

**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the  
Veneta City Council and Veneta Planning Commission  
November 19, 2014**

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

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

Community Members: Jason Alansky, Tim Brooker, Joan Mariner, Herb Vloedman

Absent: Brittany Boothe, Phil Velie

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

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Planning Commission Chair James Eagle Eye and Mayor Sandra Larson called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

Ms. D'Souza reviewed the agenda, along with the goals to be discussed with the strategy and action development plan. She said she will review Veneta's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for Veneta and how we achieve our economic vision.

Len Goodwin said what is not on the list is recreational opportunities in our immediate region.

Mayor Larson said Fern Ridge Reservoir is not mentioned.

Strengths

Ms. D'Souza reviewed Veneta's strengths as follows: Available land, redeveloping downtown, infrastructure (Utilities), proximity (wineries, agriculture, Eugene/Springfield), supportive City staff, School District, and available workforce.

Weaknesses

Ms. D'Souza reviewed Veneta's weaknesses as follows: Distance and access to I-5, outdated infrastructure, the community being divided by Highway 126, traffic on Highway 126, entering and exiting Highway 126 and Territorial Highway, restrictive ordinances and many vacant buildings, no active development in downtown, downtown is not visible from Highway 126; no workforce training opportunities and there's no active external communication about Veneta's efforts. It was a consensus of the committee that our public streets are not really a weakness.

In response to a question from Kevin Conlin, Ms. D'Souza said her interpretation of no active external communication was there wasn't much attention drawn to Veneta's successes.

Ingham said we think that when we identify catalyst projects, i.e., the pipeline and the Service Center, we did get good coverage but what would be the means to get that external communication out.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Mr. Parker said his team will list Veneta's strengths and weaknesses in a matrix form and will be included in the plan.

### Opportunities

Veneta's opportunities were reviewed which included: tourism, recreational activities, potential small scale industries like agriculture, wineries, breweries, services for residents, a redeveloped downtown, business park infrastructure, community support or community involvement.

Len Goodwin said the availability of industrial land may be an issue.

Kevin Conlin asked for clarification. He said we're not talking about opportunities for Veneta in the future but opportunities that currently exist.

There was a thorough discussion about the difference between opportunities and strengths. The following was identified as opportunities: Residents support bond measures, providing moderately priced homes which also attracts families, and discretionary spending is higher in Veneta.

### Threats

Threats to Veneta were reviewed which included the following: Increased retail and employment leakage to Eugene/Springfield, weak local infrastructure to support economic development, land availability in the Northeast Employment District, the external perceptions of Veneta, continued national and state economic weakness.

Ingham said the issue in the Northeast Employment District is there's an abundance of land but there's problems with the zoning.

Mr. Vloedman said zoning ordinances should be more transparent so residents can read and understand it.

There was a thorough discussion about amending the zoning districts in the Northeast Employment District to make them more flexible and less vague. That the restrictive land use is perceived as a threat.

Bork said no one has asked to rezone those parcels and she doesn't feel zoning districts are really a threat because the zoning ordinance is pretty flexible, however, it will be worth re-visiting.

### Goal 2 - Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

Ms. D'Souza reviewed Goal 2 as a first strategy to develop an outreach plan and provided an explanation of each action item.

### Goal 3 – Retail and Commercial Development

Mr. Parker said goals are simply statements and don't point to an outcome but are really an action statement.

Ingham said we don't have a lot of resources directed at economic development.

There was a thorough discussion about how to identify and inventory home based businesses; make face to face visits with the Chamber members, work with a survey consultant to survey local employers or send an online survey to businesses asking how we may provide assistance - things we want to include in the plan. Mr. Parker said at the December meeting, hopefully his team can identify what we realistically feel we can accomplish.

Business associations to contact included the Veneta's Farmers' Market, Travel Lane County, local winery associations. It was also suggested to prepare a needs analysis perception survey. Mr. Parker said it's not something that needs to be done frequently but it could build a relationship with community business partners and also sends a message that Veneta is a partner and we may be able to help. Another suggestion was that any outreach program conducted should include a survey and include an action item to identify and work with other small cities that resemble Veneta.

