



SKAMANIA COUNTY
PO Box 436 - Stevenson, WA 98648 - 509-427-5110

EDC Progress Report
July 30, 2016

Table with 2 columns: Description and Value. Rows include Business Startup Informational Calls, Referrals to SCORE, Business Retention, Business Relocation, Commercial Site Inquiries, Retail Space Inquiries, Street Vendor, New Companies Located, EDC Micro Loans, WIF Loans/Grants.

July progress summary:

- US EPA - Brownfields Assessment Grant Proposal - A \$400,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment grant proposal was submitted in December. It was to complete environmental assessments on properties within the County...

around the end of August. We are already working on new letters of support and updating last year's application.

- **Gorge Economic Symposium** - MCEDD hosted the annual Gorge Economic Symposium in Hood River. Skamania County has added about 160 new jobs in the last five years despite losing almost 150 government jobs. The Washington slides can be viewed here:  
[http://www.mcedd.org/documents/WashingtonCounties\\_2016.pdf](http://www.mcedd.org/documents/WashingtonCounties_2016.pdf)  
<http://www.mcedd.org/services/symposium.htm>
- **Gorge Commission – OIB/WIB** - Amanda (MCEDD) and I presented to the Gorge Commission at their 7/12 meeting. It had been a couple years since the Investment Boards addressed the Gorge Commission so it took 45 minutes (would have gone longer but we were saved by the lunch bell). Our presentation included an overview of the Investment Boards, members, roles of the states, USFS, and CRGC. We also discussed the positive impacts the Investment Funds have had on infrastructure, services, and jobs. Grant and loan examples were presented as well as an Agora demonstration. The Commission had approved the Economic Vitality Plans last year but they had a lot of related questions. I think they wanted to have a larger role in development of the Plans.
- **WIB/OIB Funding Status** - During the CRGC meeting we discussed the remaining unappropriated investment funds (~\$2MM). After our presentation we met briefly with Phil Chang (OR Senator Merkley's office), Lynn Burditt (USFS), and Krystyna (CRGC Director). It was pretty clear in that meeting that the USFS is not going to help us figure out an avenue to receive the funds. Phil Chang has started testing a different angle by going directly to representatives of USDA (USFS operates under USDA's umbrella). We'll see how that goes – so far USDA seems to be receptive in finding a funding line. There is also a small number of Gorge Commissioners who would like to keep any additional Investment Board funding for their own use. Krystyna said she would try to educate them and make sure we're aware of any moves toward that end.
- **FDIC – Money Smart Training** - Kari and I attended a Train The Trainer class to teach FDIC's Money Smart financial education. The class was put on by Mid-Columbia Housing, CEKC, and Lower Columbia Career & Family Development. The curriculum is good and FDIC provides materials for free. There is a section of the business version of Money Smart that we may utilize with Skunk Brothers' as part of their proposed loan modification.
- **Workforce** - The Business Engagement team is finalizing a flyer to be used in their efforts. It has been eye opening to watch the workforce development community struggle with designing programs based on employer needs. The concept seems pretty simple but traditions are hard to break. We have been successful in bringing some workforce funds to our area. We had a Business, Industry & Education committee meeting today and approved \$15,000 for special micro-soldering training. 20 participants from White Salmon/Bingen businesses will attend (Sagtech, Zepher, Insitu & Custom Interface).
- **Stevenson/Carson School District** - Superintendent Douglass asked for assistance finding curriculum funding for an additional kindergarten class (~\$2,300). We had luck getting some items paid for through CEKC connections. Met with one of the School District's Board members. Couple items to note: They believe they need to replace Carson Elementary School. The state cannot help pay because of a former lawsuit brought and won by School District (80's-90's?). The District received a large cash payout on the condition the state doesn't participate in future capital projects. Also, the utility cost to operate the Carson Middle School is extremely high. We'll keep an eye out for energy efficiency grants. It is unlikely the pool will be opened in the next year without additional assistance. There have been several different attempts at getting

the pool open and there seems to be a lot of community support. It looks like an approach different from past initiatives may be necessary (i.e. formalized non-profit that partners with the school).

