

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/ LABOR
FOCUS GROUP
September 17, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Staff members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shiplet, John Stromberg, Jon Lange.

Participants present: Wes Brain, Jim Fong, Lynn Thompson, Juli DiChiro, Bill Jiron, Heidi Parker, Dean Croper

Meeting came to order 10:00 a.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mayor Stromberg welcomed the group and gave a review of the City Council goal which started the process. He explained a little of the process so far, and gave information on the various focus groups, their "job" in this process and all the other ways for the community to get involved.

Jim Fong, gave overview of the work done so far by the Policy and Technical Advisory Committees. He explained that the group today will begin the work of drilling down the first draft strategies for clarification as well as give the strategies a reality check.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process. Essentially, all comments made to day will be given to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) who will take the information to create the 5-8 strategies as well as develop actions related to those strategies.

Wes expressed some concerns relating to the lack of inclusion of "working-class" participants. Jon reminded him that there will be opportunities both on-line and at the open houses for all in the community to participate.

QUESTION 1: Do you think the strategies are on the right track?

Bill - Any intelligent, reasonable group will probably come up with good ideas - and these are good - the problem comes in getting these into actions. Actions is what is important.

Lynn - Concerned about how many items are under each title. There seems to be too much focus on political ideals (workforce housing, etc.). She questions the emphasis points (why are there so many under Business Growth but only one under Education?) Also, the City's involvement doesn't show up (i.e. where's focus on improving the planning process that we hear so many complaints about?)

Juli - She agrees with Lynn's points. The bold headings all seem correct but the small details are lacking, particularly in education. There is no reflection of the rapidly changing world (technologically speaking). Education is necessary to meet the 21st Century challenges we are (and

will be) facing. We currently don't know what challenges will be in the future for businesses and don't yet know how to prepare workforce and business leaders for those challenges.

Heidi - This is all familiar thanks to the recent strategy process done at the school. All these processes really help to identify the common ideas of a community. The two vital things for her are education and diversity. Diversity of education, age, culture and race. Without that diversity we will never have a vibrant (growing and strong) community. Mentioned how Portland is succeeding so well at diversity which has strengthened their economy.

Wes - Any of the strategies listed could be given support. He's more interested in the actions and how those come together. Workforce housing is important to a healthy community. The world is changing rapidly and small businesses are in a good position to take advantage of that change.

Dean - City Hall is known for lack of clarity and clarity is an essential element of a self-sustaining economy. It is important that this process creates clarity. We need an economy which will make the city sustainable. Need to provide opportunity for businesses to settle down in their "Field of Dreams" (if you build it they will come.) There should be only one or two clear ideas under each header.

Jim - Agrees with much that was said already. What's missing is acknowledgement of what's "in the way" (what processes are holding businesses back). He agrees with Dean on the importance of growing entrepreneurship. He's not concerned with the number of strategies under each header but is concerned that we get focused, accurate, workable actions out of this process. Believes that there is no public sector without business going out on a limb to create and sustain jobs (i.e. no business = no taxes for government). As for the importance of things like workforce housing, believes that what attracts vitality is services provided - vitality needs good schools, good parks, and good housing.

Dean - Keep in mind that everyone is affected by this process and all need to gain benefit (workers, employers, government, etc.) Need to make sure it's a win-win-win-win-win.

Juli - Small business will drive economy because the nature of small business is to be nimble and flexible to survive. It is important to see this process start. We need to think about the first actions we do because those things must be successful and shown in a positive light for the next steps to have a chance at succeeding. Has heard from many businesses that it's not so much that they City processes are a hindrance but that the City doesn't seem to want to help. Businesses don't feel valued and get discouraged from growing or staying here in Ashland.

Wes - An emphasis on workforce is still needed. Businesses can (and do) succeed without giving help/success to employees i.e. businesses don't have to pay a fair wage to be successful and often are highly successful paying employees poorly.

Jim - But that's not true of all businesses. Some succeed only because they "share the wealth" of their success with their employees.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important economic development strategy the City could take on?

Jim - Strategies #3 and 4 of the Business & Economic Growth or a combo of the two as they are about cultivating and supporting small businesses. He also acknowledged the importance of education.

Dean - As we've shown with the Croman Mill site, creating opportunity is important. How do we create an environment where Ashland is the place to go for business? We will need to significantly change some views of Ashland (lots of PR) to become that place.

Jim - In support of Wes's idea that we need more workforce inclusion, really what we need is more "enlightened" employers who see the value in their employees, their community, the environment, etc. We need to be able to attract those "enlightened" businesses.

Lynn - We have to be careful with how that "enlightenment" idea gets packaged. We don't want to turn businesses away for being overly politically correct.

Bill - Is encouraged by hearing all this talk about co-dependence and inter-dependence. Without business being maintained we can't maintain a community. We need to remember to be welcoming. Developing and identifying sector work is important. To him # 4 under Business and Economic Growth is most important.

Lynn - We are part of a larger region - how do these strategies factor that in? It seems #3 and #4 are the core strategies - everything else seems to fall under those.

Heidi - Diversity of business is lacking. Our current zoning and business sectors seem too limited. Can we possibly do grants for innovation to bring new vibrancy and diversity to the community? Allowing for exceptions to the current regulations might bring people/businesses willing to be innovative.

Wes - Gave some statistics about unemployment in the region as well as across the country. He gave information about some of the economic revitalization projects going on in Detroit and how they are taking advantage of what otherwise might be a problem.

Juli - Her emphasis is on the future, which is why # 3 under Diversity/Inclusion is most important to her. We must do something to bring in family age population. We can't sustain our community without younger demographic. As for an Action for this strategy she'd like to see more internships and opportunities for young people to see how people run and grow businesses. This might give students the idea and opportunity to stay or return to this community. Most students leave unless they are interested in public sector jobs. Need them to see other opportunities. Housing is a barrier to younger folks not just because of cost but also because of lack of family wage jobs.

Jim - Recently had a Youth Success seminar and they found the same things that Juli mentioned. Need to figure out how we can come together to create exposure to business possibilities for students. How do we create/ incubate mindsets and instructions for creating new entrepreneurs?

Jon asked if Jim and Juli would be willing to participate in creating/ implementing an action related to this? Both agreed they would be willing.

Bill - We have to learn to think differently as a community, as employers, as a workforce.

Juli - Recently learned that businesses are looking for employees who ask questions that will further the thinking of the group in order to solve problems. How do we teach those skills?

Wes - Is concerned about what's being done regarding strengthening the living wage ordinance, the sweat-free procurement policy, and use of economic development zones. Also wonders if people (in this process as well as in the community) are educating themselves on things like trade agreements and changes in the world economy.

QUESTION #3: Are there activities or ideas the Council or City should stay away from, that is, NOT do?

Lynn - Stay away from all the things Wes just mentioned. We should be setting up an attractive not regulatory community (carrot vs. stick).

Wes - Should the City drop the minimum wage?

Lynn - I think the City should stay out of excessively regulatory things because they can be deterrents. We need to know if they living wage ordinance is a deterrent. We need to continually ask why would/should businesses choose Ashland?

Juli- Nothing on the list is unimportant, there are just too many.

Jim - Not a thing here is bad but we need to make priorities. He likes that there is diversity of opinion in this group and is glad that we are letting all voices be heard in the process. Should be using the New Brunswick, Canada, process as a model in that they have sector groups (like our focus groups) who meet frequently to assess what are those sector's needs, how the City/ County/ Community can change to meet those needs (changing ordinances, regulations, etc.).

Lynn - Wonders if businesses have the workforce that they need to succeed? Are we training people (providing education) that meets the needs of employers?

Wes - Workforce also needs a voice in any sort of New Brunswick style group - are they getting the housing, transportation, etc. needs met?

Heidi - All these ideas are important, we just need to remember to look at the actions developed through the lens of diversity.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Diana Shippet, Executive Secretary

**MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION
FOCUS GROUP
October 8, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way**

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shippet, Russ Silbiger, Jon Lange.

Participants present: Darrell Boldt, Laurie Sager, Collin Mullane, Bob Kendrick, Jac Nichols, Mark Knox, David Wilkerson

Meeting came to order 3:10 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Russ Silbiger welcomed the group and thanked them for their time. He gave a summary of the origins of the project, read to them the Council goal and explained the two-group process so far.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

Mark: Stated he understands the general goal but seems to remember doing this same process 3 or 4 years ago and that nothing came out of that process. He wants to make sure that this process actually has outcomes and actions. He is worried that the focus groups being segregated puts the process on the wrong track.

Adam explained that the Economic Opportunities Analysis done in 2006-07 had a somewhat different goal and purpose and its process and contents are specifically spelled out in State law, but that elements of that work were used by City Council to establish a baseline of data as well as an outline of a potential implementation plan.

Jon explained that having specialized focus groups actually makes the process work better. Getting like-minded individuals creates an ease in understanding (they are all on the same page) and a more open dialogue. Explained all the other ways in which individuals can participate in the process.

Bob: How did the strategies get developed?

Adam explained that both the Policy Group and TAC group met over the course of several meetings and brainstormed roughly 60 potential strategies and actions with each group separately going through several prioritization and ranking exercises that ultimately resulted in the initial draft strategies in the packet. The intent was to provide the public and the focus groups with a general sense of the Committee's ideas on economic development, but to provide it early enough in the process that input and feedback from the groups can be integrated in to the plan before all of the details have been worked through.

Collin: How involved has the Council been so in this process?

Russ: I've been part of the Policy Committee, and attended all the meetings. Kate Jackson has attended a number of Policy or TAC meetings. Kate, Greg, and the Mayor all attended at least one focus group. We really want to have the Council be observers rather than creators in this process. Yes, Council will make the final decision but we really want the origins of the final product to be from the community. (Better to stay our and let the group do their best work.)

Jac: Is the City or the City Council going to "take over" economic development or are they going to let the Chamber of Commerce do what they do best?

Adam: Part of this process is determining who is most appropriate to handle each action. For many things we've already realized that the City is most likely best suited to be a facilitator, not a lead entity.

QUESTION 1: Are the committees generally on the right track with the Vision and Strategies or are there fundamental problems?

Darrell: There are lots of nebulous terms with no specifics. Overall, they are good but are extremely general.

David: Is anxious to get to the details/actions. Strategy #1 under Infrastructure/Public Services (Assure Adequate land supplies are available...) needs to include housing. We are missing an opportunity for growth and development in housing. Our current public input system is onerous and anti-business. Public input can be negative and angry. Preventing (controlling) that anger lays at the feet of the City Council (example: the Northlight project was killed by public sentiment.)

Mark: Agrees with David. We try hard in this Community to socialize decisions rather than participating and/or adapting to the market. Council leadership has to have the backbone to recognize and stand up to anti-development sentiment and instead move with the market. Despite lots of regulations being met project approvers (Council) still can't approve projects.

