



SCAPPOOSE
Oregon

Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes

Scappoose City Hall, 33568 E Columbia Ave., Scappoose, OR 97056

November 18, 2021 12:00 Noon – 1:30 pm

Attendees: Christine Turner, Chair; Jeannet Santiago, Vice-Chair; Brian Rosenthal, Member; Len Waggoner, Member; George Hafeman, Member; Robby Backus, Member; Brenda Michael, Member, Jeff Weiss, Scappoose Library Liaison; Nancy Ward, Port of Columbia County Liaison; Wela Negeslpach, CET; Alex Rains, City Manager, City of Scappoose; Laurie Oliver Joseph, City Planner, City of Scappoose; Huell Whitehaus, Assistant to Public Works Director, City of Scappoose

Absent: Michael Leipzig, Member; Tina Amela, Member; Michael Sykes, CRPUD Liaison; Heidi Ralls, CRPUD Liaison; Casey Garret, Columbia County Liaison; Paul Vogel, CET Liaison; Alex Tardif, SRFD Liaison; Josh Poling, Scappoose City Council; Isaac Butman, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Scappoose

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM by Chair Christine Turner.

1.1 Meeting minutes

Brian made a motion to approve the October 21, 2021 meeting minutes. George seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

1.2 Agenda Approval

Len motioned to approve the October 21, 2021 Agenda. George seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

1.3 Citizen Communication - None

2. New Business

2.1 Updates

2.1.1 **County** – None. County liaison absent.

2.1.2 **City** – Huell provided an update on larger projects from the Public Works perspective: Keys Filter Media Replacement contractor has been awarded, a sidewalk improvement project is out to bid for Old Portland Road, Public Works crews have started to shift to winter duties, such as storm and sewer-related maintenance tasks.

Laurie gave an update about new developments in planning approvals or currently underway. Laurie did inform the Committee that the well production requirements for East Airpark Development LLC is moving in a progressing positively, with enough water production sufficient to record the first three phases of the development project. The Maple Street Cottages are moving forward, with construction document approval occurring soon. Laurie emphasized that this will be the first development of its kind in



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Scappoose. Finally, City staff are working to determine the final scope of work with the Scappoose Drainage Improvement Company (SDIC) for the updated floodplain mapping.

- 2.1.3 Port** – Commissioner Nancy Ward delivered the update. Sean Clark has been chosen as the permanent Executive Director, bringing with him to the position over 14 years of experience working for the Port. Re-zoning issues are ongoing, which the Port will be formally providing recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners at their first meeting in January.

Brian asked about NEXT Energy and the use of oil trains. Nancy mentioned that the lease agreement for the rail traffic is quite 'tight.' She clarified that no increase in rail traffic above and beyond what was agreed upon is permissible, without approval from the Port's Board.

- 2.1.4 Library** – Jeff delivered the update. The Library dedicated the new mural on Saturday, November 13. The Library has developed 'comfort packs,' which are kits for first responders to hand out to children in crisis. Lastly, Jeff mentioned the park amenities grant that was awarded for auxiliary picnic tables, solar-powered charging plinths (for mobile devices), and a new water fountain + bottle refill station that will be installed adjacent to the Library in Heritage Park with the help of Public Works.

Brian asked Jeff about homelessness and Heritage Park. Jeff mentioned that they have changed around the exterior lighting to discourage overnight camping outside of the Library.

- 2.1.5 CET** – Wela – filling in for Paul Vogel (CET Liaison) – delivered an update for their organization. Wela discussed the nonprofit and small business grants that are open; out of the 65 applicants thus far, 12 are based in Scappoose. CET has signed the contract for the Small Business Resource Network, which CET is going to find and hire a director for. Jeff asked if nonprofits with no employees can apply? Wela replied that volunteer-only organizations are eligible.

2.2 Goal Setting

Christine discussed asked the Committee about *what* they see themselves as achieving and how to best use everyone's time towards a goal or goals. Starting with Robby, Christine asked him generally about why he joined EDC. Robby stated that he wanted to be a part of coming up with ideas and proposing those ideas to City Council – whether through initiation of those ideas or getting some direction from the City (in terms of what is possible, what funds are available, and how to actualize ideas).

Christine then asked Robby about his recent letter to the editor that he published in the Spotlight, stating that writing letters to the editor representing the City in a negative light may be considered a violation of the Committee's Team Agreement. In response, Robby discussed the various wealth/income indicators for Scappoose as a community, emphasizing median home prices, schools, and crime, but not necessarily the City's tax revenue. Alex Rains, City Manager, gave a high-level overview of how the City collects tax revenue and from which sources. Alex stated that while Scappoose may have a relatively high median income, that does not necessarily



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translate to increased property tax revenues for the City's General Fund or other local government entities. Alex added that a driver for population growth in Scappoose is due – at least in part – to the comparatively low property tax rates. Robby clarified that he was speaking more towards the State of Oregon's property tax structure, citing the disconnects between [real] market value (RMV) and assessed value (AV). He added that the unique circumstances of the pandemic have exacerbated problems with the State's property tax structure. Robby continued that the point of his letter was about moving the conversation and expressing his personal perspective and beliefs as to taxation policy.

