

MINUTES
Veneta Economic Development Committee
Wednesday, April 13, 2016 – 2:00 p.m.

Veneta Administrative Center, 88184 8th Street, Veneta, Oregon

Present: Linda Boothe, Thomas Cotter, Dave D'Avanzo, Ryan Frome, Gina Haley-Morrell, Charles Ruff, Herb Vloedman (Vice Chair).

Absent: Jason Alansky, Len Goodwin (Chair)

Others: Sandra Larson, Mayor; Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Claudia Denton, Economic Development Specialist; Jackie Mikalonis, Regional Solutions Team Coordinator for the Governor's Office; Jay Bozievich, Lane County Commissioner; Stephen Dobrinich and Aniko Drlik-Muhleck, Lane County Economic Development Hatfield Fellows.

Audience: Sarah Means, Lane County Economic Development Manager; Greg Rikhoff, Lane County Operations Director; Howard Schussler, Lane Council of Governments; Jae Pudewell, Oregon Department of Transportation; Sean Stevens, Business Oregon Development Officer; Kimberly Thompson, Oregon Employment Department Workforce Analyst; Mary Camarata, Department of Environmental Quality; Melissa Murphy, Business Oregon (Infrastructure Finance Authority); Marie Pickett, Veneta Downtown Farmer's Market.

1. Call to Order

- a. Vice Chair Herb Vloedman called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

2. Public Comment

- a. No public comment.

3. Presentations

- a. Introductions
- b. Jackie Mikalonis, Governor's Regional Solutions Team: Brief Overview
Jackie Mikalonis explained her role as the Governor's Regional Solutions Team (RST) Coordinator. She also described the role of the Governor's office and their strategies in improving the economy. She said that the RST was assembled in 2011 to coordinate and integrate the efforts of state agencies in various regions. This team focuses on the specific region's needs to grow the economy and create jobs. Each region has an Advisory Committee. Veneta is in the Benton, Lane, Linn, and Lincoln counties region. The Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (RAIN), which works with entrepreneurial businesses, is the current priority project of the RST. Mikalonis said the RST is happy to work with Veneta on a variety of projects or issues.

Ryan Frome asked Mikalonis how to move forward with the necessary improvements to Highway 126. Mikalonis said she's not familiar with the specific problems, but mentioned that RST staff Jae Pudewell from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) was in attendance. She said the RST has a lot of ODOT support and representation and that the RST, Veneta, and the Economic Development Committee should connect the dots, leverage opportunities, and leverage ODOT support.

Herb Vloedman said the Highway is a bottleneck for several opportunities, including economic development, work force, safety, and commodity transportation.

Jae Pudewell said that the Highway 126 corridor is a challenging corridor for multiple reasons, including wetlands, the river, and mountains. He said that safety is a priority for ODOT and its funding sources.

c. Lane County Rural Economic Development

i. Rural Prosperity Initiative Presentation

Ric Ingham pointed out that Sarah Means with Lane County was recently hired as the new Economic Development Manager after working as their Economic Development Officer. Means said that Lane County has wanted to work more collaboratively with rural economic development partners for several years, but did not have the capacity to do so until securing two Hatfield Fellows in 2015. The County's three priority goals include Infrastructure, Traded Sector Economic Development, and Rural Economic Development. The two Hatfield Fellows, Stephen Dobrinich and Aniko Drlik-Muehleck, proceeded to develop the (draft) Rural Economic Development Program from the ground up by consulting with rural communities like Veneta. The program has been well received. Drlik-Muehleck said they were still looking for feedback.

Dobrinich and Drlik-Muehleck presented the Rural Economic Development Program, titled the Rural Prosperity Initiative. Drlik-Muehleck said the approach is more holistic and collaboration oriented than traditional economic development approaches.

Dobrinich said that one key recommendation of the Plan is to hire a staff position related to rural economic development and that it would be a liaison position between the county and rural partners. Dobrinich and Drlik-Muehleck described the expected roles and responsibilities of the position.

ii. Feedback from Economic Development Committee and Regional Solutions Team

Herb Vloedman asked how the specific Highway 126 issue could fit into the work plan of the proposed rural economic development staff position. Drlik-Muehleck said that the position would be able to take concerns like Highway 126, connect the pieces, and bring it back to the county level to be heard. The position wouldn't have direct power to assist but would have connections to all the work happening on the county level. She said those issues don't always trickle up to the county level. The position is designed to advocate for and communicate the needs of rural communities.

County Commissioner Bozievich said that while he is already aware of the Highway 126 problems, being part of this discussion with the City of Veneta, the Economic Development Committee, Lane County Economic Development, and the Regional Solutions team is the type of thing that helps magnify the voice of these concerns. This helps him keep Veneta in mind for upcoming meetings and funding discussions.

Jae Pudewell encouraged the Committee to recognize that Veneta is part of a larger community and corridor from West Eugene to Florence, and that highlighting this will be a more compelling argument when requesting assistance and funding. He encouraged the Committee and City to reach out and coordinate with other communities in the area and along the corridor to reach critical mass and gain a stronger voice. He also said that prioritizing is important.

Aniko Drlik-Muehleck said this was a great example of how the proposed staff position could assist, by being the bridge that connects rural communities to give them a stronger, more clear voice.

Greg Rikhoff said that he had read through the minutes from the previous meeting and was impressed by the prioritization work that had been done, as it is a helpful tool on the regional level. He said Lane County is currently working on its Transportation System Plan and it is great to have the prioritization to utilize through the process.