- **Other**

- Free SCORE training was held in Stevenson (Wednesday – August 3<sup>rd</sup>): Accounting & Record Keeping for your Business. They had scholarship funds to sponsor anyone who would like to attend (3 business owners/entrepreneurs attended).
- Developers of Chinidere subdivision have applied for final plat approval and expect to be selling lots in August.
- I presented at the 7/20 PUD Commission meeting.
- Attended presentation from the Performing Arts Initiative regarding their plans to develop a 600-800 seat full-featured performing arts facility in Hood River.
- John L. Scott has moved their Stevenson office. They will be located across from the Stevenson Hardware Store. I expect the building they are vacating to be remodeled and put back to use relatively soon.
- Bigfoot Coffee Roasters is expanding into the space recently vacated by Kanvas. They are adding a kitchen and will have tables and chairs in their current area.
- Food trailer, Gaia World Eats, received their final L&I inspection this week. The business opened on Saturday the 31st across the street from Umpqua Bank.
- Red Bluff Brewing continues to push back their opening. They are training staff and should be open the week of August 1-7.
- Mill A may be applying to open a high school. Will follow up on the details.
- Attended CEKC Board meeting and Board retreat.

### **June progress summary:**

- **S. Gifford Pinchot Collaborative (SGPC)** - We are working with the USFS to renew our S. Gifford Pinchot Collaborative “participating agreement”. This agreement allows the EDC to act as fiscal agent for the Collaborative. It is funded through Secure Rural Schools Title II funds and primarily pays for the Coordinator. Jamie Tolfree is resigning as the SGP Collaborative Coordinator. They are actively recruiting for the position.
- **Gorge Commission – Transportation** - The Gorge Commission has been working on incorporating transportation into their oversight and planning. Unfortunately this effort is being driven entirely by the Ports of Hood River and Cascade Locks. MCEDD manages a Gorge-wide transportation organization (Connect Mid-Columbia) that isn’t included in this Gorge Commission effort. The Ports want to leverage the political power of the Scenic Act to obtain federal funding. That is fine, but they are also submitting a list of transportation needs/priorities that do not reflect the input of any other agencies. MCEDD would like support to make sure all agencies are included in setting regional transportation priorities adopted by the Gorge Commission. This support may include testifying at a GC meeting and/or letters.
- **USDA** - State representative Gina McCabe is hosting regional meetings with USDA. Kari and I attended a meeting in White Salmon. USDA representatives went over their programs and the most current qualifications. There was a good turnout for the meeting but everyone is looking for “free” money. It’s possible to get grants but they are few and very difficult to get. It is easier to get grants as part of a larger project which includes a loan from USDA (loan rates are good).
- **WIB** - The Assistant Director at Commerce has reviewed the WIB Economic Vitality Plan. We should have signed approval for the plan next week. Oregon has already approved the Plan. The last step will be for us to submit the plan and approvals from the Investment Boards, Gorge

Commission, and states to the USFS. We sadly report Jane Swanson will no longer be involved in the WIB (left Commerce for a King County position). She managed all of the State's loan programs and many of their grant programs. It was great working with her and she was a wealth of knowledge. We are working on finding a replacement.

- **Stevenson/Carson Education Foundation** - A preliminary Foundation meeting was held 6/29 at Karen Douglass' office. The Foundation was formed several years ago but didn't have an action. They are just beginning the process of reorganization. Primary goal of the Foundation will be to raise money to support educational needs.

### May progress summary:

- **Washington Investment Board** - We had a busy WIB meeting. WIB Bylaws were adopted and executive committee members elected (Matt Masco – President, Jane Swanson (WA Dept of Commerce) – VP, and Mike Bomar (CREDC) – Sec/Treasurer). The WIB/OIB Economic Vitality Plan was approved. The plan is being sent to the WA Dept of Commerce and Business Oregon for review and to be formally submitted to the USFS by the respective states.
- **SW WA Regional Transportation Council (RTC)** - Doug McKenzie and I met with RTC Director, Matt Ransom, to discuss bridge infrastructure. At issue is the need for a dependable and sustainable bridge that connects Skamania County to the Interstate system. The Bridge of the Gods has already proven to be less than dependable and with its age we need to plan for the future. Our conversation was a little different than I hoped. Matt was initially focused on getting the Bridge of the Gods recognized by WSDOT to be available for maintenance funding. One of the takeaways is we need to begin working on political support for the idea. Ideally, I'd like to see the first steps taken in evaluating a new bridge. A few years ago Senator Murray was able to direct federal funding at evaluating Hood River bridge replacement. They now have a location identified, preliminary design, and preliminary environmental assessment work completed.
- **Pacific Northwest Regional Economic Conference** - Attended the Pacific Northwest Regional Economic Conference in Vancouver, WA. This was their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and hosted by our regional economist, Scott Bailey. CREDC (Columbia River Economic Development Council) held their quarterly luncheon in conjunction with the conference. Greg Daco of Oxford Economics was CREDC's luncheon keynote and Ed Glaeser of Harvard University was Friday's keynote speaker. There was a quiet optimism about the regional and national economies. Minimum wage was a very hot topic but at this point it is difficult to determine what kind of impact it will have.
- **Aniche Cellars Expansion** - Kari and I met with Aniche Cellars at their new property in Mill A. They plan on moving and expanding their main wine production in addition to planting another 30 acres of grapes. Their Underwood winery/tasting room will remain. We are working with them on permitting, planning, and funding options.
- **South Central Workforce Development Council (SCWDC)** - Continuing to work on Business Engagement Team development. We are using LDB Beverage as the first test case for the team. This will be interesting since few agencies on the team have included Skamania County in their plans or programs. The first Construction Industry Sector Partnership meeting next week (5/12). David Bennett has agreed to participate. Bob Hamlin and I attended the SCWDC Strategic Plan Forum at the Hegewald Center. Attended SCWDC's annual Board retreat in Yakima. Federal laws relating to workforce funding changed requirements dramatically. Much of the retreat was spend updating By-Laws, Strategic Plans, policies, budget, committee charters, and other general business housekeeping. It is eye opening to see how funding is allocated for workforce programs.

