

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Veneta City Council and Veneta Planning Commission October 7, 2014

Council: Sandra Larson, Thomas Cotter, Victoria Hedenstrom, Thomas Laing

Planning Commission: James Eagle Eye, Len Goodwin, Kevin Conlin, Lily Rees

Community Members: Joan Mariner, Herb Vloedman

Absent: Brittany Boothe, Calvin Kenney, Jason Alansky

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Lisa Garbett, Associate Planner; Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder; and Bob Parker, Amanda D'Souza; and Michael Howard of the University of Oregon Community Service Center

Planning Commission Vice Chair, Len Goodwin and Mayor Sandra Larson called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. Introductions

Introductions were made throughout the room.

Project Context

Bob Parker said he has worked with Kay Bork and Len Goodwin in the past. He said he has also worked with ECO Northwest on several economic assessments over the last 10 years. He said the program at the University has a dual mission to provide services but also education so it's a great way for students to get applied experience in communities with faculty supervision. He said he worked with Veneta in the late 80's and at that point the focus was on business recruitment and to provide a list of companies to call. He said now most communities are looking at ways to build their capacities. Mr. Parker reviewed what the EOA is and why communities go through the process.

Timeline

Ms. D'Souza reviewed a timeline for each meeting. She said the first meeting will have discussions on vision, goals, and employment forecast. The second meeting will focus on economic opportunities, discuss target industries previously identified, and identify potential new industries based on the findings from the EOA. She said action item development will also take place for the first of the previously identified goals. Meeting 4 will finalize the draft EOA and the economic element of the Comprehensive Plan and adoption of Goal 9 Economic Element.

Goal 1 - Economic Development Commitment

Strategy: Demonstrate commitment to long-term economic development in Veneta.

The group spent a few minutes completing the visioning exercise. Mr. Parker said his staff would compile the suggestions and bring them to the next meeting. Priorities identified were as follows: First, improvements to Highway 126, business recruitment; creating businesses in downtown area and provide business assistance. Followed by providing commercial building stock, specifically in the downtown area. Next, infrastructure improvements, fiber build out, and sponsorship of some kind of civic clean up or beautification program to follow over the next five years. The following priority was land use and complete code and map updates to be flexible with less regulation, reconfigure industrial retail land, provide for new industries, (wine & manufacturing) pursue agriculture and tourism, small scale medical service, recruit a hotel or motel complex. Lastly, provide other transportation improvements, including transit and connectivity to Eugene and Elmira;

also continue to improve community amendments, improve public safety, and provide affordable property.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Mr. Parker said long term economic development would be a 20 year horizon or a goal level statement. He said that doesn't provide much direction but if you are to be successful, you need to follow and have a consistent vision. He said that's part of what they want to get from the meeting tonight. He said they will take these ideas and craft them into tangible actions that staff can implement. He said it is better to focus on three things that we can do well, rather than 20 things with no direction.

Ms. D'Souza reviewed the five main goals and opened them for discussion. She said Goal 1 is to provide for an economic development, commitment, and strategy.

Victoria Hedenstrom questioned hiring another full time employee.

Thomas Cotter said he's not sure the goals that were highlighted in previous plans are still relevant, should this goal still be in the plan.

Herb Vloedman said one important point is to "demonstrate" the key component, but unless residents get the feeling that it's wanted, supported and will be successful, we have a commitment, but in order to be successful, we need to have consistent support of it.

Len Goodwin said there is a strategy that involves Veneta becoming a focal and visible partner in the region as part of our commitment to economic development and suggested that be a second strategy.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ms. D'Souza said these were the five goals that stood out.

Mr. Parker said they came up with the five goals after reviewing the documents staff provided his team. He said he doesn't want to start from scratch but extract those five goals from what the City has created over the last 20 years.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Mr. Parker said we will discuss how to become a full regional partner at a future meeting.

Goal 2 – Business Attraction, Expansion, and Retention

Strategy: Facilitate economic development in Veneta through the attraction of new businesses and the expansion and retention of existing businesses.

Strategy: Make the community attractive to business and resident through marketing efforts.