Christine asked Alex about some of the higher value homes in the community and whether or not they are inside city limits. Alex responded that, as a broad generalization, yes, many of the higher value homes are inside city limits. Brian brought up the point about the taxes/fees that are paid during development by developers. Robby added the difficulties that the Scappoose School District (SSD) has in raising revenues, stating that the City and SSD should work more collaboratively. Alex responded that the City and SSD do in fact work together when our focus areas overlap. Jeff added that Oregon is unique when it comes to the property tax measures of the early 1990's. Robby reiterated that the RMV vs. AV discrepancy is a problem, and one that he doesn't see getting any better based on his conversations with real estate professionals.

George discussed the structure of the housing construction market, housing costs, and the ability for some folks to afford taxes when their income remains stagnant, but the value and cost of housing is out of reach. George mentioned the reality of some homeowners not being able to control the cost of taxes (in terms of being tied to property values largely outside of the control of the homeowner). George remarked that he thinks the County has done well with not jumping AVs all at once, adding that he sits on the County's tax committee as well. George mentioned that with income tax, it scales with how much someone makes, rather than someone's home increasing in value and subsequently increasing property taxes beyond someone's ability to pay.

Christine asked George what he was looking to get out of EDC. George said he was interested in helping apply his knowledge and experience in home building and real estate to help contribute to the City. Christine emphasized that the Committee needs to find a purpose, mentioning that she thinks the economy drives real estate. Len stated that he sees development potential in Columbia County as virtually unlimited, in the sense that there is the demand, adding that if a restrictive approach to development is taken, then it will be challenging to fund public improvements. He added that he sees [Scappoose] as being 'on the cusp.'

Jeannet commented with regard to Robby's letter – she thought it was a good start to the conversation and thanked him for writing it. In response to Christine's question, Jeannet mentioned that she had the same question when she came to EDC – are we an events committee or an economic development committee? Jeannet added that she feels passionately about economic development, both personally and professionally. Rhetorically, she asked the group if they saw themselves as 'catalysts, initiators, or supporters; how can we attract and support new business, existing business, and support economic development initiatives across the community.'

Brian added that he thought there have been some fantastic points made by the Committee today. Speaking about development, Brian added that it will not happen by a single decision, but



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rather a series of decisions and policies. He discussed that, as Alex had mentioned, a [comparatively] low cost of living and for doing business is what attracts people to Scappoose. Brian brought up the extension of the property tax exemption that Cascade Tissue requested at a recent City Council meeting. Brian added that he testified in opposition of the extension, but Council voted the other way in a 4-3 vote. He mentioned that it is important to run cost-benefit analyses rather than increase taxes on individuals, but reemphasized that he felt Cascade had not fulfilled their part of the agreement. Brian wants to see the Committee get more involved with Council by providing recommendations, adding that they could've helped Council in their decision had there been more time. Robby stated that he agreed and that there should be more committee involvement in terms of reviewing policy, adding that he felt the ARPA funding decisions made by Council were hasty.

Christine stated that as a founding member of the Committee, she wanted to make a difference. She expressed strong support for OMIC and the idea of more people who live here being able to *work* here as well. She stated that event planning doesn't fit with what she sees EDC as doing in terms of economic growth. Brian interjected that Scappoose needs to think creatively about fostering economic development, by utilizing the value of the community as the driver, rather than tax incentives.

Christine brought up the bylaws and attendance of members, and increasing interaction with City Council. Alex mentioned the advisory role that EDC played during the development of the Urban Renewal Agency as a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Alex added that Urban Renewal will need more committee support for the 50-Year Plan, but that what such involvement will look like depends on how the consultant's work plan takes shape. The 50-Year Plan is currently in the middle of the Request for Proposals (RFP) phase – a consultant has not yet been chosen. Alex added that the TAC (which was EDC) for Urban Renewal was very helpful.

Christine raised the topic of storefront improvements. Len mentioned that it often doesn't work out financially for many business that really need help with improving their façades. Brian added that structural concerns with many old buildings tend to make upgrades financially infeasible. Brian and Len emphasized the volume of vehicle and rail traffic through Scappoose, mentioning that ODOT has helped to ease congestion, but that the railroad effectively divides the community. Nancy interjected, encouraging more residents to speak up about the issues with rail traffic.

Christine asked the members to come together on December 16 to continue this conversation and get their goals set. The Committee generally agreed that we could proceed with meeting in December. Christine also asked staff to provide member attendance records and encourage interested residents to join EDC.

3. General Discussion

4. Announcements and Next Meetings

- December 16, 2021
- January 20, 2022



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- February 17, 2022

5. Meeting Adjourned at 1:29 pm.

For questions about these minutes, contact Isaac Butman, 503.543.7184, ibutman@cityofscappoose.org
The EDC conducts its meetings in an ADA accessible room. If special accommodations are needed, please contact City Recorder Susan Reeves at 503.543.7146, ext. 224 TTY 503.378.5938