

**MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, February 2, 2022
4:00 PM
ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE

Attending: Ken Bailey, Joe Dabulskis, Steve Kramer, Eric Proffitt, Dave Sauter, Scott Clements, Bob Hamlin

Staff: Jessica Metta (Executive Director), Jill Brandt (Administrative Assistant), Carrie Pipinich (Deputy Director of Economic Development), Kate Drennan (Deputy Director of Transportation), Dana Woods (Financial Officer), Lauren Hernandez (Office Administrator)

CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTIONS

Bob Hamlin called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. A round of introductions took place.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Eric Proffitt to approve the November 3, 2021, Executive Committee meeting minutes as presented. Dave Sauter seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

FINANCE REPORT

Dana Woods presented the Financials for December 2021. November and December were included. Total cash balance as of 12/31/2021 was \$7,273,318.05. Accrued loan interest is down due to decreased lending activity in the month. November and December combined saw 4 loan payoffs and no new loans funded. The current Loans Receivable balance was \$3,724,761.66. Net Position as of 12/31/21 was \$12,968,800.04. In the Operations' Budget vs. Actual, State revenue showed zero for the month of December. This was because the 2nd quarter STIF payment showed up in November rather than December. YTD revenue was at 50.8% of budget.

Personnel expenses for the month of December were 75% of budget because we were short on staff for one part-time bus driver position and one program assistant. Ami's former position has not been rehired but is being filled by sharing out those duties to other staff for now. This may be revisited when Loan Fund activity picks up. Vehicle costs were up due to the price of fuel going up. Other materials and services appeared under budget because it included the full \$2 million in USDA funds.

Dana gave a status report with the Caselle transition: the first of three rounds of data has been processed. She said year-end reporting was complete and on time. The LGIP accounts were established and three of them have been funded. Upcoming projects include the budget and the audit. Dana will be preparing the spreadsheets for the next budget coming up. On the audit, the extension has been filed until May 31. The CPA consultant that we had lined up to help fell through so another had to be found. This new consultant cannot start until the end of February. Therefore, the Audit presentation for the Board was pushed out from the March meeting. Staff is now looking at presenting the audit to the Board in a May special meeting to fall well within the extension deadline.

Discussion: Ken Bailey asked Dana when Caselle training was expected to start. Dana replied that she and Lauren Hernandez have done several webinars to become familiar with the software. Dana did not know yet of any dates for any scheduled individual or personal training sessions, and will pursue this question with Caselle. Bob Hamlin concluded the discussion by asking Dana to reaffirm that the Audit presentation to the reiterated that the audit presentation to the full Board is now expected to happen at a special meeting in May.

Dave Sauter motioned to accept the finance report as given. Eric Proffitt seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

MCEDD DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY UPDATE

Jessica gave the background on this topic. The document in the packet contains some minor changes to our current policy that were recommended by the ODOT's consultant that conducted a review of our Drug and Alcohol program. Jessica asked the group for any comments, then to recommend this updated policy to be presented for approval at the full Board meeting in March.

Eric Proffitt moved to recommend approval of the updated policy to the MCEDD Board of Directors as presented. Ken Bailey seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

Jessica has been exploring contracting with a consultant to develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan for the organization and/or a Strategic Plan. She reviewed her memo on the topic and asked for interest in one or either of these ideas and a preference for the timing.

Discussion: Bob Hamlin noted the Strategic Plan could be helpful to identify if there is more MCEDD should be doing or if/how we want to expand our services. Jessica noted some of our grant sponsors have new requirements that applicants must have a DEI Plan in order to qualify for funding.

Ken Bailey supported the consultant as a step forward to resolve the equity amongst counties and states issue that has surfaced with bringing in Gilliam County. He added that having a written strategic plan will help both Board and staff with guidance and will be helpful.

Eric Proffitt agreed with Ken, adding that "the devil is not knowing what you don't know." Bob Hamlin supported the consultant as well. There was general support for both plan ideas.

Jessica stated that the next step in the Ford grant application will be to find a consultant. MCEDD will have to go through a process to identify a consultant and then apply for the grant. Jessica added that she will also research the costs for a consultant, and that she will consult with other EDDs interested in forming a cohort for the DEI consultant. She will come back with an update at the full board meeting in March.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

Jessica gave a brief summary of the background on this topic. Since the December Executive Committee meeting approved staff continuing with the DEI statement, we have continued with our monthly discussions and now have a draft statement. Jessica credited Kathy Fitzpatrick for the research. The

draft is presented here for the Committee's suggestions for edits and will then go before the full Board at the March meeting. MCEDD plans to add the DEI statement to the personnel policy as a header, and to add it to the website. She noted that we may need to update the statement when we do the full DEI plan.

Discussion: Steve Kramer pointed out that everything that gets added to the personnel policy should be reviewed and approved by legal counsel. Ken Bailey agreed but noted that today we are at the first step to get the policy in place. Ken added that the policy can change later if needed. Ken concurred that there was need to develop this policy because it will be required down the road by the granting entities that MCEDD works with.

Jessica will run the statement past legal and this will be presented to the Board in March.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR REPORTS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Carrie Pipinich began by applauding the Port of Skamania for the final submission of their completed application to the EDA for the new business park. She credited Jacque Schei for her work on this project.