After a brief discussion it was the consensus to not follow through with an action item to identify and work with small cities but to work with local associations.

Mr. Parker said the end product will include a list of associations, identified groups and clusters and provide staff guidance to work with those groups. He suggested partnering with Travel Lane County may yield better results. He said the next action item would be to take advantage of local wineries, breweries and recreational sports to take advantage of the reservoir.

A discussion took place to identify what that partnership would look like; some kind of birding event, winery tours, or a sporting event at the reservoir. The committee also discussed contacting local wineries and ask them what they need or would like to see from the City. Also discussed was how to create enough activity to support a hotel or a bed and breakfast and restaurants on Broadway.

Mr. Parker said rather than strengthen City events, the City could sponsor local wineries events to draw those people already driving through our City on their way to other events.

Kevin Conlin said he is concerned about the City offering loans and grants to start-up businesses.

Mr. Parker said he proposes a discussion about incentives should take place at the next meeting. He said the survey could be left open to those that did not complete it.

Ms. D'Souza reviewed the responses on how to market the City.

Mr. Parker said there are formal approaches that place spending a lot of money on development strategies. He said there are dozens of ways we can go.

Mr. Vloedman said there is a great opportunity to change Veneta's perception. He said we haven't had a new commercial building since BiMart came to Veneta 14 years ago. He suggested sending out a quarterly business newsletter to get information out and use the statistical information we already have to identify those business owners. He feels it is important to have a focused targeted business economic development format and we need to sell the business community. Also, there may be many residents thinking about becoming entrepreneurs or starting a business and a business newsletter may get them interested. He said it may send the message that says Veneta is open for business.

Lily Rees suggested sending out a separate quarterly email directed to businesses.

Len Goodwin said he strongly disagrees that the Highway 126 beautification project should be included on the list. He said improving the infrastructure is the issue not beautification.

Thomas Cotter disagreed.

Ms. D'Souza said the final strategy to increase capacity will require dedicating more resources – assigning to a new staff member, hiring an intern or an assistant for Ingham so he can focus on economic development. Ms. D'Souza reviewed the responses and the final goal.

Len Goodwin suggested the downtown standards should be reviewed.

Mr. Parker said the City owns downtown land, is there a strategy the City wants to use as an incentive?

Ingham said staff is having that conversation with the Urban Renewal Agency because there are many possibilities and complications. He said we have to be clear on what we do and don't do but the Council will make those decisions.

Thomas Cotter said the City has the land and we're willing to assist businesses and to build retail space but we don't have anyone to do it for. He said it's difficult to build a building when we don't know what's going to be in there.

Mr. Parker suggested the City be externally clear about what to do and what not to do because if we're not it may contribute to the lack of activity.

Ms. D'Souza reviewed some strategies for developing a campaign to support local businesses.

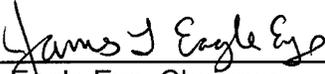
Mr. Parker said one risk factor the City will struggle with is if we invest a lot of money and nothing happens for a while. He said also we need to be careful about spending Urban Renewal Agency dollars and choosing the project for those dollars. He asked if a market analysis should be completed and if so, if we didn't want to spend the money to update the market analysis, we could talk with developers about the perception of the current market.

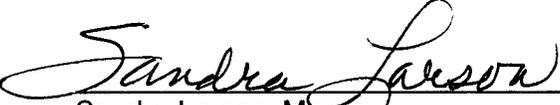
Mr. Parker said his team will work with Bork and will also get the survey out again.

Ingham said the next meeting will be Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. He said he is excited that we want to get a new and fresh look at this. He said what we've accomplished over the last few years is getting us to a place where we want to be as a building block.

Adjourn

Chair James Eagle Eye and Mayor Sandra Larson adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m

  
James Eagle Eye, Chairman

  
Sandra Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder