

Coronavirus Relief Funding workshop

May 26, 2020

9:03 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper (remotely), Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson (remotely), County Manager Erik Martin, Steve Wohld, Tamara Hayes, Becky Butler, Larry McGee, Matt Matayoshi

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Becky Butler said Lewis County will receive \$4.3 million in Coronavirus Relief Funding. She recommended earmarking \$500,000 for business and economic recovery.

She recommended earmarking \$1,635,000 for Public Health and community safety and \$2,165,000 for internal services, including jail, juvenile and courts.

Becky noted that the amounts are fluid and can be changed, though she said the amounts earmarked for internal services probably cannot be decreased.

Becky noted that CRF can be used as matching funds for FEMA grants.

Becky said the economic impact of canceled events will have an impact later in the year. Erik Martin said it's also unclear what the pandemic will do to consumer confidence.

Tamara Hayes outlined ways Lewis County could allocate the \$500,000 earmarked for business and economic recovery:

- Grants for small businesses
- Free PPE for Lewis County businesses
- Health and safety business grants to assist with equipment needed to maintain social distancing
- Marketing grants specific to online sales
- Marketing campaign for Lewis County
- Tourism recovery grants for hotels and campgrounds
- Broadband for Lewis County – CERB grant (the group noted that funds must be spent by Oct. 31, 2020, so any project must be shovel ready)

Matt Matayoshi said it would take legislative action to make broadband a public utility.

Commissioner Stamper said he wants the county to focus on the business community, to get the money out to the business community immediately. He said he questions whether the Economic Development Council would be the best group to be the allocation point of contact for the county. He said he wants a group that already works with small businesses to be the point of contact for allocations.

Commissioner Jackson said he is in favor of grants for small businesses. He said he would like to target the mom-and-pop shops that would be struggling to recover.

Commissioner Fund said Transalta has offered the Chamber a grant to be the business resource center, though she noted that the work has not really gotten off the ground just yet.

Matt Matayoshi said Transalta provided Valley View a grant to provide testing.

Becky Butler said that a week or so ago the commissioners had discussed creating an MOU with the EDC to serve as the point of contact for the county's grants. She noted that the county already has a contract with the EDC so there would be no administrative costs associated with having the EDC distribute the business and economic recovery funding.

Tamara Hayes noted that the commissioners had been asked to identify a point person to represent small businesses in each of the three commissioner districts.

Matt noted that the EDC already has a contract with the county and the Department of Commerce, which is providing the coronavirus relief funds.

Commissioner Fund said campgrounds and hotels will need help to recoup what's been lost during the shutdown. She said businesses in the rural areas also will need help with online sales.

Tamara Hayes noted that the group could allocate 50 grants of \$10,000 apiece.

Larry McGee said he wants to see the data about the area's businesses. He noted that some businesses have received multiple grants already, whereas others have received no grants.

Tamara discussed the possibility of surveying the businesses on Lewis County Together.

Becky discussed the auditing required for federal funding. She stressed that there cannot be crossover regarding federal funding.

Commissioner Stamper said all of the groups providing funding need to sit at one table to determine how to move forward. He said the group making decisions about allocations must understand small businesses.

Commissioner Jackson suggested creating a committee similar to the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee to oversee the small business grants.

The commissioners said they'd want grants to be available for all of Lewis County, however, Commissioner Fund said Chehalis and Centralia businesses already have access to grants for online sales.

Becky noted that the county doesn't usually administer grants to businesses. She asked for clarification about whether the commissioners want to pursue the MOU with the EDC to serve as the point of contact for the grants.

Larry McGee discussed the work Lewis County Together already has accomplished in the past six weeks. He said the group knows how to get stuff done quickly and how to get it done well.

Commissioner Jackson said he supports having the EDC serve as the allocation point of contact.

Commissioner Stamper said the Chamber has requested \$100,000 from Transalta.

Tamara asked if the county could consider providing \$100,000 to the Chamber to match Transalta's grant.

Larry McGee noted that the Chamber has indicated it will prioritize Chamber members for its Transalta grant allocations.

Commissioner Jackson said he spoke to a business owner on May 22 and that individual reported that they had reached out to the Chamber and was told by a representative that the Chamber wouldn't provide assistance because the business was not a Chamber member. He said he later confirmed that the Chamber had indicated that the Chamber was providing help to Chamber members only.

The group asked Tamara Hayes to reach out to the banking industry to invite representatives to the May 27 Economic Recovery Forum. The group asked Tamara to ask businesses and bankers what grants they've already received, what types of grants they are interested in, what steps they've already taken on their own to address post-COVID-19 efforts.

The group further discussed how to best carve up the \$500,000, including whether to divide it up to include grants, funding for broadband, etc. The commissioners said they are certain they want to provide some sort of grant funding.

The group decided to schedule a follow-up meeting the following week.

Meeting ended at 10:46 a.m.