Laurie: Agrees with both David and Mark. Paragraph #2 of the Vision Statement isn't ok right now; our economy isn't adaptive and flexible. Developers come in but our approval timeframes are too long so they don't stay. The experience of working through the development/planning process is challenging and even after the unpleasant process they can't get positive results.

Jac: Agrees with the others but the responsibility also lies with the Planning Commission and the Planning Department. They must also have the backbone to approve projects.

Mark: Planning Staff are very capable but they need the support from the leadership. They can't succeed without leadership from Council.

David: Staff is directed to spend equally as much time with anyone preventing a project as they do with the person developing and paying the City for the project. This seems financially un-sound.

Bob: My experience is from working in Southern California on urban renewal/urban development

projects. Projects which typically are supported by the government. In Ashland, though, I'm afraid to even ask a question or get involved. When you come to the City there is a pervasive culture of "you'll never get that done!" (i.e. the last project failed so yours will too.) The City needs to have more of an open house mentality to encourage and support projects. There should not be a battle or fight to develop a project. I don't think this is 100% true of all staff.

Collin: Everyone is sick of banking their head against a wall (Developers, Planning Commission, Council and Staff alike.) We need a community culture shift. We need to look at other communities to come up with new ideas. We need to be able to move quickly to make change, especially in this economy.

Laurie: As Mark said, we need support from our leaders and support from staff. Yeas ago there was more flexibility and then a few individuals created a log-jam in the process. They created fear and so the City eliminated any flexibility. How can the City recover (remove the log-jam) the chaos created by just three individuals?

Collin: We have a social system for policy and a very outspoken community. The Council needs to have representatives from the community formulate policy. Take those policies or directions from the majority and stop being ruled by a small group of naysayers.

Jac: We need a full council of people who support economic development.

David: And who understand what economic development actually means.

Mark: I don't want a Council who is so homogenous. Variety of thought is a good thing. What I want is for Council to not have the power of yes but the power of maybe. I want a Council who questions frequently what government is for (what's their role in a decision?).

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important strategy (on the list currently or not) the City should take on?

Collin: Maintain a quality water system. We need to be bringing options for water from outside.

Bob: #1 under Diversity/ Inclusion (Encourage and support the availability of all needed housing types...). We need to add not just housing but commercial development. We need to encourage housing in the downtown core. Some projects have tried but have not yet been very successful.

Jac: The City needs to provide incentives to attract businesses.

Laurie: #1 under Business & Economic Growth. Housing, water, etc. all fall under that strategy. We need sustainability and flexibility.

Mark: The Civic/ Community Collaboration section brings in all the issues, educates all sides.

David: Agrees with Bob, we need all types and forms of development (commercial, residential, multi-family, mixed-use, etc.) He wonders if the Croman plan can still be successful now that it doesn't have the original housing development. We need to encourage housing as an engine for other

community development (in other words it's the housing which pays for the development of the commercial buildings, the parks, etc...)

Darrell: We need a strong program to develop businesses. Need education. Action: Develop a plan to provide education for skilled workers to bring in new businesses/ grow current businesses. The City needs to support programs in place such as SOU, RCC, etc. and provide information to businesses, workers, students about that education.

Mark: The Community has to recognize "what's hot." They need to understand that to develop land we need to provide housing (housing is currently hot.) Maybe changing building height limits. Let's face it, the Urban Growth Boundary isn't going to change anytime soon, we need to understand and come up with ways to work within the current boundary.

Bob: We need high density building. Number 1 under Infrastructure/ Public Services it says, "assure adequate land supplies are available..." where? Where can you find land without expanding the boundary?

David: How do you make more land?

Bob: You can create a larger downtown district (expand the C1-D zoning).

Mark: Great idea.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities are most important for the City to do?

Bob: Redevelop areas - improve/re-develop urban development.

Mark: Amend the current codes to provide a "menu of opportunities". Example: lower the parking requirements if a developer chooses to build a higher building.

David: Develop an understanding that development is one leg of economic development.

Jon: Who should have that understanding?

David: Start with the Council, that will trickle to the Planning Commission, and then to staff. Even when developers follow the letter of the law regarding regulations their project can still be shot down. That's not ok.

Jac: Develop SDC incentives for developments.

Collin: Maybe SDCs could not be charged upfront but charged as a long-term property tax? It would mean developers can't charge that amount in the housing price upfront (lower housing cost) but the re-payment would be long-term and possibly more stable.

Jac: To go through the current process is expensive and has no guarantees of success. Maybe the fees (or a portion of the fees) can be deferred until the project is 100% approved. Developers won't develop if they are spending lots on upfront costs without any guarantee of success.

David: Council needs a message going out that they support development (message needs to be in writing.) Needs to be some sort of agreement that if my project meets a certain council goal or economic development strategy then my project can get approved without threat of appeal or denial by commissions or the Council. Currently any one person in opposition can kill a project. That's not ok. People who just have an overly loud voice should not be able to influence the Council. Council should support real estate development which provides support for projects containing both housing and commercial development.

Mark: We need a better public and private partnership. People won't even start projects for fear of not succeeding. The City needs to figure out how to take on some of the pain (cost) of project failure. Government participates in projects in other cities but doesn't here.

Jac: And the truth is that if projects don't get built the City gets no tax income from those projects.

Laurie: Maybe development needs to be stronger in the Vision Statement. Likes the idea of the Council having something in the Comp. Plan to "back you up" in agreement on projects. I.e. an agreed upon checklist of issues that a developer must have in a plan for easier approval/support by the PC or Council. We need an agreement on a larger set of goals. Need to match intent with the letter of the law.

Collin: Rules are not created to be prohibitive. Perhaps if a project meets 90% of the larger goals it gets approval (gave example of Earth Advantage Certification). 90% should be good enough.

David: We need recognition that development of the built environment is important. This should be added to the second paragraph of the Vision Statement.

QUESTION #4: Is there something the Council/City are currently doing they should STOP doing? Is there anything in the draft strategies they shouldn't do?

Mark: Stop trying to provide so much diversity in housing. We push so hard to provide affordable housing that it comes out of the bottom line and social engineering. We've changed codes without realizing the long-term consequences - we no longer allow condo conversions which means no more apartment buildings are being built. We manipulate the free market system too much. We should do incentives to build affordable housing rather than make building affordable housing a requirement.

Collin: The City forces planning based on what we want people to want rather than what people are actually asking for. He gave an example of a Colorado city who partnered with the school district to create housing where the teachers have "first pick" in purchasing. Can we do something like that with our teachers?

David: Stop passing knee-jerk reaction ordinances. (i.e. don't make code changes solely based on challenging projects.) Examples give: the Condo conversion ordinance and the "YMCA" big building ordinance.

Jac: When a project meets almost all the requirements it needs support from the Council. Gave the example of Northlight and how a "small setback issue" killed the project unnecessarily. The City

should be a facilitator but not the leader (i.e. no hiring of full-time staff) for Economic Development.

Bob: There was a workforce housing study done and he would like to see it added into the actions of this process.

QUESTION #5: Anything else we haven't covered?

Collin: He loves this town but he hates the "City" and it's disincentives. The City needs to re-build its reputation with it's own people (community) first (i.e. put the bear back outside). An Action would be: Develop a plan to re-friend city business people. Basically the City needs to say sorry.

Mark: Has worked with most people here today and knows that they are all passionate about this community. We keep saying the word, "City" but who is that? It's not the Council, not the Staff - what we really mean is the culture of the community. We ALL want to keep Ashland special.

David: In the draft Vision Statement he would like us change the final paragraph to read, "All of the combined efforts of our community are conducted with an active, open, and *tolerant* civic culture..." We need to find a way to be able to disagree with still be civil to one another in this community.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Diana Shippet, Executive Secretary

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
HOUSING AND DIVERSITY
FOCUS GROUP
October 6, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shippet, Malory Pierce, John Stromberg, Jon Lange.

Participants present: Don Mackin, Regina Ayars, John Wheeler, Jason Elsy.

Meeting came to order 3:04 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mayor Stromberg welcomed the group and thanked them for their time. He explained a little about the origins of this process and what the two groups have been working on to date.

Malory Pierce welcomed the group and gave the group more details on the two group process so far and how the groups came up with the draft strategies.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: Are the committees generally on the right track with the Vision and Strategies or are there fundamental problems?

Jason: Overall he likes the vision statement. Worries that it's long-winded for use on a website or in a pamphlet. Successful mission statements should be readable in a glance.

John: The first paragraph of the Vision Statement is really just preamble. The "nut" of the statement is actually in the second paragraph.

Regina: Disagrees with the Vision Statement sentence, "Its economy is adaptive, resilient, and flexible..." Ashland currently is one-dimensional. All the bolded words in the Vision Statement should be pulled out and turned into one, simpler, mission statement as they are the key words.

Jon: So the Vision Statement doesn't fit Ashland now - how about in 2030? Is this a good reflection of how we want Ashland to be?

Regina: For a possible goal to achieve it's good. A lot of what is in the statement is accurate for today, which is why it is confusing that this is for looking to the future.

Don: All the comments stated so far are relevant. It could be make more concise. And we could add something like, "Our hope for 2030 is..." Then there would be good reasons why some of what we already have today is included in the Vision Statement.

John: I guess the question is, who is the target audience for this Vision Statement? Citizens? Tourists? Other cities? The public is very different than colleges.

Jon: The Vision and the Strategies are mostly going to be used by Council as a guide for making future decisions. It also is for the public to know what we as a community support.

Mallory: The Vision Statement has to be aspirational in order to begin to develop innovative strategies. The two groups who created this made it aspirational on purpose.

John: The Vision Statement now makes more sense knowing that it is a working document to chart a path for decision making. Are all the points (bolded items) in the Vision Statement brought up in the Strategies? Would be nice if, ultimately, on the website all the important words could have hyperlinks to on-going (or upcoming) actions.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important strategy (on the list currently or not) the City should take on?

Don: The idea of economic development for start up, retention and expansion (#3 under Business & Economic Growth). We need to find a way to increase the number of family wage jobs. Those jobs are needed to keep our schools and our community healthy. He can't help but think about the recent news of the loss of production in Ashland of Brammo vehicles. The good side of that situation might be that what is staying (r&d and administration) could bring in the kind of family wage jobs we are looking for. They could be a model to start an executive or research development park. Another thing we need to work on is low-income housing. Most people employed in the city (teachers, nurses, CofA staff) can't afford to live here. Jobs and family are a two-hand balance. The appeal of retirement to our community is happening naturally but how do we diversify the economy and the housing?

Regina: Most of the Business and Economic Development section is important. Without jobs people can't send their kids to school here, can't buy houses here, etc. We need to increase the quality (wages) of the jobs we have here. Also we need to increase the rental unit supply in town. She doesn't agree with #2 under Business and Economic Development section (Expand the tourism season...) because OSF is already working hard and doing well at expanding the season.

John: The Business and Economic Development section is important. It would be great to see more businesses like Superior Windows. They employ a good number of people, they eliminate the need to travel to Medford for building supplies, etc... Affordable housing is, to him, the most important thing to focus on. Having the City help with marketing and partnering on that is important. Once a family owns a home they are more likely to stay here long-term, which means stable numbers of kids in school, and a stable workforce for the community. Housing ties directly into growth - not everyone wants to work in the service industry or at OSF. We need to have other job options. Diversity comes from having other options available. The lack of property (land) available for low income housing is an issue.

Regina: In lieu of affordable homes available to purchase, we need to have viable rental units. Recently read a statistic that 50% of all teachers will be retiring in the next 5 years. How can we

create a supply of housing to keep the next generation of teachers here?

John: We need both ownership and rental. Unfortunately, renters tend to be a migratory population so we need a stable, owned housing market to have a stable population. Especially to keep a stable student population for the 12+ years of schooling.

Jason: The City needs to help in assuring an adequate land supply. Businesses can't come here without land to build - and if they can't find land here they will go to places like White City that do have the land easily available. There isn't more affordable housing currently because there isn't affordable land available. Thinks that #1 under Infrastructure/ Public Services (Assure adequate land supplies...) should be moved under the Business and Economic Growth category.

Don: When bringing in a new business to an area, an owner or developer needs predictability. Land already set aside and zoned properly eliminates a great deal of the uncertainty for a project. Also, our current 180 day approval process is far too long for being competitive with other communities in the Rogue Valley. A process that is less subjective than ours current process is important for investors and entrepreneurs. They need clarity, predictability and speed.

John: There are regulatory barriers which could prevent businesses from coming or growing here.

Don: I don't know if that's true or not, but it is the perception of our community. Maybe there actually need to be narrower parameters in order for there to be greater clarity. An action connected to that might be make planning requirements clear, predictable and less subjective.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities are most important for the City to do?

Jason: Should we expand the current growth boundary/city limits? What are the implications of that? We need to look at current lands and see if the zoning is appropriate and if the approval for projects can be streamlined. Based on recent experience he knows that is can be difficult to determine what's right under our municipal code and apply it correctly. We should be leading like Beaverton currently is - they waived certain fees just to attract businesses away from Portland and made their process far easier than Portland's process and it worked. We should have an inventory of lands and get them re-zoned to what we actually want to see built on that land.

John: Echoes what Jason said about zoning and streamlining. Often there is so much discussion that it goes to the point of paralysis. In the boom economy times it took a long time to get projects approved because there were too many projects going through the process. Now it takes a long time to get through the process because there isn't enough staff in Community Development. An Action might be streamline planning process to speed up approvals. Developers waste money every day that things aren't approved. If, for example, RVCDC had been able to get through the process faster they would have been able to build up to 10 more units in the last few years. On the plus side, he does appreciate that the City has done things like SDC fee waivers, re-zoning areas to higher-density, etc.

Adam: So, is it the rules/standards/requirements that are the problem or the process itself that is the problem?

John: The process. He doesn't mind the requirements. If there could be just one staff member who

would take ownership of each project and shuffle it through the process rather than let the plans lay un-touched on someone's desk for weeks that would help greatly. Developers shouldn't have to harass the department to get their plans moved through the process.

Regina: We've had some good ideas recently from the Housing Commission that the City should support. Things like Co-housing - there is only one in town and it was a challenge to get through the process but now the city should be able to see its success. How can the City help in the future to expedite ideas never seen before like co-housing? Also, the Housing Commission's housing trust fund - the City should help with finding new sources of revenue for that fund. Unfortunately, there are too many single family homes being built on multi-family zoned lots. The City needs to identify all the places they truly want multi-family units and make sure that single family homes are not built there to take away that multi-family space. We also need to look again at vertical housing. We've never really made any in-roads on that idea. We should have a rental registry to help track supply and need. We should partner with SOU to help with providing student housing. There should be waivers on density bonuses for affordable housing.

Don: Thinks the adequate land issue is very important. If we have a target demographic we want to bring into (or expand existing) the city it would be easy to identify all the vacant property and see if we have comparable zoning to accommodate that demographic. Re-zoning a property is the biggest time barrier to developing a property. It would be great to have those properties properly pre-zoned to speed up the development process.

QUESTION #4: Are there any actions or activities the City should stay away from?

John: While the Food & Beverage Tax is going to fund something important it has provided a perception in the Rogue Valley that no one should go to Ashland. We shouldn't add any other taxes which would continue or advance that perception. The rest of the valley doesn't feel welcome in Ashland so we need to do whatever we can to tie ourselves into the rest of the valley. A transportation hub would be good - get easier, more frequent, longer running public transportation into and out of Ashland. Maybe it would help the un-welcome perception that if a patron shows that they are locals they don't have to pay the food tax? We should be wanting people throughout the valley to be here year-round, weekly. We don't want the rest of the valley to be seen strictly as tourist and not as part of the larger community.

Regina: Can't think of anything we should stay away from. All the strategies listed look reasonable.

Don: In Ashland's attempt to be fully sustainable they have created an image in the rest of the valley of a desire to be exclusionary. Ashland is not perceived as a regional partner. We need to prevent that isolationist image by being active participants in opportunities in the County (things like SOREDI, RPS, etc.) Years ago many high tech businesses came into Ashland due to AFN. Then Medford created an enterprise zone and many moved there. Why didn't (don't) we create a zone like that in Ashland?

Adam: Responded that various discussions of the merits and benefits of an enterprise zone for Ashland have been discussed in the past, as recently as 2008. In weighing the pro's and con's of enterprise zones, there were statements made that questioned whether or not the 3-5 years of property tax waivers would be the driving decision making force for businesses locating in Ashland or elsewhere in the Rogue Valley. Additionally, the City has been discussing the potential for an urban

renewal district that could be in the same location as potential enterprise zones which could hamper the success of the urban renewal potentially.

Don: Maybe an action could be "Evaluate the use of enterprise zones as a tool for business expansion and retention." Also, he would make number 1 under Civic and Community Collaboration stronger (Increase partnerships/involvement with local and regional partners...), we need those partnerships to change perceptions of Ashland. We need to not do anything which maintains or strengths any negative perceptions of Ashland.

John: All the strategies on the list are a great set of goals to work towards.

QUESTION #5: Are there any activities the city is doing/working on now that should be expanded?

Don: The relationship with SOREDI.

John: Accepting and using CDBG monies. He would love to see that increased. Waivers of SDC fees are hugely important to building affordable housing. Its a nice payoff, the City forgoes a small amount of fees (\$12,000) but gets a good long-term investment of a stable community (kids in school, workers in the community, etc...) The CDBG funds should be used exclusively for land acquisition because that path provides a greater bang for the buck (land acquisition doesn't trigger additional Federal requirements but development does.)

QUESTION #6: Any big picture or details we haven't already gone over?

Regina: Would like to see the City be more pedestrian friendly and not so auto focused. Car free or pedestrian only areas could be valuable tourist attractions (she does recognize this idea can have many challenges from the business community.) The City needs to work on helping develop the Northlight property - it's currently an eyesore.

John: We should annex and buy property just to the north of the City (near exit 19) and then subdivide and sell. Yes, it would expand the current city limits but it would give more opportunities for business expansion and help us have more control over the area for maintaining quality of life in Ashland. There should be no growth just for the sake of growth. We need to have specific targeted goals and don't lose what's good about Ashland.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Diana Shiplet, Executive Secretary

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SUSTAINABILITY
FOCUS GROUP
October 5, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shiplet, Ric Holt, John Stromberg, Jon Lange.
Participants present: Tracy Harding, Torry Biles, Lynn Blanche, John Leme, Julie Norman, Stephanie Tidwell, Melanie Midlin, Heidi Dawn, Leslie Adams, John Alexander, Larry Blake.

Meeting came to order 5:04 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mayor Stromberg welcomed the group and thanked them for their time. He explained a little about the origins of this process and what the two groups have been working on to date.

Ric Holt welcomed the group and explained how important this process is. He gave the group more details on the process so far and how the groups came up with the draft strategies. He asked that the group really give their honest, open opinions on these drafts. He gave the group a little information regarding how he defines sustainability.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: What are your general reactions to the Vision Statement and the Draft Strategies - are they generally on the right track and what's the single most important strategy?

John A: The header, "Business and Economic Growth" really should be changed to "Business and Economic Development" - we don't necessarily want all the negative things which come with unchecked growth. The "Civic and Community Collaboration" section is what's most important although there seem to be some partnerships missing. In the "Infrastructure" section there needs to be more reference to a local economy.

Tracy: The need for adequate agricultural lands is also missing from the Infrastructure section.

Torry: Infrastructure is also missing the need for more open spaces and parks. We need more bikeways, pathways, walking routes to connect neighborhoods. Land use planning in the city needs to focus more on being accessible and people being able to move freely thru neighborhoods without fences. We need also to connect neighborhoods to the trails. Also, we need to make sure government has a local focus - they need to us local businesses as much as possible.

Lynn: Would like to see how sustainability is defined by the City. In this draft there are very traditional economic development words. She isn't seeing a collaboration focus on all levels,

including civic, community, government, education, non-profits. Tourism is not well defined - there seems to be too much focus on only art and culture. Where is Eco-, Geo-, Edu- tourism? Tourism needs to be expanded to include all those (and more) possibilities.

John L: This draft feels too traditional and there is not enough focus on green. He talked about the joint management ideas from Ric's book. The City should not focus on the small details of the economy but should point to or facilitate other groups as good examples. How do you manage interdependence of all parts of the economy?

Julie: Under the strategy, "Develop a set of target industry clusters/sectors and enhance..." need to add "specifically sectors which address increased energy costs." Under the Infrastructure section the last two strategies could benefit from the phrase, "with rapid investment in conservation and reduction in greenhouse gases."

Stephanie: Doesn't see enough green in the draft strategies or vision. She sees lots of local references but no environmental references. Like John A, she doesn't like the word 'growth.' This should all be about making the city resilient, not about growing too fast. There are no ethical environmentally sustainable target sectors. We need to set ecological values. She doesn't understand the strategy, "Establish and adopt a plan to provide demographic sustainability..." because that seems like a nice goal, but doesn't actually seem realistic. Under the section Infrastructure/Public Services we can do better than just maintain and expand. We need to have total energy independence. We need to look beyond the City limits and work to protect our forests, rivers, etc. all those things which give us our high quality of life.

Melanie: This draft is pretty conventional and business as usual. A lot of these things are already happening in the city so this is just a plan that tells us we're already doing the right thing. Running an economy based on growth won't work much longer. In the past the housing market growth is what fed the economy, now that this has slowed we need to determine if that's where we want to continue to focus or if we want to come up with a new model. What does "new jobs" really mean to us? If we want more people moving here and more housing built we are focusing on a traditional model. We don't want to grow Ashland by thousands of people. We need an alternate growth of economy that's more sustainable. She doesn't see a strategy for local import substitution. We should be working towards no supplies, banking, etc. coming from outside the area.

Heidi: Most omissions have been covered by the rest of the group. She would like to see agriculture mentioned in the Vision Statement. The strategy, "Continue to improve and develop quality local transportation systems to ensure..." needs to be stronger and more radical.

Leslie: Agrees with what others have said. The Vision Statement has no recognition of anything outside the city limits (no connection to the region), there is no reference to our rivers, forests, rafting, etc. There is not enough green or mention of how we can be a leader in decreasing use of fossil fuels. What's the definition of sustainability? To her personally Diversity, Inclusion and Housing are most important. How many students (SOU or High School) aren't able to stay in the area due to lack of jobs or affordable housing. She's grateful to have found a good job in the area but wonders if she will ever be able to afford to buy a home here. In the Infrastructure section the word "maintain" is not good -- our current wastewater plant isn't environmentally sound so why would we want that just "maintained"?

Larry: Is interested in the discussion others have had about the word growth versus development. Development can be as equally loaded a word to some as growth. We need a sustainable community, one not spread out. We need to support transit oriented development. He talked about the Littleton, Colorado example of creating a plan which puts them ahead of the curve.

John L: The idea of government trying to pick winning industries is misguided. He believes in a market economy for success or failure of businesses. It is important for government to insist on certain factors or guidelines for industries like environmental sustainability.

John A: Maybe rather than talking about targeted clusters, maybe we should be highlighting resources for better connections (gave example of OSF and Kokopelli having joint travel packages.) We need to find the root problems with environmental issues and understand a good concept of where to target energy use in order to save energy overall.

Lynn: It's an environmental health / environmental protection balance. We need to save certain things for use and save others for beauty.

Stephanie: Should we change the header of "Business & Economic Growth" to "Business & Economic Resiliency"? Resiliency works to prevent a boom and bust economy.

John L: Quality of life is more important than more money. We need some reflection of the human capital (a measure of quality of life.)

QUESTION #2: What are some specific actions related to the strategies?

John A: Identify success stories (businesses) and use those as examples/focus/standards for others. The current City granting program should continue to look for innovation. (Examples of innovation: the CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), and the Food Bank Project) If we can understand what made those successful and figure out how to measure their outcomes of success we can use as examples for others to create success.

Stephanie: In the infrastructure section an action would be to reduce waste or increase local recycling programs. Other actions we could take on include: Increase incentives for energy efficiency (both residential and business), Commit to more local sourcing, Increase use of renewables (solar power), Commit to protect lands around us, Preferential contracting for local businesses (she's not 100% sure this is a great idea but should be considered).

Jon asked how those actions might help the economy.

Stephanie: Increased efficiency equals a decrease in cost of utilities for businesses and residents, which means more money in their pockets can go into the economy. Protecting and highlighting our local natural resources increases tourism. Sometimes it's not all about economics - sometimes actions are just the right thing to do.

Melanie: Doing things which make energy efficient does increase the economy, it creates jobs for those who install those efficiencies, those who develop them, those who maintain them.

Leslie: It would be great if SOU was a leader in energy efficiency. She'd like to see the SOU campus

garden produce food for the cafeteria, a stronger bike program, etc. There is huge potential for SOU to be on the cutting edge.

Ric: I think they should use and encourage endowments which focus on sustainability.

Tracy: We need to purchase locally. Municipalities need to make 3 attempts to purchase locally, then 3 regionally, then 3 in-state before going national or internationally.

Melanie: We need to understand what supplies/suppliers we have and what's needed and then figure out how to target those missing pieces to come here.

Julie: We need to figure out youth employment solutions. How do we keep students here? How do we enable them to live and work in the community?

Lynn: "Support/facilitate a system or program to increase access to private investment capital..." - don't we already have that in Medford? How can we collaborate with those things already in place rather than re-invent the wheel?

Ric: We should use existing non-profits, find the holes or gaps left by those non-profits and help to fill in the holes.

Torry: Agrees that SOU needs to be proactive in the local economy. There need to be more joint ventures/training tied into bringing students/graduates into the business community. A long term commitment is needed. SOU could be the engine for sectors in the economy to grow if they are more integrated with the community.

John A: Have we talked about local currency? We should develop a local currency. There should be a non-interest based local economy.

Torry: It would be as simple as having a local rewards card for lower cost purchasing in local businesses.

Melanie: Wanted to make a plug for a stronger transit element. There should be greater public transit, particularly free transit. Free transit has been shown to have greater use. Good public transit options have more social equity than affordable housing does.

Larry: Entrepreneurs in Ashland seem to develop products but then move to Asia for production or they get sold to a corporation back east. There doesn't seem to be an nurturing of long-term development for entrepreneurs.

QUESTION #3: Are there any actions or strategies which the City or the City Council should stay away from?

Leslie: It's good that Ashland is the only municipality participating in the RPS process who chose to stay within their current boundaries.

Torry: Maybe the action phrase for that is do not expand beyond current city boundaries.

Lynn: Don't be afraid to reach or to be extreme.

Stephanie: Don't think about everything only in terms of Economic Development - focus also on natural resources (it's why most of us live here.) Too much planning focuses on the bottom line rather than things like quality of life, clean water, etc.

John A: We need other happiness measures. How do we determine when growth should end? What's the limit on how much we want SOU to grow (i.e. when is the growth harmful rather than helpful)? We need to figure out how to identify the growth cap.

Melanie: Don't make plans based on unlimited growth.

Lynn: Don't limit inclusion of green and don't miss opportunities to focus on green.

QUESTION #4: Anything else you would like to mention?

Melanie: Don't try to recruit big business from the outside.

Torry: Don't go forward with out first creating metrics on non-monetary growth (i.e. determine what we want/value in quality of life), remember to focus on the less subjective measurements.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Diana Shippet, Executive Secretary

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
VENTURE CAPITAL/INVESTMENT
FOCUS GROUP
October 4, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Jon Lange, John Fields

Participants present: Bill Thorndike, Jeff Monosoff, Meiwen Richards, Steve Vincent

Meeting came to order 10:02 a.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

John Fields welcomed the group and thanked them for their time. He gave a summary of the origins of the project, his involvement as committee member, explained the two-group process so far and his hopes of a focused, defined strategy that is actually executable.

Adam Hanks thanked the group for their time and gave an overview of how the draft strategies and vision statement were created.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: Are the committees generally on the right track with the Vision and Strategies or are there fundamental problems?

Bill: Thinks that they may be missing the recognition of the balance between the uses of land that diverse economic activities require and spoke of land use "toleration" with the ultimate best uses able to pay for overall City services. Land uses must be balanced to make economic financial reality

Jeff: The vision statement has too many items included which dilutes the individual elements and reads to him as a normal product of political process and not a productive way to make things happen. There needs to be a process "in-between" to make actions happen

Meiwen: Wonders what is achievable and realistic when looking at the draft strategies list and feels that the transportation and education elements are important

Steve: Feels the overall scope of the vision and strategies seem almost unmanageable and difficult to execute. Wonders what the indicators are to say that there is something that needs attention/work on, such as local data similar to previous data from RV Civic League and Oregon Progress Board. Also seems some potential inconsistencies between the strategies.

Bill: Commented that he sees two major impacts to Ashland in the next three years (beyond tourism); State funding for SOU and the medical sector and its effect on Ashland Community Hospital. For ACH, what game will they be able to play, i.e. remain independent, be purchased, etc.

Ashland needs to ask itself “What is unique about us?” and work to those strengths. Also “Can we get regional value with existing levels of coordination/involvement. The investments (time, dollars) are not keeping pace with the valley.

Steve: What about a model similar to SOREDI with Grants Pass having a SOREDI staffed satellite office with some City participation in funding the position to provide SOREDI level resources, but locally focused and connected.

Jeff: The Planning Dept needs to be more customer friendly and assist their customers/clients in getting what they want compared to current wall of frustration.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important strategy (on the list currently or not) the City should take on?

Steve: Land availability is the most important issue

Bill: Need to look at the numbers/stats. What is our capacity to serve the poor, i.e. what is the cost of poverty to our communities. Can everyone shoulder that cost. We need to look at the advantages/disadvantages of our local labor pool. Continuity, the ability for long term business sustainability and stability. That can be done in part by facilitating long term relationships for retention and growth of our existing businesses. Access to some sort of reinvestment pool of private equity funding and co-investment opportunities

Jeff: Instead of City budget funding, a reduction in permitting/development fees should be considered, possibly coupled with an establishment of criteria for eligibility for fee reduction or waiver

Steve: Land inventory is the most critical. City could be more involved in the acquisition of light industrial land. Douglas County has a private investment board that assists the City in acquiring and having land available for development (shovel ready) City could also assist with “spec” building possibly some type of incubator project to develop or attract new businesses. Commercial equivalent of a “model home”, i.e. quick move in and start ability.

Bill: City could consider an industrial lands task force to evaluate industrial land availability as the community grows/changes. Also some sort of process to ensure the possibility for business expansion on existing or adjacent parcels to reduce/mitigate the need for businesses to leave the area to grow.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities are most important for the City to do?

Steve: Mentioned that the City may want to look at the economic gardening concept of City economic development that is being implemented in the City of Beaverton. Also a formal Business Retention and Expansion program could be implemented. Also suggested the possibility of a Small Business Development Center satellite office in Ashland (SOU?). Along the same lines, a satellite office for the Oregon Wine Institute through Umpqua Community College may be a good fit. Another smaller but logical cost saving and collaboration project could be the sharing of facilities between SOU and the School District, particularly the football fields.

Jeff: Feels that expansion beyond the current peak summer months is essential for Ashland. Events such as the Halloween parade and other off-season events could be created, developed and expanded. Also suggests that the City, under the Infrastructure strategies, reconsider the TAP intertie as both a rates cost reduction for the business community and an assurance of adequate water supply.

Bill: The City could expand their efforts in communications. Actions could include an audit of existing communication process and tools, such as the City website, etc to increase information available to businesses and residents. Information is valuable and sometimes difficult to access.

Jeff: Commented that the near term future of the local economy is not good, cited downsizing of operations by many businesses/institutions due to negative growth. Mostly out of local control.

QUESTION #4: Are there any actions or activities the City should stay away from?

Steve: The City should not try to do economic development (or many other things) on its own. The City needs to collaborate with others in town and in the region.

Meiwen: The City and community need to look at combining resources locally and regionally. The wine industry is a good, positive example.

Bill: Should stay away from doing things that don't assist in generating and maintaining local money or projects/programs that don't pencil on a cost/benefit analysis.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Adam Hanks, Project Manager

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SPECIALTY MANUFACTURING
FOCUS GROUP
October 4, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Jon Lange, Kate Jackson, Annie Hoy
Participants present: Nancy Morgan, Jon Bauer, Diane Paulsen, Doug Massey, Susan Powell
Meeting came to order 3:05 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Annie Hoy welcomed the group and thanked them for their time. She gave a summary of the origins of the project, his involvement as committee member, explained the two-group process so far and voiced her enthusiasm for the process and the eventual outcome.

Adam Hanks thanked the group for their time and gave an overview of how the draft strategies and vision statement were created.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: Are the committees generally on the right track with the Vision and Strategies or are there fundamental problems?

Doug: Said that everything looked ok, but gave an example of Dagoba Chocolate's potential expansion that was stopped with significant influence for the decision due to the City's requirement for a new transformer that would serve the project as well as others in the area. He felt that the City needs to be more equitable and aware of how their services and costs impact the potential for new and existing businesses to be successful and grow.

Jon: Felt that the information provided to the group was good but that he doesn't have the background or overall context to really answer that question.

Nancy: Feels that it is a great start and thinks that the proposed strategies seem to cover most of her issues.

Diane: The vision and strategies may be almost too lofty and are too much to practically accomplish. Voiced an overall sentiment that the City often "gets in the way" of business expansion and has been frustrated with the process of siting a new facility for her business.

Jon: Pointed out that Ashland is competing for private sector jobs with other communities like Medford and White City and what they are comparing for the most part is cost of space/land and the available labor force. Because those areas usually have the advantage, businesses locate in Ashland

usually because they want to be here despite the comparative advantages of the other areas of the valley.

Susan: Feels the City should take some efforts to mitigate the approval process issues that it has. Time is critical to businesses and delays cost money. An idea is to try and make more information available up front rather than as the application process slowly moves forward.

Diane: There is an attitude that people should “just feel lucky they get to live in Ashland” and we need to take on the challenge and find a way to level the playing field so more people can be successful here.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important strategy (on the list currently or not) the City should take on?

Susan: The diversity topic of encouraging and providing all needed housing types. Many of their employees don't live in Ashland because the housing options in their price range are too small. Many employees, either by need or cultural background, live in a multi-generational family which requires larger houses/units.

Nancy: Agreed that housing is a big issue. She also felt that targeted education/workforce developments efforts would be very beneficial to her company and the business community, for both the new labor group entering the market and for the existing, employed labor pool, but doesn't think that it is the City's task to carry out.

Jon: Feels that the Business & Economic Growth section has the most important elements, particularly to support/facilitate and system or program for ongoing and coordinated efforts to assist and encourage local business start-up, retention and expansion. Would like to see more proactive role by making start-up/expansion process information more readily available and understandable so people know what they are getting into at the start.

Diane: Agrees with Jon and thinks that business start-up tools and assistance is a key strategy.

Nancy: Sees a prime City role in economic development in the coordination of resources/information

Jon: Added that Ashland is still a small community and keeping the smaller scale and proportion is important, but the business frustrations need to be listened to and processes adjusted based on that input and cited the Northlight project as an example. He feels that the community balance is not there right now and that the City should be more responsive to the business community and cited the Croman Mill Master Plan as an example of not listening on the topic of the high cost of entry for construction/development created by the plan.

Susan: Added that the benchmarks created result in elitist type development and leaves many potentially productive businesses that could be an asset to the community out of the picture.

Doug: The City could assist the business community by helping prepare businesses for

reconfiguration and redevelopment by helping them understand the requirements for changing uses of a building and ways to deal with things like updating old buildings for ADA, earthquake, other new standards.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities are most important for the City to do?

Susan: The City could relook at their zoning designations to make it easier for larger group type housing and a mixture of housing opportunities of SFR and MFR types to help encourage the variety of housing types and prices available to the community. Additionally, the City should work on streamlining and simplifying the permit process and could implement something like a team/stakeholder meetings to get everyone together at one time and work through the issues rather than submitting and stepping through each step independently which takes much too long and can create an endless loop as each Dept enforces their particular rules.

Diane: The City needs to look at their land supply issues and more closely review the available lands for limitations so there is a more accurate understanding of what can actually be developed on the available lands in Ashland. She also noted that she does not think there is an attitude in the business community that expects the City to solve its problems/issues. When everything is boiled down, every business has challenges with access to capital.

Jon: Would like the City to look at one of their core functions, which he thinks is information. The City can and should be a primary source of information for the business community and not necessarily be involved with actively working on or “solving” many of the particular issues within the economy.

Susan: The City should work on collaboration with other non-profits for grant administration and could function as a sort of clearinghouse.

QUESTION #4: Are there any actions or activities the City should stay away from?

Doug: Anything that creates additional roadblocks. The City should stay in a role of facilitation and assistance

Diane: Anything that disrupts or creates an imbalance between the needs of business and the community. Business needs to match or compliment the standards of the community as well. It is all about balance.

Nancy: The City should not duplicate services or programs that are being done by others within the community/region Overall she feels that the community and the City has been supportive of her business efforts and she feels that she had direct access to information and staff that she couldn't have in other communities

Susan: People are connected to Ashland in their business branding. Changing the “brand” would not be good.

Jon: Added that he thinks that many businesses are located here because of that branding and are banking on that Ashland branding for some of their success.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Adam Hanks, Project Manager

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
HEALTHCARE/ ELDER CARE
FOCUS GROUP
September 23, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shiplet, Greg Lemhouse, John Stromberg, Pam Hammond, Jon Lange.

Participants present: Don Mackin, Laurie Schaaf, Harvey Ray, Chris Dodson, Connie Saldaña.

Meeting came to order 10:00 a.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mayor Stromberg welcomed the group and thanked them for their time.

Greg Lemhouse explained how this project got started and a little of the process so far. He expressed appreciation for the talents of the participants. He told the group how he believes we need to work to diversify the economic base, support local business, and do our best to expand the number of family wage jobs. Let the group know that anything and everything is on the table for consideration.

Pam Hammond gave information on the work done so far by the Policy and Technical Advisory Committees. She listed the various focus groups, and gave information about the job of each committee in this process and their assistance in clarifying this first draft of the strategies.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: Do you think the strategies are on the right track?

Harvey - Both the Vision Statement and the Strategies seems to be on point. The bottom line is the order and how you prioritize in order to start/create actions. We need to have recognition of where we have strengths already and how to increase those strengths and then find the weaknesses which need attention.

Laurie - Sees how they all relate to how they do business at the YMCA but she doesn't yet know if anything is missing.

Chris - The strategies look good. She agrees with Harvey on the need for focus points. These strategies need to be fluid in order to deal with the unexpected. In terms of dealing with seniors, they are the fastest growing demographic in Ashland and we need to make sure their needs are being met. Lack of transportation (or easy access to transportation) comes quickly to mind when thinking about missing needs of seniors.

Don - All the strategies are very broad and general and optimistic. There seems to be lots of room to

arrive at specifics. It's very hard to challenge the "warm and fuzzy" feeling you get from these strategies. It is important as we start to get into specifics that we as a community are willing to maintain our vitality and be willing partners throughout the valley. Unfortunately, Ashland has an image of isolation, which might actually be a challenge when it comes to recruiting businesses and employees. Often people work here but live elsewhere and we need to understand why. Ownership in elder care facilities have lots of turnover and many challenges regarding qualified staffing - we need to be responsive as to the cause of this.

Harvey - One piece of concern is the issue of elder care. We need to better recognize the impact of that growing demographic and the reimbursement system related to their care. He things there is potential for an elder care facility owners association which would be part of on-going dialogue with/ supported by the City.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important economic development strategy the City could take on?

Don - The idea of developing a targeted industry (#4 under Business & Economic Growth). This could be a vehicle to increase elder care. For example, under the hospital umbrella hospice is very successful and the Federal funding is fairly adequate. However, respite care has no funding (and no real umbrella group) and so is non-existent. Can this be supported by a cluster/sector? People here need greater assurance as to what care will be available in the future. We need to keep control local rather than let "big business" take over all our care facilities.

Chris - The entire Civic/ Community Collaboration section is important. Most else can, in some way, fall under that umbrella. This keeps government at the partnership level and avoids the City trying to duplicate serves already provided. The City should refer or assist (be coordinator) not owner.

Laurie - The Business & Economic Growth section is very important for the YMCA. Most YMCA funding comes from local businesses and local community members. From a healthcare/ elder care side Diversity/Inclusion is important. We need those frequently lower paying jobs which are necessary for care and support. In order to have those workers we need to make sure they are able to live here.

Connie - Diversity/Inclusion is most important. Housing options are key to keeping necessary lower income caregivers working in Ashland. Their support might also create more opportunities for an in-home care business sector. There is frequently less profit in that sort of area, which means less entrepreneurial support, but it is still important to the community (aging population).

Harvey - Civic/Community Collaboration is most important. A good example of a currently working partnership is the hospital. We need to work together on how the hospital will successfully support the growing elder population. We also need businesses and government to work on sustainable needs of the community such as utilities (refer to #3 under Infrastructure.) The hospital will need a better balance of patients. There seems to be an underlying issue related to housing. The hospital needs patients who can pay bills without depending on Medicare or charity care. We need to create jobs to bring/keep those patients into the area.

Jon - Why else might demographic balance be important?

Harvey - A broad, well educated workforce is needed for community balance. If we don't provide what's needed here there are services and systems just down the road who would be willing to do it. Losing community/patients/workforce to other parts of the valley will take away from the current quality of life.

Connie - Sees no disparity between good quality of life and good economic development.

Chris - Balance in a community gives an overall better quality of life. Studies have been done on an international scale, and those parts of the world who score highest on quality of life are always those with multi-generations (intergenerational) working and living together.

Harvey - We need a wide variety of services and programs, everything from housing variety to social programs.

Jon - In an action statement, how can the City do this?

Harvey - Encourage coordination of the continuum and support of health care (birth to death). See care as a continuum. As people move through life they move through healthcare needs. We need to ensure and support those functions already in place.

Connie - the State has supported Adult foster homes, how does the City have a role in supporting those?

Harvey - The City needs to find institutions or businesses who have the ability to oversee adult foster programs and support them.

Chris - There are groups already in place who are working on supporting them.