Example: \$1.5 million available for youth programs allocated between four counties – Klickitat and Skamania Counties split \$90,000 (only 6%)! SCWDC claims the state determines allocation percentages. Will be looking further into this. Working with SCWDC staff on helping a local business with workforce needs and creating construction industry sector partnerships. As part of the newly formed Employer Engagement Team we are working on structure, cooperation agreements, and protocols moving forward.

- **Red Carpet Committee** - The Red Carpet Committee hosted an event to welcome new Port tenants to the Stevenson waterfront (Phloem Studios, Skamania Acupuncture, Laura Buchan, Backwoods Brewing, Wave Communications). Approximately 50 people attended the event that included business tours and company presentations. Tours included Backwoods' new production facility, Phloem Studio and Laura Buchan's wood working shop, and Skamania Acupuncture. Wave Communications sent a corporate representative from Seattle to discuss the acquisition of Sawtooth Technologies.
- **Connect Mid-Columbia** - Connect Mid-Columbia's purpose is to enhance the Mid-Columbia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) with a more robust conversation around our regional transportation priorities and needs. We discussed project priorities, active projects funded through TIGER, FAA, & Connect OR/STIP Enhance, upcoming funding opportunities through Western Federal Lands Access Program, and 2017 FAST ACT. The next meeting we will be focusing on transit/Gorge TransLink new services and proposals.
- **Washington Asset Building Coalition (WABC)** - Kari and I attended WABC's conference, Creating a Lifetime of Opportunity Through Asset Building. This was Kari's first exposure to Asset Building which is community development focused. Commerce is pushing the need for more community development within the economic development agencies. It is one of the reasons CEKC is such a strong partner in our area. There were many speakers and topics including several state Senators, Port Director, Policy Advisors, FDIC, AARP, Presidential appointee to the White House Social & Behavioral Sciences Team, and US Treasury Deputy Secretary (J. Mark Iwry). General topics included creating the next generation of savers, tackling the student loan crisis, microenterprise in WA state, and expanding retirement savings for all.
- **Other**
  - We met with Mark Heystek of MCEDD for additional Agora training and direction.
  - Meeting with Gorge Winds Community Grocery to discuss their North Bonneville storefront plans.
  - Skunk Brothers Distillery hosted this month's Chamber Break. They have been able to improve distribution and get more shelf space. They also just shipped a large order to Nevada so their inventory is low at this time.
  - Annual Workforce Council Board Retreat is next week in Yakima.
  - One day Asset Building conference is also next week.
  - Clark & Lewies was open through the winter for the first time. April was a better month for them than the past two Junes.
  - In the last two weeks we've met with several local businesses to discuss their plans and provide assistance. We're also helping a couple new businesses get started (hopefully soon).
  - Participated in Stevenson Clean Up Day with approximately 25 others.
  - Still working on possible commercial kitchen at WRMS. Health department reviewed the space and it needs at least a stove, stove hood, and hand sink. Looking for clarity on minimum qualifications for stove and hood (least expensive options).
  - Attending Regional Economics Conference next week in Vancouver.
  - New toll rates have been effectively approved by the Port of Cascade Locks.
  - Presented quarterly report to Stevenson City Council.
  - Completed training required in RCW 42.30 (Washington Open Public Meetings Act).