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Jobs

PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY: Catie Faryl

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1. AN ISSUE: Too many entities endeavoring to address joblessness without a coordinated effort to create advocacy. City and Regional officials, environmental, farming and business alliances and private sector employers, business owners and developers need to organize and ask for assistance and support at the private benefactor and State and Federal levels in concerted and consolidated campaigns, documents and actual physical appearances to entities that can help. It is a problem when "they cut up the pie without us" - and Southern Oregon is so far from population centers where the majority of money goes unless we send some "squeaky wheels".

A SOLUTION: Sponsor a gathering and invite Jobs with Justice, Green Jobs for All, the Jobs Council, local chapters of the Grange system, local representatives of World Wide Opportunities for Organic Farms, all elected City and County officials and appointed boards, RVCOG, staff and Community Development officials, GroundWorks, Community Works, The Homebuilders Association, Mediation Works, Department of Employment, union officials, business owners, Sustainable Business Network, Oregon Action, Main Street Alliance, all elected officials, applicable County and Community staff, administrators of Economic Development Grants, GroundWorks, CommunityWorks, South Valley Employment Center, Sustainable Valley Project, SOREDI, Department of Employment, Ashland Resource Center, The Homebuilders Association, the Ecumenical community, The China Connection, WebSpirit, Ashland Resource Center, and employeers like Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Harry & David and Associated Fruit, Good Grief, America (foreclosure relief), Boards of Realtors, Rogue Valley and Asante Hospitals, Pacific Domes, Drill Doctor and Darex, Lithia Motors, HomePro and Solar Magazine and others.

The workshop goals could be: 1) to reveal and coordinate employment programs in the works and speed up their implementation 2) form a group who will visit Salem and Washington to ask for direct help for Jackson and Josephine Counties 3) explore "State of Jefferson" alliance that would support regional jobs and increase attention to work that could be developed on open land like sheep and goat herds and an by-product industries 4) find service organizations who can underwrite entry level jobs, 5) work with union officials to create journeyman and apprenticeship programs that do not require "union pay" during learning period and 6) form

Trade Alliances that focus on EXPORT of arts, green products, food and value added products, manufactured goods, and intellectual properties, innovations and inventions from the Rogue Valley. Obviously there are other categories that could be focus groups charged with studying and bringing forth solutions during the workshop.

There are many places this type of workshop could be held. Jackson County Visioning Workshop (2 yrs ago) was very successful, with moderator Kelley Madding and other County employees facilitating. Oregon Green Expo might accomodate this type of workshop at the Medford Armory this June 24 - June 26 event (contact Susan Huntley and Don McCoy). Jeff Golden is working with groups to organize productive outcome and jobs as well.

COSTS AND FUNDING SOURCES: There should be no cost encumbered if public facilities and staff are utilize. If the Green Expo is a desirable venue, participating parties could pay a reasonable workshop fee, or get a famous keynote speaker and sell tickets.

2) AN ISSUE: Downtown Ashland merchants have concerns about presence of homeless, panhandling, loitering and behavior downtown.

A SOLUTION: In addition to creating a "Plaza Watch" group, under discussion at the Citizens Coalition meetings, some nominal jobs could be created. Perhaps the Elks, Soroptimists, Chamber of Commerce, Ashland Gallery Associaiton, the Board of Realtors, and theatres could find a little money to pay "homeless" to do sweeping and litter patrol downtown. (Another thought, perhaps too kooky for many, would be to develop through local theatre and arts group a way for people to be in costume as part of this "patrol" or Plaza Watch. That would certainly be more fun, fitting, and appropriate than to have it feel like people are spying on each other, and would be an exploration into tolerance, since "all the world is a stage!")

COSTS AND FUNDING SOURCES: Nominal, maybe name tags that would make it "official" could be provided by the City, with other groups finding funding for minimum wages a few hours a day. Theatre groups and merchants might contribute Elizabethan or other appropriate costumes - English Bobbie for our Community Services Officer???

3) AN ISSUE: Many people are convinced that the homeless don't want to work. The Citizens Coalition is evaluating the many faces and facets of problems and finding solutions for each group. There are displaced people, unemployed people, couch surfers, those who want to move around, transients passing through, abused women, runaway teens, teens posing as homeless, people who get stranded, the mentally ill, veterans and many other categories and needs to be addressed.

A SOLUTION: Having a work site off the Plaza and a permanent rest stop (as in Creative Re-Use Depot and South Community Services Center) gives an alternative for those people who want to work. A time limited employment opportunity (3 days) could be offered there in exchange for food and other services. Also that creates an opportunity for us to know and develop rapport with "homeless", "homefree", and others who then could be vouched for if local jobs were available.

Building the model where transitory groups are offered alternative services outside City centers can be pioneered in Ashland. Advocacy for work/stay sites in conjunction with the State and National Departments of Transportation, Health/Education & Welfare, and Housing & Urban Development could result in freeway rest stops eventually becoming work sites for landfill diversion, recycling centers and alternative car fuel refilling stations that could be incorporated into the existing facilities. Looking long term it is projected that transient populations will increase everywhere, and the lifestyle by choice of the homefree (with the lowest carbon foot print in our society) will increase in popularity due to the mortgage meltdown, ability to live off the grid with help of cell phones and other new technology, and a general desire for freedom and embracing of new values. Building an "industrial and re-purposing job program like the international farm (WWOOF) along the interstates where large numbers of people can serve a useful purpose while keeping their independence and health, and not impact settled folks and merchants on Main Street, would be a forwarding thinking project to pioneer for our country. Homeless and jobless folks may become a much needed labor forces as our State's demographics shift: new census data reports only 30% of Oregonians have children and that trend is continuing while State continues to grow as a retirement destination.

COSTS & FUNDING SOURCES: Last year a competition was held by The Angel Exchange, a group including Steve Vincent, to award financial support to similar projects. Other candidates for sponsoring or underwriting might be the new Sustainable Valley Business Accelerator, Jackson County Local Action Committee and the new Oregon Legal Journal, an excellent sources of information on generation of jobs and programs in Oregon.

4) AN ISSUE: Southern Oregon is an arid area, where water is limited. Also we have massive irrigation districts (MID and TID) where maintenance costs are spread over fewer farms, vineyards, orchards and ranching operations each year. We need to keep agriculture affordable and viable in our region. In addition, we are fighting fires, watering landscape and washing cars with potable water, passing high costs to consumers and municipalities, when we could rethink and reconfigure our water systems.

A SOLUTION: With the help of Urban Renewal Districts, groups like Klamath Siskiyou Wild, Rural Organizing Project, 1000 Friends, and hundreds of environmental groups and the Water Districts, the County could ask for Federal Stimulus Funds and other State and National Funding to create a massive PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT that could hire 100s of local unemployed, jobless and homeless to be put to work building better systems. This could be a Conservation Corp. project, or similar to Lomakatsi Reforestration Program (another project that could be easily expanded and add jobs).

Many of our solutions are regional, not just Ashland problems. It has been my hope and effort to encourage the City of Phoenix' Urban Renewal to be inceptor of a regional water project that would begin with the restoration of our creek and creation of a water cistern in the downtown "hole in the ground" between the Ys where Highway 99 is divided in downtown Phoenix. Since a huge Highway 99 Corridor Study is upcoming for our region, this too is an opportunity to consider what public works program jobs might be developed in that regard.

bcc: to parties and organizations mentioned