Don - Maybe we need the Florence, Oregon "front desk" (conciierge) concept. People (seniors?) call in for assistance with finding a plumber or cleaner or reliable taxi company and the "front desk" gives the contact info for a pre-vetted person/group who can assist. Perhaps we can do a "food-coop" style service, where the group goes and buys in bulk for lower costs to the senior participants.

Chris - Ashland at Home is already developing something like that.

Harvey - Two care facilities need coordination to use what they have (vans). There should be an umbrella group to ensure we're using all the resources at our disposal.

Connie - the National Aging and Disability Resource Center is working on a similar project, one not limited to lower income participants.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities may work with the strategies (or your most important strategy)?

Don asked a clarification question about Brammo and today's newspaper article. Adam talked about how what Brammo is keeping here (research & development, management, etc...) matches quite well with our SWOT analysis of our strengths (aka the news isn't bad).

Harvey - Provide a quality utility system. The City needs to address where weaknesses (such as water) are and improve those services. We need to look at environmental viability, particularly when encouraging businesses to grow and increases in in-fill. We can't do or sustain the rest without quality infrastructure in place.

Don - There is an issue with water redundancy. We have no back-up system in place. No redundancy is scary.

Chris - Transportation issues span all socio-economic levels. We need good transportation for the environment, we need it to get people to the shops to support business, we need it to get people to the hospital for care.

Connie - Could the City Senior Center coordinate use of vans or other means to get seniors to the hospital or doctors offices?

There was a short discussion about liability issues.

QUESTION #4: Anything the City should stay away from?

Laurie - Where organizations already exist, support rather than try to duplicate.

Don - If the City maintained inventory list of services/organizations then people could have one place to go. This might be a useful recruitment tool city-wide.

Chris - The Chamber of Commerce/VOCB might be a better place to take on that role.

Harvey - It's not just about having a list, the list must be reviewed frequently. We must find weaknesses or gaps in the list and find way to fill those gaps.

Question #5: Anything we've missed today/ any last thoughts?

Harvey - Owners association, we (community wide) need to support/recognize these groups. How do you take the good work at Skylark (everyone buys into the community) and extrapolate that to the broader community (so we all buy)?

Jon - Harvey, would you be willing to work with the City to figure that out?

Harvey - Yes, always willing to give ideas, thoughts, critiques.

Chris - If you go the route of a master list of resources you need to have someone be consistent in the overseeing.

Meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

Diana Shiplet, Executive Secretary

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOCUS GROUP
September 22, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shippet, John Stromberg, Jon Lange.
Participants present: Ric Holt, Mark Marchetti, Jim Klein, Jim Fong, Ron Fox, John Rinaldi, Mallory Pierce, Wendy Siporen

Meeting came to order 3:05 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mayor Stromberg welcomed the group and reminded the group of the original City Council goal which started the process. He thanked them for their time.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

Jim Teece asked if we were here because someone was unhappy with the strategies in their current form.

Ric explained that he had sent an e-mail to the effect that he was uncomfortable with some things in the Vision Statement not being reflected in the strategies.

Adam explained that it was always planned for this focus group to occur. We wanted to make sure that members of the Policy and TAC groups (who've been mostly working separately) got a chance to get together and talk about the strategies and maybe explain better how each side developed their ideas.

QUESTION 1: Do you think the strategies are on the right track?

Ron - Processes like this never have end-products which come out in a neat bundle but the big picture is here and there is room for creating the actions and specifics.

Jim T - Feels like they are cloudy. Certain things we started with have been removed. Overall, though he doesn't see things in these strategies which would *prevent* economic growth. What's missing is the balance of diversification of the economic base (i.e. we can survive on just tourism). We need to use/invest in technology. He hopes the strategies aren't just bullet points on a piece of paper. As much as we invest in tourism we need to equally invest in other types of businesses.

John - There is good stuff here to peak curiosity and encourage support. There could be greater emphasis regarding what the City can do (i.e. more actions related to the City being business friendly.)

Mark - They are fine, and mostly reflective of what we've talked about. He wonders if some strategies are really actions related to other strategies. He agrees with John that clarity of the City's role is missing. However, he's not yet sure what the City's role actually should be.

Wendy - A lot of what was talked about didn't end up in these strategies. She echoes the need for diversification of the economic base. We are currently over dependant on tourism -- what can be done to lessen that dependence? How can we support use of local businesses/goods which will work to create new jobs and possibly entirely new businesses? Would like to see an analysis of what the community is importing (goods, services, finances, etc.) What types of investments whether public or private or a combo of the two should this plan support or encourage?

Mallory - Agrees with Jim T. that there is nothing here preventing growth. She finds the diversity and inclusion section odd. Wonders if we will lose the support for any one specific area because there are too many ideas mashed together. The demographics of the US are changing rapidly. Ashland may be the last place to notice it, which is unfortunate. We aren't a particularly welcoming community -- how do we change that? She worries that these incredibly loaded issues won't be considered all that loaded in the other focus groups.

Jim K - Overall these strategies are good reflections of the Vision Statement. There isn't any real focus on sustainability. It's true the demographics are changing rapidly (SOU has a rapidly increasing Hispanic population, for example). How do we deal with the inclusion needed for those new demographics (not to mention the increase in international students)?

Ric - Sustainability is finding whatever the general community values and making sure it is able to continue for future generations. These values need constant evaluation and there needs to be an effective re-evaluation mechanism. He has a distinction between economic growth and economic development in that growth is related to income but development is related to the overall standard of living. Development can include all the other aspects (housing, diversity, etc.) Rather than focusing on new businesses we need to focus on supporting local entrepreneurs. Ric likes that much of that support seems to be reflected in the current business/growth strategies. We need to look at all varieties of capital investments including private, public, social, education, etc. and connect those with the vision. Ric doesn't agree with the second strategy under diversity/inclusion because it needs to be better defined and expanded. He acknowledged that we need to support Hispanic business development more. Doesn't see sustainability reflected much in these and there is no reflection of the need for the sustainability of our quality of life.

Jim F - Was able to participate in the first focus group (Workforce Development) and found that group to be very engaging. He informed the group that no one in that group was 100% attached to any of the strategies. He feels that overall they need to be more focused but that they are generally on the right track and are evolving well. He agrees with Ric that entrepreneurship is vital.

Ron - Thanked Ric for considering the need for metrics in the definitions of sustainability, including quality of life.

Ric - There needs to be a continuous evaluation of the indicators of quality of life.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important economic development strategy the City could take on?

Jim K - Education.

Wendy - The City needs to have micro-capital for investment. They need to continue (an increase) partnerships with non-profits.

Mark - Number 3 under Business & Economic Growth.

Jim F - A combination of Number 3 and Number 4 under Business & Economic Growth. One can't be done without the other.

John - Can't parse them that finely, they all seem interdependent. He would vote, however, for the Business & Economic Development group as a whole as most overall important.

Jim T - Technology needs to be more in the forefront. We've taken something powerful and make it only focused on sustainability. We seem to be gun-shy still about projects like AFN. The investment was made there and we are profiting (as a resource) from it. We need to be ok with risk and failure.

Ron - First rule is always do no harm. Whatever the outcome of this we need to make sure that we don't mess up what we've got. We need readily acceptable markers to know if we are sustaining the community's goals.

Ric - We need the primary investment to be in entrepreneurs - needs ways to "import" creative people. We need to provide culture, schools, and diversity to be a place for entrepreneurial growth. Also, we need to connect better with the international community and form solid international business relationships. We want local businesses to bring in that international capital.

Ron - Remember that our entrepreneurs are a fundamental gem in this community.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities may work with the strategies (or your most important strategy)?

Mark - Things that effect the friendliness towards business things like improving the streamlining of the planning process (rules and regulations?), making business friendly council decisions, etc.

Wendy - Need to be more specific about identifying those sectors we want to expand or diversify. We need to think beyond tourism and food sector. Identify what do we want to support?

Mallory - Often creative folks don't come to live here for lack of housing or decent paying jobs. Need to understand what are the barriers to basing yourself/ your business in Ashland? How do we keep talented people (of all kinds) in the valley? People can't live here, so can't have kids in the school system, so can't afford to take a position in a business here.

Jim K - High school and college students need mentorship. How do we leverage what we've got and make that useful for the next generation of entrepreneurs? How do we use what talents/skills students possess (new technology, etc.) and make that useful for the current generation of entrepreneurs? We need to develop good relationships on both sides of the equation.

Ric - Believes we should use terms creativity and entrepreneurial rather than exclusively entrepreneurial. We need to support developing this creativity at a young age - within the educational system. Also, we need to support entrepreneurs supporting/ mentoring one another. Once a small level of success is achieved how can we and they help to reach the next level?

Wendy - Is that the role of the City? What could they do to support mentoring? More money?

Ron - We can't use just the city, we need to include the community as a whole. Need some sort of action to support entrepreneurial endeavors. An action to create that "petri" dish environment where creativity grows. The City alone can't do it.

Jim T - Maybe this would be a good partnership between the City and Thrive. The City needs to take on a leadership role but use the "founding members" of the community including; OSF, Mt. Ashland, SOU, School District, Hospital, Chamber of Commerce, etc. to work together towards creating a model of what is working locally. All decisions (Council, regulatory, etc.) need to be based on the agreed upon strategies. An action he would like to see is to double the size of SOU. We need to encourage and support SOU's growth because it will help provide that young community for betterment of economic base and school system.

John - Entrepreneurship just happens. The City has to be supportive of this and work with groups who already help (Thrive, SOREDI, etc.) The City could provide incentives to help businesses including things like enterprise zones, urban renewal districts, etc. The City must take an active role in being helpful to businesses.

Jim F - City needs to encourage youth success and workforce development programs (at Ashland High School, SOU, and elsewhere). They need to assist in building peer to peer programs to help CEOs who need help with next generation technology, networking, finding funding for growth. The City should be co-conveners in these programs, not take them on themselves. The City should help with access and exposure to programs already in place (Thrive, SOREDI, etc.) They can help with asking entrepreneurs to take and active part in being mentors. The City should NOT lead but be there to support. We also need to encourage international business - continue to support the Ashland - China connections already started.

QUESTION #4: Any last thoughts or additions?

Jim K - Just remember that the City isn't an overseer but is a partner. We all need to bring our strengths to the table.

Ric - We need to refocus/ re-define the distinction between City and Community. Need to think more about our roles. We can't leave out the non-profit business sector and the community needs to

support that sector.

Ron - Each community in the valley has a different set of values and a different perspective on economic development. We need to remember in this process to "Be Ashland."

Meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Diana Shiplet, Executive Secretary

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
RESTAURANT/ RETAIL/ LODGING
FOCUS GROUP
September 21, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shippet, Kate Jackson, Wendy Siporen, Jon Lange.

Participants present: David Runkel, Don Amway, Dennis Slattery, Thom Beam, Lisa Beam, Alex Amarotico, Graham Sheldon, Rich Hanson

Meeting came to order 10:00 a.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Kate Jackson welcomed the group and gave a review of the City Council goal, which started the process. She explained a little of the process so far and why she is glad they are doing this process.

Wendy Siporen gave information on the work done so far by the Policy and Technical Advisory Committees. She gave an overview of the various focus groups, their "job" in this process and all the other ways for the community to get involved.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect each other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today will be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: Do you think the strategies are on the right track?

Graham - Finds it tough not to dive directly into actions. These strategies could encompass any/everything. They do, however, explain good broad strategies but what is important is how can they be specific to us? For clarity, we need to be sure to explain that difference between strategies and actions in any communication of this process and outcome.

Alex - Thinks they are great but like Graham, agrees that it's the how (action) that is important.

Lisa - As small business owners we all have a hard time seeing beyond what's needed to make it successfully through a week, which is why the action side is more important.

Thom. - They are great. Thinks # 1 under Diversity (Encourage and support the availability of all needed housing types at price ranges and rent levels that match up with the incomes of Ashland households) is an action, not a strategy. Diversity can be an economic growth detractor. For example, someone who lives in affordable housing will have lower income and therefore disposable income to spend in shops, restaurants, they will pay lower taxes, therefore lowering the City's budget, etc. On the other hand, someone paying "full-price" for a home will likely have greater disposable income, pay higher property and income taxes, etc.

Dennis - You must think about the audience. They are not geared to assist people in knowing how to run a business. Ultimately, these seem to be used to create a more supportive government. The devil is in the details. There are detrimental action plans that could come out of this along side helpful action plans. Overall, it's nice but underdeveloped at the moment. We need to ask how is this going to guide eventual users and who are those users?

Don - The execution of these strategies needs further input from those people "in the trenches" who are doing the work on a daily basis. There needs to be constant input and updating to the approved document/plan because ultimately how we do business this year isn't how we did business last year.

David - He has seen a lot of governments spend lots of money to create Economic Development Plans and most included lots of financial waste. We need to build on what we already have and do not try to make Ashland something it isn't. Technical jobs, which are mentioned lots in the strategies, usually develop and success nearby to highly technical schools. We do not necessarily have any highly technical schools nearby to use for training and resources. The first strategy (Support/facilitate a system or program to increase access to private investment capital for local businesses, with a focus on "seed funding" for small business start up and expansion) is too exclusive. A good action would instead be "creating a loan fund to support small businesses." Maybe if you removed the reference to private investment that will open up that possibility. All diversity/ inclusion parts are total BS. They don't belong in an Economic Development strategy and they take time better used on more important issues.

Dennis - Disagrees with David. The diversity strategies mean more than we are a community welcoming of diversity -- it's using one of our current strengths, not seeking to do something drastically different.

Lisa - The diversity message is in the Vision - does it have to be in the strategies?

Alex - Thinks of the City of Aspen and wonders how we can be successful in economic development if all our service workers have to drive many miles just to work.

Graham - There is a fine line between gaining a workforce and keeping the bums out. Not sure how to find that balance. We need a city that is inclusionary but still able to recognize that there are societal rules to be followed and those who can not follow those basic rules should not be welcome.

Dennis - And it is not a matter of whether or not you have a home or not – it is all about your actions. If Thom, for example, were to start peeing on buildings and aggressively intimidating people walking he would be just as unwelcome. Behavior is the key.

Thom - We have rules and permits allowing certain behaviors (selling, campaigning, using the Plaza, etc.) but we don't require permits for panhandling and we should.

Dave - Nothing in these strategies goes to building a small convention center. The strategies should at least allow for the possibility of that sort of facility to bring more people into town.

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important economic development strategy the City could take on?

Don - Infrastructure of the town. There is a lack of parking, inadequate sidewalks, etc. Nothing has been done to improve infrastructure even though we have more visitors coming to town.

Dennis - Agrees with Don.

Thom - Has met with many people over the possibility of a convention center. There is always a concern about how to create it without the center being a burden on the City or on taxpayers. Ultimately you need private, not government, funding. Then you need to work on all the current limits to zoning and building (like the three story limit in the downtown core.) Thinks a golf course on the already owned Imperatrice property would be a good action.

Lisa - Yes, downtown needs a facelift but for her expanding the season (#2 under Business and Growth) is the most important strategy.

Alex - Year round is most important, a city "face-lift" is nice but not necessary - he came & stayed for what we currently have here. Also thinks diversity & inclusion is important, we need to remove those things which are currently driving tourists away.

Graham - Year round is obviously important, but even the summer season is a problem. Lots of times the theater is at capacity but the hotels, restaurants, shops, etc. are not at capacity. Strategy should read more like, "increase the overall experience of tourism throughout the year."

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities should the City/ Council take on?

Graham - Increase general quality of public spaces (sidewalks, plaza, etc.) Make Lithia Way a second main street - encourage/incentivize so businesses can succeed on Lithia Way. Have easy way for government to create ad hoc groups with a mix of public and private to address specific issues (like recent deer meeting). Make those meetings frequent and regular.

David - Dedicate a portion of lodging & food tax to a convention center.

Thom - (responding to David) We always hear about AFN and the Wastewater Treatment plant as examples of failure - it would be "social suicide" to recommend using lodging and food tax for another potential project when the last uses were so unsuccessful.

Kate asked for some clarification from Thom on his convention center idea and the challenges they face. He gave some details and some code, regulation, and cost problems for clarification.

Dennis - Not sure if it is governments place to tell people how to handle wildlife in their backyards nor is it governments place to run a convention center. Does understand the need for frequent re-examination of planning rules and regulations to as to be helpful for private enterprise growth.

Thom - There needs to be a balance between planning decisions and the end outcome. (what we do always effects how things end up.)

Graham - City of Ashland has become very difficult to do business with (or in) but he's worried that we might rush to quickly to make things easy and business friendly and end up robbing the City of the essence of what we are and what makes us great.

Alex - Need to know the ultimate goal. What do we want to be? Where do we want to end up in the process?

David - That's why a city facility (convention center) might actually be a viable option.

Alex - If we lose sight of diversity and inclusion we might go to far away from what's great here.

Dennis - So we need to not be less restrictive, just need to be able to see opportunities and use those wisely.

Don - We need to understand where we are as a community. We are not a group destination community - there is no easy or affordable Airport access, our lodging isn't willing or able to have the lower-costs necessary for group destination success. We need to understand that we are successfully a leisure destination and need to build on those strengths.

Alex - Wonders if the semantics of the words convention center are getting in the way because that isn't exactly what was envisioned.

Thom gave some details on how they hope for less traditional convention center and more of a community center. Jon asked if Thom could create an action they city could do which would assist the process.

Thom - Buy land today (because it's more affordable now) and put on the ballot latter to build the building.

11:00 a.m. - Rich Hanson arrives.

Graham - The community center deals better with the fallacy that we are already at capacity.

Dennis - Likes the community center idea better than a traditional convention center but any space can be costly for tax payers.

Lisa - Tourism needs to be defined not just as overnight guests but as anyone who comes to the City. We need to work on anything which will get people to stay longer and (hopefully) buy more.

Rich - Continue to work on the parking challenges.

Thom - City could vacate all 4 spots on Lithia Way right now.

Don - Need to address 24 hour parking at the Hargadine Parking Structure, for weddings and other big events having 24 hour parking near Ashland Springs Hotel would be very beneficial.

QUESTION #4: Are there activities or ideas the Council or City should stay away from, that is, NOT do?

Thom - Expanding the downtown core to other areas while there are still vacant buildings and open spaces. We need to continue to focus on in-fill.

QUESTION #5: Some of you mentioned things that are already here and being done. What should the City keep doing/working on?

Don: -The Welcome Center -we need to support it. I-5 is one of our best resources and we should be using the current remodeling to our advantage and use the I-5 connection more effectively.

Thom - The City and the Public Arts commission have been very supportive of art. An action would be to see more partnering on public arts projects.

Alex - Keeping Community Development and City Hall in the downtown core. Sends a good signal about downtown. Not happy with the locked access though.

Rich - Homeless issue is the main deterrent to successful businesses here and should be addressed. Would like to see cigarette disposals available on every street or light pole.

Thom - Parks & Recreation events are well attended and successful. Would like to see more. Something like Bend's Pole, Paddle & Putt which might require some freeing up of rules related to alcohol.

Don - Increase money to promote and advertize tourism.

Dennis - SOU & City need to work closer on how they can help each other. Seek ways to develop partnership opportunities with SOU. Find ways to bring the community into SOU.

Question #6: If you could direct Council to do anything what would that be?

Thom - Are we talking 2030 or Today?

Jon - Both.

Graham - Create better east of planning process. It is still a maze, very random and leaves people unsure of how the process actually works. Need to be more predictable because it currently feels like "going through a meat grinder."

Jon asked for some specifics.

Thom: They submitted plans which were returned stamped at the very last moment. They built according to the plans and then were told afterward that the plans were incorrect and they would have to be re-done.

Lisa - It's frustrating and there are people who do not want to do any business in the city of Ashland because of that. Time is money but staff doesn't seem to recognize that. It would help if there were streamlining and consolidation of timelines.

Dave - Residential processes seem to be fairly streamline, but commercial are too complicated. You get different answers from different staff. Maybe there needs to be just one person who handles commercial projects. Need greater commitment to education both of staff and of developers/business owners. Also, really need to advance our codes in relation to green building.

Dennis - How rules and regulations are applied - they currently seem arbitrary and capricious. There is no template for what a good plan submittal might be. Too much government mentality and not enough entrepreneurial mentality in City staff.

Rich - Just do a survey of all the builders, contractors, architects in the area to find out exactly what they find difficult.

Lisa - Need to train staff to understand that we are customers. Customer service is what's missing.

Alex - A great action would be to hire a hearings officer.

Graham - If people feel the process is arbitrary there is obviously a problem.

Any last thoughts or additions?

Thom - If this process makes a decision or action the city needs to follow it through. They need well thought out plans that include well thought out exit strategies. This is what was lacking in AFN and the Wastewater Treatment Plan upgrades - no exit strategy.

Dennis - Ashland has a remarkable business community and they need to be listened to clearly in this process. Those businesses here have stuck around not because it's easy but because they ascribe to the values of Ashland and we need to support that.

Rich - Need to focus on how we can help rather than how we can put up roadblocks.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Diana Shippet, Executive Secretary

MINUTES FOR THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CREATIVE ARTS
FOCUS GROUP
October 20, 2010
Siskiyou Room
51 Winburn Way

ROLL CALL

Leadership members present: Adam Hanks, Diana Shippet, Russ Silbiger, Jon Lange.

Participants present: Peter Alzado, Jim Young, Marcus Scott, Gary Lundgren, Tom Olbrich, Howard Schreiber, Julie O'Dwyer, Kevin Christman, Carol Davis, Jess Webb, Mark Mularz

Meeting came to order 3:02 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Russ Silbiger welcomed the group and thanked them for their time. He gave a summary of the origins of the project, read to them the Council goal and explained the two-group process so far.

Adam Hanks thanked the group for their time and gave an overview of how these draft strategies and vision statement were created.

Jon Lange clarified the process of today's work, asked everyone to respect other's opinions, and informed the group how the information gathered today would be used in the next steps of this process.

QUESTION 1: Are the committees generally on the right track with the Vision and Strategies or are there fundamental problems?

Gary: They are on the right track. He originally wasn't going to come to this meeting, but after reading the drafts decided that this process was worth participating in.

Tom: These are good. Comprehensive. It is, though, the longest Vision Statement he's ever seen.

Howard: Everything here seems a little too broad and vague.

Mark: They are on the right track because it says what's important but the important part will be getting to all the details.

Peter: There is lots of dynamics to these drafts. It will be interesting to see what the end will focus on. We have a national monument (Cascade Siskiyou National Monument) close which hasn't been given any focus. Can the City connect better to that natural resource? Recently read an article that the national monument will make Ashland one of the 10 most visited places due to the unique ecological resources there.

Julie: Agrees largely with the group. What's missing is that in the vision statement the word business is there but not highlighted. The Council can make the most difference in our economy by supporting entrepreneurial businesses.

Kevin: Agrees also with what's been said. The Vision sounds utopic, but how will it be implemented? How will all these ideas be put into place? There are so many ideas he's worried we won't be able to achieve them all.

Marcus: The groups are on-target. He does think that it's lacking the word "culture". Coming to Ashland is a cultural experience (OSF, Film Festival, galleries, etc.) In the Business and Growth section expanding tourism beyond the ODF season is very important, especially to the Artisans' Market. They need more opportunities for income from January 1 to April when the market opens. Can we possibly create a space or facility to help small businesses grow? Businesses need space in order to grow. Need to figure out how the Artisans Market can co-exist with current businesses while still finding room to expand.

Carol: Echoes lots of what has been said. Needs the details filled in. The term, "specialized and targeted tourism", what does that mean? Does it mean staying with what we already have? Expanding into new areas? How is this defined? She has always wanted Ashland to be a visual arts center - how can we do that? We need to work on how to expand the artists market, create new galleries, find places for public art, etc.

Mark: Relating to the Business and Economic Growth strategies, he wants to see the word vibrant included. He's sad to have seen the project across the street from the Post Office fail. That space could have helped to build up densities, could have brought people in, expanded the energy of the downtown core. He wants to see the City embrace projects like that when they are well done - even if they are unusual.

Jess: Objectively the Vision Statement is nice. It's a little too "wordy". Nothing is directly named except SOU. Why is that? Does it really need to be named in the Vision Statement? Why not other organizations? If others are named, where would the limit be? The strategies look right. Sadly, he's had to have his business in Grants Pass because it's "cheaper" to do business there. Wishes that wasn't the case.

Peter: Knows that Ashland has been known strictly as an arts center, would like to see a better marriage between the arts and the sciences (National Monument as example). In New York the city supports artist's housing. The rents for certain buildings are based on how much they make from their work (how much they sell). This creates vibrant, creative pockets within the city. Is also sad about the Post Office project not going through. The difficulty in becoming a successful theater is that you have to do projects which are generally popular in order to sell enough tickets/advertising to pay the bills. This limits the types of productions they can create. But with artists housing or financial support for theater companies their will be a more dynamic pool of talent and more freedom to produce challenging works.

Marcus: Has had lots of conversations recently with artists and they have the same challenges. It's hard to balance creating enough "saleable" projects to pay the bills while still working on creative, boundary pushing art.

Carol: Pushing the envelope in local art would encourage a wider variety of people to come for those new, vibrant creations (people won't come to see the same thing again and again.)

Jim: As a tourists (having recently returned from Guanajuato, Mexico) what he's looking for is safety, a place to sleep, good places to eat and an experience you can't find elsewhere (i.e. something unique to that area.) Most people come looking for experiences or souvenirs they can't find elsewhere. Unique art or artisan crafts attracts a greater number of people. Can we foster elements as a community which will expand the tourism base?

QUESTION #2: What is the single most important strategy (on the list currently or not) the City should take on?

Jess: Seed money for all projects is too far fetched, but incentives for encouraging film production in Ashland would be good. Jacksonville recently decided to have a plan in place for filmmakers to easily know what can and can't be done in the city.

Gary: Would like to see a film production start locally - not someone coming up from LA looking for cheap rents for their cast and crew. Wants an entirely local cast and crew so jobs can be kept local.

Tom: Echoed what Jess and Gary said. The Film Festival currently take a finished product and present it at the festival. He would like to see all the "lead up" work kept and supported here. He would love to see greater support for the visual arts and all the ways it can be displayed. All the start up, retention and expansion done at AIFF has only be possible because of the current granting program at the City of Ashland, which he appreciates greatly. How can the City expand that to help us stay around and attract more people?

Jim: A few years ago helped with the First Nations Day parade, which closed traffic on East Main Street. There were huge difficulties in working with the City to do these things. Need to figure out how we can have creative expansion within the boundaries (or just outside the boundaries) of the law.

Howard: Disagrees with Jim's statements. The City has a good process in place. You pay the fees, go through the process and your event is approved. It's a decent policy. He's worried more that we don't have filmmakers in place because there is not enough work for them to stay. Not sure how the City itself can help with this - this may be the job of private businesses. Need to get the "flow" going with opportunities for students to stay in the area in order for the film industry to grow here. He thinks the Education/Workforce Development strategy is the most important. SOU (and his film/television program) graduates lots of skilled students but there is no place for them to go after graduation (no local jobs). The Civic/Community Collaboration strategies are also important and the University has been trying to do this lately. They have been trying to bring people in from outside the university who have the right knowledge to help broaden the education of students.

Mark: The first two items under diversity are the most important to him. He would like to see added as a strategy that the City supports businesses with thoughtful innovation, especially when those businesses solve problems and move the city into the future.

Peter: Diversity/Inclusion section is the most important to him - it covers many other headings. Joining forces of a variety of businesses and the arts creates and "attractive stew" for people. Ashland could be of greater interest to more people if the smaller theaters were a greater focus for

tourists. They would come for a wider variety of the arts. We need to not ever have capitalism without having social responsibility.

Julie: Two strategies are the most important to her. The first is expanding the tourist season. Artists, restaurants, theaters "die" for three months out of the year. We currently have many wonderful things for people to come for but we have many other small venues/activities which need support. Secondly, Ashland touts itself as a center for the arts but has very little in the way of public art. We need to work to support public art wholeheartedly.

Kevin: Ashland has an antiquated system of public art (we can't even manage to keep Lincoln's head on to keep that statue in place!) Enhancing public art will enhance the tourism experience (people leave a theater production hoping to experience more equally uplifting/compelling but don't find much art to support that experience.) The policy from the Council has been do whatever you want about public art, but don't ask us for money.

Marcus: Most important strategy to him is "Support/facilitate a system or program to increase access to private..." He would like the Artisan's Market to be able to expand. The problem with the current system is that those with lots of money are able to do (develop?) what they want but those without money can't get the help/support/advancement they need. He would like to see socio-economic platform added to the diversity strategy. Also would like the City to help with visibility of the Market from the Plaza (maybe have market physically expand beyond Calle Guanajuato).

Carol: Most important strategy is expand the tourism season. Most businesses take money from the tourists in the summer and then re-distribute the money in the community in the winter (sell in summer, remodel in the winter). There needs to be more opportunities to make more in summer in order to survive (spread the wealth) in the winter.

Howard: Didn't notice the word, "marketing" or "advertising" in the strategies. They need to be there. Maybe they are implied but probably should be clearly stated.

Kevin: All the Infrastructure/Public Services strategies seem to be very utilitarian. We need to expand beyond not having potholes in the street or having wide enough sidewalks and need to see public art as part of the necessary infrastructure.

Jim: We need to structure the laws so that they can be changed without too much trouble. We need to create a cultural change that would allow for parades or loud music.

Mark: Liked what Kevin said about art as infrastructure. The City of Aspen, Colorado turned their downtown into a pedestrian only mall and they probably would have it no other way now. It creates a much richer experience for tourists. We need to look at how we can change components of our city to be more attractive and vibrant.

QUESTION #3: What actions or activities are most important for the City to do?

Gary: He's connecting the first three under Business/Economic Growth. They need to help or encourage small businesses to become bigger with capital and connections for support. Action could be to develop a system to assist small businesses obtain easier access to capital.

Tom: Continue with and expand the current grant program. Support art/artists in whatever way possible and promote that art/artists. He's meaning beyond the TOT and VCB work already being done.

Howard: Promote what exists here and support businesses that will come here to create jobs (keep students here). Make it easier for those things to happen. Maybe this means marketing.

Mark: The City needs to get behind/ support/ facilitate innovative ideas. Supporting those ideas adds an element of risk, which is challenging but necessary. We need to look to other innovative communities for examples of what worked for them and how we can use or modify those things for our community.

Peter: Agrees with Tom, we need to establish a fund above and beyond TOT to support or promote artists.

Julie: Ditto on all that. We have a plethora of talent here, and those people should not have to go outside the community to make enough money to survive.

Kevin: As a sculptor he is doing lots of work in other cities but can't do any work here. There is no support. Could there be a Pay Pal link on the city website to support the arts? Can the City facilitate/help to fund projects or at least have means to make that support easier?

Jim: The City is a place to make true cultural changes. They need to look at the money we already have and how they use it to support art. Can we help create diversity through our decisions?

Marcus: Liked Mark's Aspen idea. He has always visualized our plaza as something like the Guanajuato city plaza - a place off limits to cars. He would like to have it made accessible to pedestrian, maybe create an outdoor mall open all year.

Carol: The City has to walk the talk. They (Council, City rules & regulations, Planning Commission, etc.) should not create unintentional obstacles to economic growth. The whole city organization needs to support economic development.

Jess: It's nice to see in the drafts that all areas in the economy are being addressed. To help film production grow we need a city staff liaison to support the project (i.e. here are the resources you need and here is where you can find them in the community/valley, here are the permits you need, let me help you fill them out, etc..) Obviously, SOU and OSF drive the economy, we need liaisons to those entities to connect them beyond their own industries.

Due to the time constraints, Jon Lange asked that the group send any additional responses, comments, questions, thoughts about the final two questions to Adam's e-mail address.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Diana Shippet, Executive Secretary