

MINUTES

Lane Economic Committee

Lane Council of Governments – 4th Floor Large Conference Room
99 E. Broadway, Suite 400 – Eugene

February 27, 2006 – 11:30 A.M.

PRESENT: Rob Scoggin, Acting Chair; Tim Black, Mike Blommé, Anna Morrison, Glenda Poling, Jim Ramseyer, John Sullivan, Lynnette Wikstrom, members; Denny Braud, Mike Galvin, Robin Onaclea, Howard Schesser, alternate members, Deb Schmidt, *ex officio* members.

Steve Dignam (LCOG); Peter Thurston (Lane County); Bob Warren (Oregon Economic & Community Development Department).

ABSENT: DeAnn Cherbas, Chuck Forster, John Tamulonis, Hal Reed, Mike Sullivan, Ellen Teninty, members; Jay Bozievich, Philip Hudspeth, Kari Westlund, *ex officio* members.

GUESTS: Tom Kartrude, Noa O'Hare, Ric Ingham, Diane Wiley, Michelle Wygle.

Mr. Scoggin called the meeting of the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) Lane Economic Committee (LEC) to order at 11:35 a.m. He invited those who were present to introduce themselves. He determined there was no one present wishing to present a Public Comment and said he had no comments to make himself. He allowed Mr. Dignam to contribute several light-minded comments of a timely nature.

1. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Blommé moved, seconded by Ms. Poling, to accept the minutes of the January 23, 2006, meeting. The motion was adopted unanimously, 8:0.

2. New Member Nomination

Mr. Dignam said he recommended that Jenny Ulum be nominated for appointment to fill the vacant membership position on the LEC. He noted that her application for appointment had been distributed with the agenda of the meeting.

Ms. Poling moved, seconded by Ms. Onaclea, to present the name of Jenny Ulum to the LCOG Board of Directors for appointment as a member of the Lane Economic Committee. The motion was adopted unanimously, 11:0.

3. Needs and Issues List

Mr. Dignam reviewed consideration given to the Needs and Issues ranking process of public infrastructure and redevelopment projects at previous LEC meetings. He reported that the LCOG

Board of Directors had authorized continued coordination of a customized and revamped process in Lane County for two years and directed that a tool to measure its effectiveness be developed. He reviewed suggestions made for its improvement. He reported that he had made contact with University of Oregon officials and determined that it would be possible to secure the services of an intern to work on the project.

Ms. Morrison said it was her recollection that the Board had limited the expense of the project to \$2,000, that there were “mixed feelings” about its effectiveness, and that it had been agreed that project submissions would be limited to five from each agency.

Members discussed elements of the process – the use of student interns to assist small agency project application development, the need for simplicity, limiting applications to one per listing category, the improbability of support for it from the Oregon Economic Revitalization or other State agency, and the involvement of Lane County’s “new Peter Thurston.”

Mr. Dignam said he would seek to determine how to make the directive happen.

4. Economic Development Project – University of Oregon

University of Oregon Riverfront Research Park Director Diane Wiley made a presentation on how her program fulfilled its mission of “. . . creat(ing) a community of scientific excellence and innovative technology . . .” She described its facilities, and the nature and work of its 57 tenants.

Ms. Wiley reviewed the purpose of the University’s Technology Transfer Office and described recent spin-offs coordinated by it – 45 new inventions, 28 license agreements, \$3.4 million in licensing revenue, and 7 start-up companies in fields such as neuroscience, neuro-informatics, foreign language assessment, computational intelligence, and monoclonal antibodies.

Ms. Wiley reviewed the operation of the Riverfront Innovation Center as a technology incubator and described its outcomes benefiting the community. She reported that a new 55,000 square foot multi-tenant building was being planned.

Members discussed the presentation.

5. Rural Economic Development Grant Program

Mr. Dignam reported his recent discovery of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Economic Development Grant Program. He said it provided grants to rural utilities that were to be distributed to nonprofit economic development programs. He said the program was not being utilized anywhere in Oregon. He explained that a 20 percent match for grants up to \$300,000 was required and that he was seeking to identify a Lane County utility to coordinate the program.

Members discussed the opportunity – using Lane Community College rural learning centers or the University of Oregon business incubation program as the nonprofit development agency.

6. Increasing Private Industry Involvement in Economic Development

Mr. Dignam reminded members of previous LEC discussion of the value of expanding local business involvement in economic development activities. He reported that the LCOG Board of Directors had directed that a study be made of any overlapping interests of the LEC, Metro Part-

nership, and the Lane County Standing Economic Advisory Committee. He said he had been given the task of coordinating the study with the goal of determining if value could be gained from combining some or all of the efforts of the groups.

Mr. Sullivan said it was his experience that participating in the LEC was of positive value and that he believed its efforts would be improved by the involvement of more representation from private business.

Mr. Warren said he believed a study of the work of the three groups would be more objective if it was conducted by independent observer.

Ms. Poling said she believed that, as a public/private entity, Metro Partnership had a unique niche to support economic development issues.

In response to a question from Ms. Morrison, Mr. Dignam explained that a report of a previously begun study of economic development programs in Lane County was not available because it had not been completed.

Members discussed the proposed study and appeared to agree that it would be valuable for the LEC to “step back” and evaluate its mission and program as part of it. Mr. Dignam said he believed there were practical challenges to the merger of the interests of the three groups to be involved, but that a realignment of their tasks could be mutually beneficial.

Mr. Scoggin announced that the next LEC meeting was scheduled for March 20.

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

(Recorded by Dan Lindstrom)

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