Charles Ruff asked what kind of tangible resources could be available through the proposed position for local businesses. Drlik-Muehleck said the position would not have a lot of capacity to connect with local business directly, but could support efforts that do such as Veneta Business Connect. Drlik-Muehleck and Dobrinich reached out to regional resource providers for Veneta Business Connect to ask how they could be involved, and the proposed position would be able to do similar things. The position would be a great resource for those kinds of programs like Veneta Business Connect to find resources, etc.

Ric Ingham said that this would free up time for City Administrators and staff so they could do things like connect with local businesses, utility providers, and the Chambers of Commerce, and that it's better for the local leadership to connect with businesses rather than the County.

Melissa Murphy said she had visited Maupin, Oregon that had an agreement with the local SBDC contracting 40 hours per month of services such as trainings and one-on-one consulting in Maupin. These would be a type of agreements that the proposed staff person could work on that would provide more direct business support.

Ric Ingham asked County staff if they were still seeking comments on the draft plan or if the Board of Commissioners were looking to adopt it. Sarah Means said there is no adoption process, but that the Board has heard the plan and gave positive feedback. She said the that they are planning to fill the position as soon as possible in the next few months in order to not lose momentum. She said that it should be a flexible, working document and in that sense the plan is continually seeking feedback. Sarah Means and Greg Rikhoff both said that moving the plan forward is a strategic priority for the County. Rikhoff said he encourages feedback on the plan.

- d. City of Veneta
 - i. Veneta Economic Development Strategy: Five-Year Action Plan

Ric Ingham explained the history of the Veneta Economic Development Strategy: Five-Year Action Plan (Action Plan) and related documents including the Economic Opportunities Analysis and Comprehensive Plan update. He said Veneta and the Committee are interested in hearing feedback.

Claudia Denton explained the Action Plan components, goals, action items, and the Committee's prioritization of the action items.

Vice Chair Herb Vloedman asked for questions and comments from the whole room.

ii. Feedback from Lane County and Regional Solutions Team

Jae Pudewell asked what Veneta's largest traded sector business was. Ric Ingham said Holte Manufacturing. Ingham and Vloedman said that Highway 126 were the business owner's largest issue, due to the problems it causes for his workforce.

Sarah Means said the prioritization is the type of thing that is helpful to the County so they can be better partners, and she wishes she had one from every rural community. She said it will help the County in planning and allocation of resources. Jay Bozievich agreed and said it is good to know that working on items toward the bottom of the list is not helpful.

Jae Pudewell cautioned against finding solutions for Highway 126, but rather to communicate the problems and issues. This could help find creative and short-term solutions until the corridor is ready for the \$110+ million update.

After brief discussion, the top priorities for Highway 126 were safety, reliability, and capacity. Problems include crashes, dangerous turns and sections, inaccessibility for emergency vehicles to get through, lack of travel alternatives (especially if there is a crash as there is no other throughway), unreliability (ex: a large standard deviation for expected travel time into or out of Eugene), congestion, and general discomfort and problems for commuters and residents. Secondary issues include tourism and wayfinding signage.

e. Group Discussion on How to Align & Leverage Efforts

Aniko Drlik-Muhleck said the County is looking to have more of a presence in rural communities to understand both current efforts and future plans.

Jackie Mikalonis said it would be great for the County to have more of a presence in the four-county level that is the Governor's Regional Solutions Team, and County representatives would be welcome to attend RST Advisory Committee meetings.

Herb Vloedman thanked everyone for coming, and said it was a large group with a lot of information in a short period of time.

4. Administrative

- a. Approval of Minutes:

Motion: **Gina Haley-Morrell made a motion to approve the minutes from March 9, 2016. Dave D'Avanzo seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 7-0.**

5. Program/Project Updates

- a. New Action Prioritization Sheets

Claudia Denton did not have an update, but requested Committee members to keep an updated copy in their binders.

Ric Ingham said that after the Open House questions about System Development Charges has pushed that item higher on the prioritization list. Staff has been conducting research and should have an update at the next Committee meeting.

- b. Newsletter Update

Claudia Denton said the newsletter is not completed but showed the Committee a draft. She did say that some of the article subjects changed from the original plans.

6. Other

- a. Veneta Business Connect Update

Claudia Denton gave a brief update and said that the program was on track to complete 24 interviews with 13 already completed and six more scheduled. She said the interview team Debrief was scheduled for April 28th and invited Committee members to attend. She said the program is going well.

Gina Haley-Morrell asked if any business declined to participate, and if so what the reason was. Denton said a few declined due to capacity, as many are single owner-operators. One business declined as they were not interested in participating in a program with the City. Some businesses were also unreachable and lacked updated contact information. She said that overall there was positive feedback and interest.

- b. Kimberly Thompson gave a handout with economic data and statistics. Ric Ingham said he may ask her to attend a future meeting to give a presentation.

- c. Sean Stevens said that Chris Harder was recently hired as Business Oregon's new director. He said that Harder seems very interested in learning and hearing from the community. Melissa Murphy said that the Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority has hired a new executive director, Chris Cummings.

- d. Ric Ingham asked Howard Schussler to describe his new position working for Lane Council of Governments after working for Lane County for 14 years. He said he is the Government Services Director and oversees planning and grant writing efforts.

7. Next Meeting

- a. The next meeting was confirmed for Wednesday May 11th, 2016 at 2 p.m. with a regular meeting schedule of the second Wednesday of the month.

8. Adjourn

- a. Vice Chair Herb Vloedman adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.