5,000. He would like, when Executive Director Abousleman comes back after phase one, to describe better what the possible outcomes of what OCWCOG could be doing. If it comes back that the assessment could be done, but there is no additional money, Mayor Traber would like to know what else would come out of this first phase.

Executive Director Abousleman said that the OCWCOG Planning Staff will be visiting with two or three other Councils of Governments that do housing work to assess how they did it. OCWCOG Planning Staff will be gathering a lot of data, but when they move into the housing needs assessments, that will entail costs, which sometimes is paid by the State or by communities.

Mayor Smith asked if the project would have more leverage in getting support with the existing agencies that are supposed to be helping with housing. Executive Director Abousleman said they want to assess who's in the game, who not to step on, and who they could work with. To help ease any of the critical issues OCWCOG will do what they can do.

Councilor Greg Chamberlain asked if their purpose was to come along an existing agency and facilitate more housing availability. Executive Director Abousleman said the existing agencies mainly focus on low income or homelessness. There is not an overall conversation about housing in its entirety.

Mayor Konopa said Councilor Dann Cutter sent an email that he could not attend today's meeting, but was in support of this proposal.

Commissioner Schuster likes the idea, but would like if Executive Director Abousleman could bring in some examples. Executive Director Abousleman said they will bring in

samples, for instance this work is happening in Bend and OCWCOG will talk with other Councils to add additional examples.

Executive Director Abousleman said that every Board meeting going forward, he will be updating the Board as to where the Planning Staff are and if they should continue. He will only use \$5,000 at a time.

CED Director Warnock clarified that doing each one of the phases in depth is considerably more than a \$25,000 plan. He did not want the expectation that at \$5,000 increments they would have a deep dive into each of the phases.

Mayor Lepin motioned to approve \$25,000 of Special Projects Funds, in \$5,000 increments, to fund the *Regional Housing Assessment*, with a report out before going forward with each increment, Councilor Nuber seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6. OCWCOG's Business After Hours Event Alcohol Policy

Executive Director Abousleman stated OCWCOG does not have a policy for alcohol on OCWCOG property after hours. They do have a policy of no alcohol on OCWCOG property during office hours. Oregon State Credit Union has asked OCWCOG to host an Albany Chamber's After Hours Event which serves alcohol. The Credit Union would like to partner with OCWCOG to showcase the lending programs and the businesses. To host this event OCWCOG would need an exemption from the no alcohol policy.

Mayor Traber motioned to approve the exemption to OCWCOG's Alcohol Policy for the May 2019 Business After Hours Event, and soon come back with a special event addendum to its current policy, Councilor Elliott seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. OCWCOG Events Update

Executive Director Abousleman presented updates on *CelebrateLBL*, which was hosted at the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport. He acknowledged Mike Volpe who received the Citizen of the Region award. Mr. Volpe has been an advocate for seniors and people with disabilities for most of his life.

Executive Director Abousleman felt it was an exceptional event with a great venue and excellent weather. There were about 120 people in attendance. The finances are unknown at this time, but costs will probably be higher than predicted due to last minute changes with vendors.

Executive Director Abousleman stated he would like to continue with the event if the Board agrees. Mayor Traber pointed out that the event had two purposes, one to celebrate the contributors in the Region, which he felt was done well and they should continue doing; and to fundraise for the *Meals on Wheels* program, which they can look for more sponsorship to help with finances.

Chair Konopa stated the main goal for *CelebrateLBL* is to get OCWCOG out there and known. It's a great way of advertising regardless if it makes a big profit.

Mayor Smith felt the event was a class act. It was well put together and enjoyable. She would like to see more silent auction items. Chair Konopa also commented on how she enjoyed the unique layout where they could mingle and walk around.

Executive Director Abousleman gave a shout out to all the staff who were on site.

All Board members agreed to continue *CelebrateLBL* for a third year, with the venue being held in Linn County.

8. OCWCOG Program Updates

SDS Director Randi Moore gave an update to the Board on the able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) policy that will be affecting *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)* consumers in their communities. This policy was put in place in 1996 and stated that a person receiving *SNAP* benefits needed to have certain requirements for eligibility. If the person did not meet the requirements, they would have to work source to make them eligible.

States could ask for a waiver due to low employment in their State. With Oregon's employment increasing and a better economic forecast, they are losing their waiver. Benton County lost their waiver in January 2018, and Linn and Lincoln Counties will lose theirs in January 2019. Consumers receiving *SNAP* benefits should receive notification that they may be losing their benefits, if they are not a senior, a person with a disability, mental illness, pregnant, caring for young children or other individuals.

SDS Director Moore informed the Board know that this will be coming to their Counties and people may be worried about it. There are ways for them to reach out to their workers to find out if they are exempt from the criteria or there might be other ways that SDS can support them. If a person loses, or goes through the process of losing, their *SNAP* benefits because they do not qualify for an exemption, then their workers are supposed to help them go through the process of keeping their benefits until they are able to find employment or go through educational resource trainings.

Mayor Traber questioned OCWCOG's role in *SNAP*. SDS Director Moore explained it is the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) Self Sufficiency's Offices that provide *SNAP* for the three Counties, but OCWCOG manages the benefits for seniors and people with disabilities who would be exempt from losing their benefits. However, SDS does carry a few companion cases, so they are working closely with the Self Sufficiency Offices to make sure consumers know their rights and processes.

Commission Schuster asked if there was any way to regain the waiver. SDS Director Moore did not see that happening, as it would require a Federal policy change. This was a bipartisan agreement back in 1996 to make sure that people who were unable to work received their *SNAP* benefits and those that could work were held accountable to do so.

Mayor Traber asked if DHS was doing what they can in the County for these people. SDS Director Moore said that the Self Sufficiency Offices do quite a bit of outreach. When someone is identified as an ABAWD, they are sent information on how to reach out to their workers and the process they need to go through. Self Sufficiency Offices do what they can.

Deputy Director Rachael Maddock-Hughes will be emailing out the *Memorandum on the Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents Policy* to the Board members after the meeting.

CPS Director Jennifer Moore announced that Benton County's Veterans Service office, along with Corvallis's SDS staff, is moving. The Corvallis office will be closed tomorrow. They will be moving over the weekend and opened again on Monday.

CPS Director Moore also wanted to thank everyone for their support with the *Tapas and Treasures* event which netted around \$7,000 for the *Meals on Wheels (MOW)* program. She noted an upward trend in home-delivered meals from several years ago with percentages going from 80% to 83.25%. *MOW* Staff will continue to look for these trends so they can do more proactive program management and development, along with building forecast models, and look at how their program's services may need to change over the next three-to-five-year window.

CPS Director Moore pointed out that the *Money Management Program* is looking for five new volunteers in each of their Counties and if anyone knows of anyone to please let them know about this opportunity. CPS Director Moore explained that the program connects volunteers in providing support to individuals who need assistance with their money management to allow them to stay independent in the home of their own choosing. The more volunteers in the program the greater the capacity to serve more clients.

Commissioner Schuster questioned how volunteers are vetted. CPS Director Moore said there are background checks and multiple training steps each volunteer must go through. There are also procedures in place to help prevent abuse and fraud.

CPS Director Moore stated they just received press coverage for their *Senior Companion Program*. The article can be found on the front page of the Friday, September 14th edition of the *Albany Democrat-Herald*.

Mayor Traber asked CED Director Warnock what the key takeaways on the housing seminar were. CED Director Warnock said they are putting together the talking points, which will be forthcoming. One of the interesting pieces on the data table is the trend line coming down. When monthly transportation cost and amortization of a mortgage is averaged out, the cost difference is marginal. OCWCOG will be doing more webinars on economic development (which will include community development with housing) and transportation.

CED Director Warnock said business lending has been busy with three loan applications received. They are seeing a need and a demand for microenterprise level of lending.

CED Director Warnock said that transportation planning has been taking off. *Multimodal Network Connectivity* and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) grants are both new within the last three months, with lots of transportation planning activities going on and looking at opportunities where staff can do interdepartmental coordination on transportation.

Mayor Traber asked about the OCWCOG role and take on the direction of Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE). CED Director Warnock said OCWCOG entry into the conversation came on the Regional application beyond the community level. He feels this is a good place for OCWCOG and Economic Development to be engaged. Conversations are going in the direction of working more with property out of Portland as an administrative structure. OCWCOG is evaluating the benefits of this partnership and is cognitive of brand confusion, and does not want to duplicate efforts.

9. Topics of Regional Interest

Commissioner Schuster said Benton County is taking a big step forward with assessing the sustainability and quality of their water. Lincoln County received money from the Legislature to do a pilot project and Benton County is trying to collaborate with them. Executive Director

Abousleman stated Oregon State University's College of Science Dean Roy Haggerty's work is on the Willamette Valley's water council. According to Dean Haggerty there will always be plenty of water, but different in the sense that there will be less snow pack but more rain with a substantial amount in ground water. Executive Director Abousleman asked the Board if they would be interested in hearing Dean Haggerty speak on a water conversation.

Chair Konopa is concerned about the 9th Circuit Court Ruling that says the homeless cannot be prosecuted for camping, if there is no available shelter. The Albany's Law Center tried to challenge Albany in a lawsuit. She understands they are advocating for the homeless population, but at the same time they are enabling them as well, where the City of Albany is trying to be proactive and get them into housing. This is unfortunate and by the next time they meet they should know more about this Ruling on how it can impact all cities on what they have for ordinances in protecting public spaces.

10. Other Business

Executive Director Abousleman said he would like to propose skipping the Legislative Round Table this year. They reached out to all their Legislative delegation, but did not get enough interest. They will go forward and put together a Legislative package. OCWCOG will coordinate their advocacy with Senior Services Advisory Council and Disability Services Advisory Council, which they will package and present to the Board. This package will be the what that goes to the Legislature.

Executive Director Abousleman stated there will be an open house within the next month or two at the OCWCOG's new Corvallis office location and all are welcomed.

Executive Director Abousleman said they are working on assessing the cost to build a fertilizer plant on the Coast.

Chair Konopa thanked Mr. Volpe again on his well-deserved award of Citizen of the Region and his time and years of devotion in advocating for seniors and people with disabilities. He is greatly appreciated.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:24 pm.

Minutes recorded by Terri Sharpe.