Broadband: The Wasco County Broadband action team met in January and will begin with mapping work. The mapping tool used by the State of Washington will be used as the template for Oregon's mapping. MCEDD's Washington counties will be included in the data collection. The goal with this project is to figure out the access gaps for Broadband to identify where further resources will be needed to get Broadband coverage to everyone.

Business Resilience/Support: MCEDD will be hosting a grant writing workshop this spring for government partners and non-profits. Carrie promised more details at the next meeting.

Industry clusters: The GTA's annual budget has been completed. The GTA's events calendar is set for the year, with the largest project coming up in April, supporting the mixer at the AUVSI trade show in Florida.

Energy updates: The Hood River County Energy Council has updated their work plan. There is a new contract with The Next Door that supports outreach to Latino and low-income groups about barriers accessing energy efficiency tools and how to remove them.

Infrastructure:

- The City of Cascade Locks has secured CDBG funds.
- Wasco County's Dog River Pipeline project bids came back higher than the original estimate, and the plan is to apply to Business Oregon for the extra funding that will be needed.
- Working to get new bus barn in Moro.

TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Kate Drennan reported on The Link's inclement weather response this past month. There were new snow route policies that went into effect that made some safety changes in routes. The Hood River service stopped when I-84 was closed. Dial a ride service was maintained for medical rides and necessity runs for riders.

Grants: MCEDD is in process with Wasco County with the application for the 5310 grant that will fund the Link's deviated fixed route services for the next two years. In addition to this grant, Kate asked the committee for approval to apply for ODOT's 5339 grant program to fund vehicle replacements and bus facilities. With this money, the Link can replace two buses. Kate stated that she was looking at the possibility of purchasing Hybrid buses. This will require some infrastructure research to determine if the buses can be supported. The research that would be needed on the infrastructure improvements falls within ODOT's price structure. She hopes the 5339 grant will also provide enough money to add more bus shelters on the fixed route lines.

Steve Kramer motioned to approve MCEDD's application to ODOT's 5339 program to cover vehicle replacement and bus facilities. Ken Bailey seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Kate reported on Kathy Fitzpatrick's grant-writing work in the past quarter. Kathy supported the Veteran's medical van for Hood River County and Sherman County with grant writing, and the grant was approved in January. Kathy continues her work with the Gorge Transit Strategy, which is in contract negotiations with a consultant team until the end of February. This project will continue to move forward in the spring.

Wasco Transit Development Plan: This project continues, and Kate will host an open conference here at the MCEDD office for feedback in the next quarter.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Jessica gave a brief background on the EDA planning grant application that is in progress. Jessica explained to the Committee that the EDA planning grant is what the local assessments are used as the match for. This is a 3-year grant that provides \$80,000 per year for planning purposes. She then requested that the Committee motion to approve her application for the EDA planning grant.

Scott Clements motioned to approve MCEDD's application for the EDA planning grant. Eric Proffitt seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Jessica reported on the Expansion Task Force meetings that have been taking place since the last Executive Committee meeting. These conversations gravitated to the issue of MCEDD's Oregon services versus Washington services. The current Washington board members have requested a conversation about those differences and other ways MCEDD can serve our Washington partners. Jessica is in the process of developing the options for Gilliam County that have come out of the conversations and will present them to the Board at the March meeting. She touched on the idea of adding this topic as an Agenda item to the March meeting since the Budget will not be ready for presentation.

Discussion: Ken Bailey said he was concerned about pushing forward too quickly due to the number of agencies involved. If the full Board approves going forward in March, due diligence on all of the paperwork and approvals before final sign off will take a few months at least.

Steve Kramer stated that he needed more clarification from the Task Force. He explained that he could not derive from the Task Force minutes if there was a

recommendation from the task force to move forward. Ken responded that the Task Force was ready to add this topic to the agenda to move the project forward at the March meeting. The topic will outline the questions, solutions, and steps forward that have been identified so far, and request approval to continue in the process.

Scott Clements noted that the Task Force discussions seemed to focus more on the issue of the relative services provided to the Oregon and Washington Counties. He had not heard any real reservations expressed about adding Gilliam County to the MCEDD District. He recommended clarifying the services question first, noting that the Gilliam County question could not be addressed while the Washington Board members were distracted by any perceived inequity of services.

Eric Proffitt agreed with Ken that September was a more realistic timeline for final approval and admission to the District. He also agreed with Scott's priority assessment that MCEDD must ensure that all of its partners are served equally before expanding.

Jessica appreciated the Task Force committee's feedback and has responded to it by stepping up her Washington outreach efforts. She has registered to attend the Spring Legislative Conference in Olympia with Washington Economic Development Association scheduled for March 2nd. This conflicted with the next scheduled Executive Committee, and requested to move the meeting forward to Tuesday, March 1st, at 4pm. The Executive Committee approved moving the meeting date to March 1st with consensus.

Jessica reminded the Committee that her annual review would be on the March Board meeting agenda. She requested further meeting time with Bob, and perhaps Ken, to assist with her evaluation.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS/ COMMITTEE MEMBERS UPDATES

Eric Proffitt mentioned an article that appeared in Business Oregon on Klamath County's Pumped Storage project. He recommended the article to the other Committee members as a possible source for ideas that MCEDD can use to move the Goldendale Pump Storage project along.

Steve Kramer mentioned the Oregon legislative session has started. He cautioned the committee members to keep an eye on the economic development pieces as they move through the legislature.

ADJOURN

Bob Hamlin adjourned the meeting at 4:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jill Brandt, Administrative Assistant.