

MINUTES

Lane Economic Committee
Lane Council of Governments (LCOG), Fifth Floor Conference Room
859 Willamette Street -- Eugene (Remote meeting via GoToMeetings)

September 14, 2020
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Mark Bodie, Dan Betschart, Kari Westlund, Courtney Griesel, Kelli Weese, Anne Fifield, Rob Scardinham.

GUESTS: Howard Schussler, Allison Camp, Amy Bradbury.

1. Welcome/Introductions/Changes to the Agenda

Mark Bodie, Chair, convened the Lane Economic Committee (LEC) meeting at 11:36 a.m. Those present introduced themselves.

2. Review minutes from August 10, 2020

Action Item: Approve Minutes

Mr. Bodie moved, seconded by Mr. Scardinham, to approve the August 10, 2020 minutes as shown. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

4. Comments from Members, Chair & Staff

There were no comments.

5. Impact/Recovery Efforts for – Travel Industry; Look ahead to 2021/2022

Ms. Westlund mentioned that all of Travel Lane County's partners sent in their numbers so far for the year. In general, numbers were down everywhere since March, but it depended on the area. The Oregon Coast had a robust Summer as well as Central Oregon with numbers at an almost normal level. Ms. Westlund stated that prior to the fires the Upriver Lane Corridors were doing alright. Portland had the lowest numbers compared to their normal because of the riots and them being a dense city.

Ms. Westlund said that Lane's cities had mixed demand drivers. Their cities relied on festivals, sports, conferences, and arts to fuel their tourism. They were at around 50% revenue at some points throughout the Summer. Currently hotels were full because of the fires. Those rooms were set at emergency rates.

Ms. Westlund noted that the River Corridors were off their normal revenue by 1.5% in July. Eugene was off by 57% and Springfield by 41% since July. She shared that one-third of the hotels in the Eugene/Springfield area were closed in March and since then most had reopened.

A big hurdle for tourism was the restrictions on mass gatherings. With those still banned it might take three or four years to see a full recovery in tourism. Lane County tourism was able to hit \$1,000,000,000 in the 2019 calendar year. The break down was \$800,000 from first time visitors and \$250,000 earned from people who live in the area. There was a 75/25 split in revenue and 11,000 jobs through tourism.

Ms. Fifield wanted to hear about the status of the venues in the McKenzie River Corridor. Ms. Westlund informed her that her list would be incomplete and just include those who Travel Lane County connected with. The structures that were safe were: Terwilliger Hot Springs, Ike's Lakeside Pizza, Loloma Lodge, McKenzie River Lavender, Obsidian Grill at the McKenzie General Store, and Tokatee Golf Club.

Ms. Westlund said that the McKenzie River Track was not burned but surface might be damaged. Also, all the McKenzie Riverside Cottages were safe but one. The Wayfair Resort had several units remain but also had several lost.

The structures that were burned down were: Blue Heaven Cabins, Christmas Treasures, Randy Dirschum's shop and home (his last bota hanging in the Adventure Center), McKenzie River Round House Bed & Breakfast, and the Oregon Cliff House.

Ms. Westlund said that they were unsure of these structures: Blue Sky Market, Caddisfly Resort,(near Eagle Rock Lodge, which was safe), Harbick's Country Inn (Dakota's feeding fire crews and right across the street), McKenzie River Cabin, McKenzie General Store.

Ms. Westlund said that it was hard to say what will happen going forward. They were expecting revenue to be 30% lower for 2020. Summer ended up being better than they thought, but they needed mass gathering to be allowed before they can start recovering.

The University of Oregon was planning on welcoming students starting on September 18, 2020. They would be checking in 450 students a day. The students would be checked-in, get tested for COVID-19, be put in self-isolation until they got their results, and then they would move forward with registration. Ms. Westlund said that they were working with the University to make sure there were enough hotel rooms available to isolate students with the fires bringing hundreds of people into town.

Mr. Bodie wanted to know more about the rooms that Red Cross were renting and if the hotels were seeing revenue. Ms. Westlund replied that they were getting some revenue, but it was very low. They were not looking at these rooms being full as a good thing since it was an emergency. She informed everyone that The Graduate was also acting as a donation center and that the Super 8 had been donating bedding.

Ms. Fifield asked if there were any steps that places should take regionally to start cleaning up. Ms. Westlund responded that one issue they would see in the next few days was people come in to capitalize on the emergency. It might be hard for people to figure out who is being honest. She hoped that something would come out to help people figure out what to do and in what order.

Ms. Griesel said that there were some good and some questionable organizations taking money right now. She gave the example of United Way. They had set up a fund but just gave the money to the community, who currently have no way of using it. She thought it would have been better to give the money later when it could have been used.

6. City of Eugene Recovery Efforts/Equity Inclusion Initiatives

Allison Camp and Amy Bradbury, from the City of Eugene, were there to give the Eugene COVID-19 Recovery Update.

Ms. Bradbury said that they were focused on a whole community recovery. There were five focus steps in this: natural & cultural resources, economic recovery, infrastructure systems, housing recovery, and

health & social services. Other areas have chosen to pick one or two steps, but they felt that did not encompass all issues that needed to be tackled.

Ms. Bradbury and Ms. Camp shared a few of the impacts that they had seen so far from existing gaps. They noted that marginalized populations were more affected than others. Housing was a concern and they were expecting homelessness to increase during and after the pandemic. The issue of childcare and low-wage employment went hand and hand. With all the problems going on non-profit stability was a concern. A lot of community support came from these non-profits. Local businesses were also being severally impacted.

Ms. Bradbury and Ms. Camp went over the eight focal areas that were most important. These were: public health support, community outreach & data, examine city processes & procedures, housing security, childcare, city as an economic driver, non-profit support, and job availability and retaining.

A table of options available through agencies was shown on the screen. Through the regional survey they would be able to get more community data & outreach. By supporting childcare providers, they could increase jobs available and help families that needed childcare. They were also looking to partner with Care.com, United Way, Colu.com, and the UW-FFLC-Door Dash Pilot to achieve a few of their goals. They shared that they could also use Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus Funds (CDBG-CV) to give non-profit supports and increase housing stability. They would also partner with EWEB to increase non-profit supports, provide more childcare, and increase housing stability.

Ms. Camp and Ms. Bradbury explained that the reasons these things were chosen over other options was because they wanted to have solutions that fixed a couple of issues, wanted equity across the board, and wanted to create community trust and confidence.

They stated that while these were their plans now, but they were ready to change them as was needed for the community. While gathering data and continuing forward through the pandemic they might get new information and need to switch their focus.

Mr. Bodie wanted to know more about homelessness and housing getting worse as a result of COVID-19. He mentioned that with the fires the lumber market would be worse, and it would take an additional \$16,000 per unit. Mr. Bodie asked how they should move forward with these challenges. Ms. Bradbury replied that they were taking issues as they came. Mr. Bodie emphasized that housing was one of the most important aspects of any community. Ms. Camp mentioned that a couple years ago they reached out to the community to help them recognize barriers in the community around housing and they were going to go back and look at those responses.

Ms. Camp told the Committee that they were welcome to email either of them with any additional questions they had.

7. Set Next Meeting Date: October 19, 2020 – Third Monday

Mr. Bode set the next meeting for October 19, 2020 and adjourned the meeting at 12:42 p.m.

(Minutes recorded by Lydia Dysart)