Mr. Parker said Business Oregon is talking less about recruitment and more about retention and expansion. This is a new policy for them but that may not be the right strategy for Veneta. He said but talking with business leaders, many businesses in larger cities feel like recruitment is placed as a higher priority rather than retention and expansion. He said he's not sure if this is true but it's important to make sure we're clear about what we want to accomplish. Whether we want to address business-recruitment and retention-expansion as separate issues.

Len Goodwin said we may want switch it to business retention and expansion and attraction – put them in a different order. He said on a statewide level, attraction and recruitment of new business is almost a chance encounter. He said many business opportunities for which Oregon is a choice because of the preferences of the chief executive officer and not from a benefit the state offers. He

said it's true that the point of retention and expansion becomes more important but in a small city like Veneta, we have to remember that successful economic development is more likely to happen because of cluster economics; like a food or beer cluster. He said Springfield has developed a medical cluster, we clearly have to attract new businesses, and Sweet Creek Foods in Elmira could be the core start of a food cluster.

Mr. Parker said in his mind there's no reason why breweries can't be competitive from Veneta. He said one of the challenges is knowing what the next opportunity will be.

Kevin Conlin said its not just enough to attract businesses. He said to be successful we need to be doing both; attraction and retention and we need to be making some effective marketing efforts.

Len Goodwin said the first thing any industry will think before coming to Veneta is what will the City do to retain my business?

Mr. Parker suggested the Committee focus on two strategies; one attraction and the other retention.

Victoria Hedenstrom said the second strategy should be attraction – the strategies should be separated.

Joan Mariner said local businesses feel ignored by City infrastructure. She said many artisans from the Oregon Country Fair (OCF) would like to market their wares but the City hasn't made much of an effort to provide a place for those artisans to sell their wares.

Ingham said we tried to do that with the Farmers' Market but many vendors know they can go to Eugene or Springfield and sell a lot more product.

Goal 3 – Retail & Commercial Development

Strategy: Create a vibrant downtown core area that encourages residents and visitor to shop and spend time.

Strategy: Focus on retail and commercial development that will offer a full spectrum of products/services for the community.

Mayor Larson suggested the emphasis should be how to create a more vibrant downtown.

Mr. Parker said the challenge to be vibrant is that we need activity. He asked the question, how or what can the City do to attract private investment to the core area. He said there are several things the City can do but it wouldn't be cheap. What businesses can locate here that have big enough markets to sustain them – another grocery store but we may be waiting around for a while. He said there are costs with every aspect of economic development. Providing retail space will be expensive.

Herb Vloedman said many people don't know that downtown Veneta exists. He said they consider Veneta to be Ray's and the four corners area. Downtown is separated from the corridor by the railroad tracks. He said if we want to have a commercially viable downtown, it needs residents and visitors. He said if we put a Starbucks downtown, travelers would not know it was there. He said even another restaurant downtown as an anchor wouldn't have the visibility the four corners area has.

Len Goodwin said both he and Ingham have talked about the high ratio of residents to employment. He said it seems that we could get people to notice downtown if we have more people employed in

Veneta going downtown and making a choice to shop. He said there's no talk about industrial or employment if we don't focus any attention on increasing the employment capacity of Veneta. He said if we were to succeed on that, we would probably create the atmosphere that retail and commercial would be viable.

Ingham said we know that we have an enormous amount of retail leakage and that 80% of resident retail dollars are spent outside our community. He said we continue to miss that opportunity and suggested working to create an attractive place for people to spend their dollars.

Victoria Hedenstrom disagreed. She said there are opportunities. She said we have dental, medical, and chiropractor offices. She said she felt the problem is beyond what is or isn't here and there's a component that needs to be addressed.

Goal 4 – Business Readiness

Strategy: Remove obstacles to business development in Veneta.

Strategy: Incentives.

Kevin Conlin said he doesn't know what we'd do other than create an environment that would provide the best businesses would relocate in Veneta. He said we don't word smith it to death but it's fairly comprehensive. He said retail and commercial involve a lot of things. He said we could recognize the limitations and some of the rough edges but leave it where it is until we find something that clearly mandates a specific change when we get to the policy level.

Mayor Larson said local residents say they want more retail, more restaurants and that's a good goal - developing community loyalty and employment opportunities could be part of the action.

Mr. Parker said we need to identify what the obstacles are and focus on the ones that we actually have control over.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Ms. D'Souza said business readiness would be a business wanting to expand.

