

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2017
12:00 P.M.
BRIDGE SIDE RESTAURANT
699 WANAPA, CASCADE LOCKS, OR 97014

ATTENDANCE:

OIB MEMBERS: John Kasberger (Hood River County), Rick Leibowitz (Wasco County), Jack Miller (Hood River County) Carolyn Meece (Business Oregon), Kristine Mier (OIB Secretary/Treasurer), Amanda Hoey (MCEDD staff)

WIB MEMBERS: Sandy Seaman (Skamania EDC), Mike Bomar (CREDC), Anita Gahimer-Crow (Skamania County), Jaclyn Woodson (WA State Department of Commerce), Kari Fagerness (Skamania EDC Director)

GUESTS: Krystyna Wolniakowski (Columbia River Gorge Commission), Jason Hildreth (Columbia River Gorge Commission), Casey Gatz (USFS), Rachel Pawlitz (USFS)

CALL TO ORDER:

Jack Miller called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Round table introductions took place.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 16, 2016 MINUTES:

John Kasberger moved to accept the November 16, 2016 minutes as presented. Mike Bomar seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

OVERVIEW OF BI-STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL:

Amanda gave an overview of the bi-state advisory council including its history and the roles of its members which include the OIB, WIB, MCEDD, Skamania EDC, Gorge Commission, USFS, and State staff. She briefly summarized the purpose of the council which is to support bi-state economic development and encourage collaboration between the two Investment boards. The annual meetings and sub-committee meetings provide an opportunity to discuss potential joint projects and adopt policies for managing funds.

OREGON/WASHINGTON INVESTMENT BOARD UPDATES:

Washington Investment Board: Kari Fagerness gave an overview of the Washington Investment Board activity for the past year. She indicated that the Washington Investment Fund has a current balance of \$773,915.76 as of October 31, 2017. No new loans have been granted in 2017 however, there were several loan modifications and one of our oldest loans paid off this year. The board is also working on details for a pilot program similar to OIB's program approved in 2017. The board approved a disaster relief program that utilizes a monthly payment skip option with interest only accruing during these months. The WIF has only one delinquent loan at this time.

Oregon Investment Board: Jack Miller provided an overview of the OIB activity over the past year. OIB has approximately \$1.1 million available to grant/loan and a little more than \$1.6

million in loans receivable. OIB has granted \$5,000 to Columbia Gorge Community College for a feasibility study to support the workforce training needs for the food and beverage industry. Loan requests have been down but have had a number of restructures. A loan was approved for Root and Cane Vineyard service for an automated picking machine. Celilo Paddle Company, a start-up company out of The Dalles, received a \$24,500 loan. A pilot program that focuses on help for business affected by the Eagle Creek fire has been established. There are currently three businesses utilizing the pilot program. Most recently the OIB approved funding for 15 Mile Ventures dba Freebridge Brewing, Good Medicine, LLC and Romuls West, LLC. Most loans are being referred by the SBDC out of The Dalles, OR. The SBDC is able to work with businesses in Washington as well. However, Washington businesses would need to travel to the SBDC or pay travel cost.

EAGLE CREEK RECOVERY AND DISASTER LOANS:

OIB was working on the loan pilot program prior to the Eagle Creek fire. However the programs are now being applied to the fire recovery effort for businesses. The program will continue to provide support to businesses in the future that have not yet fully recognized the fire's impact. OIB staff is participating on an Eagle Creek Fire Disaster Recovery Council. The recovery council is developing a number of recommendations to the Oregon Governor, including that the state: 1) Direct flexible funds through the Regional Solutions Economic Opportunity Fund to guarantee or buy down interest rates on regional lending programs; 2) Direct Business Oregon, in consultation with regional partners and stakeholders, to prepare a legislative concept for the 2018 Session to create a state emergency disaster relief program that would include a low-interest loan product for businesses impacted by disasters; 3) Ensure that there is a strong SBDC with steady funding that is able to be flexed during emergencies; and 4) support of the Council's request to the Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegation to appropriate the remaining \$1.9 million authorized by Congress for the Oregon and Washington Investment Boards.

FEDERAL FUNDING STATUS:

The National Scenic Area Act authorized \$10 million in federal funding for economic development in the Scenic Area. To date \$8.1 million has been appropriated, leaving approximately \$1.9 million still to be appropriated. There is a recognition that the need is greater than \$1.9 million, but the boards decided to begin by focusing on the remaining un-appropriated funds. A letter was sent by the Congressional Delegation last year to the Director of Agriculture and OMB requesting those funds be budgeted for appropriation. A revised letter has been drafted by members of the delegation and is being circulated for signatures again this year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:

The Columbia Gorge Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), compiled by MCEDD with input from stakeholders throughout the five county region, was recently completed. It is linked with the OIB/WIB Columbia Gorge Economic Vitality Plan for consistency. Priority strategies were modified from the last CEDS update and Housing was determined to be the top priority followed by Financial Capital/Entrepreneurial Environment, Workforce, Infrastructure, and Regulatory Environment, respectively. Several target sectors within the priority strategies were modified and the Forest/Wood products section was added. The Columbia Gorge Economic Development Strategy Summary is available on MCEDD's

website at mcedd.org. Amanda briefly highlighted items within the strategy and some discussion ensued.

GORGE 2020 AND ECONOMIC ADVISORY TEAM:

Krystyna Wolniakowski gave an update on the Gorge 2020 plan. There are four topics that are being reviewed at a detailed level. The topics are: Recreation, Urban Boundary Adjustment, Land Uses, and Economic Development. Updates were given for each topic. The Gorge 2020 plan timeline is to have a final plan within two years with a Commission submission deadline of January 1, 2020. The process will consist of public meetings, teams to focus on each area, and expert input.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATES:

Kari Fagerness gave an update for Skamania Economic Development Council. Skamania EDC worked with MCEDD on the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The EDC is focusing its strategies on the areas that were identified in the CEDS which include addressing workforce and infrastructure challenges and how those impact development projects in the community.

Amanda Hoey gave an update for MCEDD. MCEDD is also focusing on CEDS strategies, regional transportation issues, and anticipates working with the Columbia River Gorge Commission on the Gorge 2020 plan.

PARTNER UPDATES (*USFS*):

USFS – Rachel Pawlitz gave an Eagle Creek Fire update. *USFS* is looking at adjusting some of the fire closure areas. There are some areas that are being considered for reopening this fall, but most areas will remain closed until spring with projected slide dangers over the next 2 to 10 years. There is active engagement happening with partner groups for restoration planning in the spring. *USFS* is working with ODOT to look at traffic patterns and congestion, primarily on the Historic Columbia River Highway. They are considering a pilot program for a permit system for the Dog Mountain trail. Other trails on the Washington side are being monitored for potential overuse issues. A discussion ensued.

ADJOURNMENT: 1:45 p.m.