



Harney County Economic Development

Minutes
Community Revitalization Team
Wednesday, January 6, 2021
5:30 PM- 7:00 PM
Via Zoom

Attendees:

Pete Runnels-Harney County Judge	Irene Gonzalez-Small Business Administration
Fred Flippence-Harney Electric Cooperative	Dan Porter-Plectrum Music Company
Patty Dorroh-Harney County Court	Misti Porter-TVCC Outreach
Allison Field-Business Oregon	Logan Hunt-Burns Paiute Tribe
Mark Owens-OR House of Representatives	Jen Hoke-Harney District Hospital
Angela Lamborn-HC Senior and Community Services	Noelle Colby-Rotell-DHS
Jake Blackburn-EOU Intern	Daniel Brown-Incoming: City of Burns
Curt Blackburn-Blackburn Real Estate	Judy Erwin-City of Burns
Colby Marshall-Blackburn Real Estate	Ed Susman-Worksource Oregon
Susan Christensen-GEODC	Ray LaFrance-Worksource Oregon - Burns
Lea Gettle-OR Trail Electric Cooperative	Bree Cubrilovic-GEODC
Steve Quick-HC School District #3	Brenda Smith-High Desert Partnership
Jeff Rose-Burns District BLM	Riley Morris-Burns High School Intern
Jen Keady-Family Eyecare	Barbara Cannady-Community Member
Forrest Keady-Historic Central Hotel	Chantel Ivense
Rob Littleton-Residential Construction and Design	Greg Smith-Harney County Economic Development
Gust Tsiatsos-GCT Land Management	Denise Rose-Harney County Economic Development
Terri Bradley-Veterans Village Union County	

1. **Director Greg Smith** welcomed the group, called the meeting to order and identified those calling in by phone.
2. **Old Business:** The November-December meeting minutes were sent out by link to the website, and there were no comments or changes suggested.
3. **New Business:**
 - A. **Regular Reports:**

Harney County Court, Pete Runnels – The courthouse saw 6 new public servants sworn in on Monday, January 4th. The county received \$550,000 in business support grant funds which was distributed to 69 businesses in the county, with the primary focus on those in the hospitality industry. The Brownfield grant is going well, things moving at a rapid pace. Twenty county bridges have been flagged for weight restrictions and issues. Two are planned for replacement in the upcoming budget year. One is on Foley drive the other at the Diamond turn off. Cost will range between \$200-300K each.

City of Burns, Dan Brown-This is Dan's third day on the job, but he has been made to feel very welcome in the community. He has had a lot of drop in visitors to City Hall and is getting significant help from outgoing Interim Manager Judy Erwin. His first impressions are that city ordinances are in place to help grow business in Burns, and he looks forward to working on updating and streamlining processes. Working with business owners in Burns will be a priority for him.

City of Hines, Kirby Letham – no report, Kirby excused.

Burns Paiute Tribe, Logan Hunt –The tribe has had several COVID cases so the administration will be working from home for a period of time. Yapa Street housing project is slated to pave roads in the spring and is still waiting for the delivery of 4 homes. They are still working on agreements for the downtown building and the RV Park. The Tribal Economic Development work group has not met again.

Harney County Economic Development, Greg Smith-The two interns who worked for Economic Development this fall and early winter were introduced. Jake Blackburn developed the spreadsheet used to track demographics of Harney County businesses. Together, he and Riley Morris called registered businesses in the county to see what kinds of support they need during COVID 19 restrictions. Most were willing to receive updated information but did not request a lot of help. The primary request was for assistance in social media, online marketing of their product and how to get customers to wear masks when they entered a physical business. The Technical Assistance Grant wrapped up at the end of December, so we are back to regular office hours. We were excited to facilitate funding through Morrow Development Corp. for the purchase of warehouse and office space with Eco Source Native Seed, part of High Desert Partnership.

B. Additional Reports:

Representative Mark Owens- gave a brief legislative update. He has been asked to serve on the Water Committee and Human Services Committee and is working on veterans housing issues.

C. Regular Committee Reports:

Housing – Curt Blackburn said his office has seen a very slight increase in the availability of rental units in the past month. He found it a pleasure to work with Morrow Development in the Eco Source purchase. They are the private foundation that could partner for housing construction loans. The remainder of the housing report will be discussed in the focus section.

Small Business Support- Dan and Misti Porter introduced themselves and talked about their backgrounds in business and how they hope to approach the Small Business Support Committee leadership. A discussion was held related to several other efforts in the community to form committees of business owners, and general agreement was that these efforts could be combined with cross reporting, to save resources.

Workforce – Intern segment under Greg Smith report was the primary effort.

Infrastructure – The franchise contract with the county for Mi Wave fiber out to homes and businesses has started and they will be installing fiber as early as this spring. Vaccination clinics are rolling out by specific groups, more information can be found on the county health department’s Facebook page.

D. Focus Project: Harney Homes – Veterans Housing possibilities

Angela Lamborn-Sr. and Community Services Director outlined their recent planning process, noting that research and groundwork for a veterans housing project was in their five-year plan. They have a broad resource base for partnering across the state and the region with the successful completion of the Feathered Nest project last year. They will likely move the timeline forward, as it seems there is a lot of local interest and support for a veteran’s project. We have a high percentage of veterans in the county and many are struggling for quality housing.

Gust Tsiatsos-GCT Land Management Owner Gust was on hand to describe the Veterans Village of Union County he worked on in La Grande. He and manager Terri Bradley described the collaborative process used and the concept of village living for veterans. Their project includes homes, access to social and health resources and community outdoor spaces. They highly recommended a group approach which includes many community and state partners. The group has plans to bring a similar effort to Baker City and were willing to share advice and best practices. Colby Marshall asked about specific process and Gust commented that they were able to secure the grant funding first, the contractor later. A public private partnership was discussed. Other input included involving the veteran services office, Community Connect of NE OR (their housing authority) and to consider trauma sensitive design. Their rental units are taking about 16 months to complete, and they are phased in.

Rob Littleton-Residential Construction and Design Owner- Rob has already purchased a lot in Hines and is in the planning process to build a duplex. He described his background as a builder in the Bend area and ties to Harney County as a kid. He owns a home in Burns and sees the need for decent quality rentals growing in the community. The incentives discussed will help and he advised that common sense building going forward will keep the effort on track. Dan Brown asked what challenges they can address. Rob replied that the community has been easy to work with and supportive of the concept. He asked about end product demand and pricing ideas. Jen Hoke from Harney District Hospital added that she sees a moderate, well built duplex going for \$900 a side, especially with a private garage. Three bed, two bath homes can bring as high as \$1100/month in rental income.

Dan Brown-City of Burns, Manager- In an expanded discussion about ordinances, Dan commented that the framework is in place and there is some good capacity in current ordinances. It will take some work to review them all and determine what they are able to do with what is in place. He is in this process now and will keep the group updated.

Wrap up discussion agreed that the housing committee will hold a meeting to finalize the project incentives and Greg Smith reminded the group that we are close to building the first home, with current incentives and low-cost financing. He will provide the county with a sample template RFP to use for soliciting contractors interested in the project.

Greg also updated the group on the legislative bill that was dropped at the state level to allow taxing entities to opt out of increased value on residential construction and remodeling. The bill applies to frontier counties only and implementation is optional. There has been some interest on the part of the Governors office.

General Announcements:

Allison Field, Business Oregon- A new director has been appointed, Sophorn Cheang. The Community Block Grant rental assistance program may be helpful in the housing project.

Greg Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:02 PM.