Mr. Parker said to accommodate new business the City has to provide the right land and infrastructure for new business and provide incentives for residents to buy local.

Victoria Hedenstrom and Lily Rees both suggested partnering with Lane Community College and the school district to create that employment partner to provide an internship program and/or a business college.

Ms. D'Souza suggested some kind of work force strategy.

Len Goodwin said based on his experience, incentives don't generally work and they end up costing more than they benefit.

Thomas Cotter agreed except if you're purchasing land to build something, incentive can be important. He said certainly incentives would only apply within City limits. He said we need to be careful on what partnerships we enter into because we've seen Eugene's examples of incentives where after a six year program the business has moved out.

Mr. Parker said there's different kind of incentives the City could provide. He wasn't assuming the City would have a lot of money to offer financial incentives. He said maybe that goal should be re-characterized.

Goal 5 – Infrastructure Improvements

Strategy: Make aesthetic and infrastructure enhancements and improvements to make Veneta attractive to residents, visitors, and potential industries.

Mayor Larson said aesthetics are more important at this point. She said we have a lot of work that needs to be done although we can't do all of it.

Len Goodwin said this is one thing the City can do. It's within the City's power to create the infrastructure. Of all of these things, this is one that if there is will and resources, it can be done.

Kevin Conlin said this is the spine, if you don't have this everything else is wishful thinking. It's all founded on that.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said we've already done so much of the infrastructure now we need to focus on the aesthetics.

Herb Vloedman said when we talk about aesthetics we talk about downtown, but no one sees downtown.

Ingham said we have several plans for the four corners area but unfortunately, they all involve ODOT so it's a lengthier process.

II. Next Steps

Employment Forecast

Ms. D'Souza said an employment forecast is required as part of the Goal 9 Economic Element. It is used to determine the land need based on expected growth of employment in Veneta. She said the associated administrative rule that Mr. Parker referred to outlines two methodologies used to determine the employment forecast. She will review both of those and ask which methodology the committee would like to use. She said there are many steps involved which she reviewed.

Ms. D'Souza said there are two safe harbor methods outlined in the administrative rule that should be used to determine employment growth. She reviewed both methods and said it's up to the City to determine which method to use. Their recommendation is to use the employment growth rate because they believe the population growth rate over estimates the need for industrial land in Veneta.

Mr. Parker said they recommend the committee select one of the two safe harbor methodologies. He said they can chose another forecast but it would take more work. He said the employment growth rate of 2.92 is really aggressive and the committee should be realistic about where we want to get to. He said his team would like some direction so they can document it. He said Veneta has enough land to accommodate quite a robust employment growth level over the next 20 years.

Len Goodwin said there's another good reason for using the employment safe harbor. He said the current and future economy is going to result in fewer employees per acre and lower net employment densities than in the past. He said to go with the population forecast assumes we will follow past trends and that is likely not going to be accurate.

Kevin Conlin agreed and said there's no reason to complicate the day by choosing population method unless there was compelling circumstance or something that requires us to use that mode of analysis.

Mr. Parker said Veneta is fortunate to have that industrial land inventory but there will be complications associated with developing it. Once we let it go, it will be difficult to replace. In addition, if Veneta starts re-designating industrial as commercial, how will it affect what's happening downtown? He said it's a big decision to make and he will provide some implications for where Veneta ends up in the long term.

Ingham said no one received a hard or electronic copy of Mr. Parker's information so staff will get that information to all Committee members and let everyone digest the numbers for an easy decision at the next meeting.

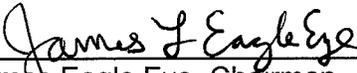
Mr. Parker clarified that the next meeting will include a discussion on the employment forecast technical document.

Ms. D'Souza said the next meeting will be October 29th. Agenda items discussed will be: Repetition of the employment forecast; target industries, and development of the action items.

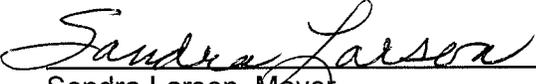
III. Other
None

IV. Adjourn

Chair James Eagle Eye and Mayor Sandra Larson adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m



James Eagle Eye, Chairman



Sandra Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder