

# Union County Economic Development Corporation

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## Minutes April 17, 2008

Monthly Meeting:      6:00 p.m. at UCEDC Office 1119 Washington Avenue,  
La Grande

Meeting Facilitator:      Howard Perry – President  
Board Reporter:      Violet Trapp, Administrative Assistant  
Executive Director:      Craig Thompson  
Members Present:      Howard Perry, Mike Poe, Robert Strobe, John Howard, Bill Whittemore,  
Gary Lillard, Don Kellogg, Dennis Spray and Dale Case

Absentees:      Steve Anderson, Janet Hume-Schwarz and Jeff Puckett

Visitors:      Anne Barth

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Howard Perry - President.

The new board member, Robert Strobe, La Grande City Manager, was welcomed to the board by President Howard Perry. Robert was appointed by the La Grande City Council.

Howard welcomed the UCEDC guest, Anne Barth, and gave the floor to her to present the project she is working on. Anne has spent the past two years researching to find out if an NHL size ice skating rink could be a real possibility in La Grande. Anne has filed for a non-profit organization status with the State of Oregon in order to seek grant funding for this project. The purpose of Anne's visit was to explain her project and what has been done up to this point and to ask for a letter of support that will be helpful in seeking grant funding. Anne left written material with the board concerning the project and the information is available to anyone interested in reading the report.

Howard called for a motion to approve the March minutes.

*Dale Case moved that the board approve the March minutes. Gary Lillard seconded the motion. The motion carried.*

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Mock Site Visit** – Craig Thompson

The VA Mock Site Visit Evaluation Meeting was held April 16 at the Misener Room of the County Commissioner Building, by the Consultant, Dick Gardner. Craig said the meeting went very well. There are a couple of follow-up items that need to be addressed at the bottom of page 4.

1. Connecting Grande Ronde Hospital, local health care providers, pharmacies and VA Clinic to gain synergy and keep as many health care dollars local as possible.
2. Eastern Oregon University nursing program and Oregon Dental Services hygienist school to utilize VA Clinic as training site.

On page 9 under the current economic development players, Gary Lillard said the La Grande Downtown Development Association should be added.

Page 10 recommends considering a comprehensive economic development strategy for Union County.

The first two pages of the review relate directly to the VA Clinic, including the timeline, observations and recommendations. Some of this relates to the Contact Committee. Craig views the whole review as recommendations and suggestions, not as criticism, but as a way to improve the process. The Contact Committee, City of La Grande Councilors and the UCEDC Board Members were invited to attend. Craig indicated the group would like to form a working group to review the items that are recommended in the consultant's report, such as the fragmentations, countywide economic development strategy and a few other items. Howard Perry and Craig discussed this and recommended that the UCEDC Board take the lead in forming a working group. Craig said this actually is the first step in the SWOT Analysis that is required in the MOU/Work Plan that is due in January 2009. SWOT is Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. UCEDC could move right in to working on the SWOT Analysis.

Dale Case noted that on page 6 the pyramid shows that only 1% of economic development comes from the outside. That shows UCEDC should concentrate more on the local industries to bring about economic development. Howard Perry said perhaps we need to re-educate ourselves as well as the community in what is success as it relates to economic development. The measuring stick has always been how many new businesses and new jobs have come into the community. Expanding and maintaining the local business and industry already in place is a vital part of economic development also. Dennis Spray said that Union County is expanding economic growth and stability by increasing tourism attractions that draw people in from the outside. John Howard mentioned that in the past a bus was used to take groups of people around the county to visit the industries and maybe it would be good to do something like that again.

Craig, Robert Strope and Dennis Spray were assigned to work together to form a working group.

Howard Perry asked that the board agree to have Craig and Robert Strope draft an article for The Observer that expresses appreciation to all those involved in successfully getting the VA Clinic located in La Grande and the completion of the building.

#### **Land Purchase Offer** - Craig Thompson

Craig said that UCEDC has two offers on land in the La Grande Business and Technology Park and the City of La Grande has an offer on a parcel of the land owned by the city. One offer is from All Phase Electrical which the UCEDC Board approved with the condition that a site plan be submitted to the Property Committee for approval. All Phase Electrical has submitted the conceptual site plan. Craig has the conceptual site plan and All Phase will have to abide by the covenants. With that being approved by the Property Committee, Craig has contacted Phil Burling and he will proceed forward with the sale. The other item that has slowed down the process is that lot 6 is in the flood plain, which entails insurance coverage and the height of raising the grade of the lot. A benchmark was needed. Anderson/Perry has prepared a 100 year flood plain designation with the benchmarks. Mike Boquest and Norm Paulus of the City of La

Grande, UCEDC and Phil Burling have copies. Craig is hoping this offer will go to closing in May.

The other offer is with City Garbage Service, Ron Larvik, on Lot #21 plus an easement. The Property Committee has met and made a counter offer. Craig talked with Phil Burling. City Garbage Service has not yet responded to the counter offer.

Robert Strope said the city has counter offered that the sale would be contingent upon signing an agreement to meet the construction time lines.

**Alicel Project Presentation** – Craig Thompson / Dale Case

Craig and Dale attended the NEACT Meeting on April 3. The Group looked at the recommendations from the ODOT Region 5 staff as well as the NEACT sub-committee. The recommendation of the ODOT Region 5 staff was that the Alicel Project be #1 and was accepted by NEACT. Dale received some information from the Railroad Advisory Committee which is the Statewide Railroad Advisory Committee. The Alicel Project is listed as #11 statewide. The next step is the final review committee meeting scheduled for April 29 and 30 followed by a public meeting in May. The approval will be done in June. Dale and Craig will work with PGG to start working agreements, financing, rail line construction agreements, environmental assessments and whatever else needs to be dealt with.

**Business Park Sign** – Craig Thompson

Craig and Robert are still waiting to hear back from Matt Barber. When they receive the information from Matt it will be passed on to the board.

**Board Appointment** - Craig Thompson

Robert Strope needs to be assigned to 2 committees. Need to find what committees Lee Lindsey was assigned to and possibly place Robert on those committees.

**REPORTS:**

Howard Perry thanked all the committees for meeting this past month and for each one's willingness to participate.

**Finance Committee** – Mike Poe

The committee met, review its goals. The finance reports were looked at and no changes needed.

**Property Committee** – Dale Case

The Property Committee met and the committee's report was given under old business items.

**Communications/Marketing Committee** – Gary Lillard

The committee met and worked on the # 2 draft of the marketing plan. A copy was handed out to the board members. Consultant, Dick Gardner, reviewed the marketing plan and sent his report. The next step is for the committee to meet and discuss what the consultant has recommended and incorporate the recommendations into the marketing plan draft and bring to the board in the May Board Meeting.

**Membership Committee** – Don Kellogg

The committee met and determined its goal is to increase and maintain the UCEDC Membership. Don went to the Union County Chamber of Commerce and got a list of the chamber's membership. The committee decided to set a goal for each board member to recruit 2 new

members per year. Mike Poe added that the committee could make a categorized list of names and that UCEDC should target other groups of business and industry that are not on the chamber's list. Howard Perry mentioned the list of names that Bill Whittemore had asked the board members to submit several months ago. Violet gave the list to Bill and the list was handed to Don Kellogg.

**Executive Report** – Craig Thompson

Craig received a call from a company that is looking to locate in Union County, Baker or Pendleton. The company is looking for an existing 50,000 sq. ft. building or 5-8 acres. Craig submitted the Business Park as a build to suit alternative providing all the information on the park and the pricing guide lines.

**Administrative Assistant Report** – Violet Trapp

- February Minutes were sent to the membership and partnerships.
- Financial Reports through March were given to Mike Poe for the Financial Report.
- The membership list is updated through the month of March.
- All the board member binders are updated for the April Board Meeting and new board member binders prepared.
- Invoices and letters for April membership renewals were sent.
- Thank you letters and membership certificates are prepared and ready for Craig to give to the members that renewed or are new members.
- The new and renewed members of UCEDC for March are:
  - Steve Anderson Consulting Services – New member**
  - Todd Richmond – New member**
  - John Howard Realty & Associates – New Business Member**
  - Banner Bank**
  - Howard Butts**
  - Mark Davidson**
  - W C Construction**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**La Grande ED Director Brainstorming Invitation** – Craig Thompson

Robert Strobe, La Grande City Manager, called a brainstorming meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup> with some key stakeholders in the community on economic development. The purpose was to look at some options and alternatives for staffing an Economic Development Director for the City of La Grande. The group prepared a list of the current economic activities and the organizations responsible. The group looked for any deficiencies that should be identified and who should be involved. It was determined that there are 4 options concerning the position of the director:

1. A full time city director position
2. A part time city director position
3. Contracting out the director position
4. Either an existing or new non-profit organization to perform the function of director.

The number one choice is to seek a full time city director position. Craig said his understanding from the group is that the position will focus primarily on the downtown redevelopment effort.

Craig gave the floor to Robert Strobe.

Robert said that when he became City Manager the number one goal of the La Grande City

Council is to do something about economic development, specifically within Island City and La Grande, stressing retention, expansion and improvement of businesses. Within that frame work, the city council is specifically looking for a downtown redevelopment program, as well as compliments the efforts of UCEDC in marketing and promoting the Business Park. Currently there are two or three things that no one is doing for the City of La Grande. Robert intends to recommend to the city council in the May meeting that a full time director be hired for the City of La Grande with the funding coming from the Urban Renewal Funds. Robert says there are many economic organizations in this area and what he would like to work toward is getting these organizations to work together in a parallel direction.

## **Off the Agenda:**

### **Forestry Tour** – Dale Case

In the March UCEDC Board Meeting, the board discussed the possibility of setting up a Forestry Tour. Dale said he talked with Paul Oester at the Forestry Extension Office in Island City. The Crop Committee met and Dale brought up the idea doing a forestry tour in conjunction with the crop tour. The committee received the idea very favorably. The potential may be that UCEDC can get a tour going this year. The crop tour scheduled for June 18, 2008 goes till noon with a bar-b-que at the noon stop. The persons interested in the forestry tour could continue after the noon stop. Because the infrastructure is already in place this would make it very easy do the afternoon tour. Dale expects the forestry tour to happen.

### **Letter of Support** – Howard Perry

Howard expressed that he thought it would be good for UCEDC to write a letter to Anne Barth in support for the ice skating rink.

*Dale Case moved that UCEDC write and send a letter of support for the ice skating rink to Anne Barth. Robert Strobe seconded the motion. Motion approved.*

## **FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

John Howard said that Aarons is now open. It is located where Lynch Motors use to be. He encouraged everyone to stop in and see what the appliance and furniture store has to offer. John also announced to go on internet to Google and type in Oregon Industrial Properties and let him know what you see when it opens.

Meeting Adjourned 7:18

Respectfully Submitted by:  
Violet Trapp  
Administrative Assistant

## **Note:**

**Next Board Meeting:** **Thursday May 15, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.**  
UCEDC Office at 1119 Washington Avenue

**Executive Meeting:** **Tuesday, May 6, 2008 at 7:30 a.m.**  
UCEDC Office at 1119 Washington Avenue