

## **Mayors' Meeting**

March 5, 2021

9 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Erik Martin, Morton Mayor Dan Mortensen, Centralia Port Commissioner Peter Lahmann, Assistant County Engineer Geoff Soderquist, Centralia Mayor Sue Luond, Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes, Public Health and Social Services Director JP Anderson, Assessor Dianne Dorey, EDC Executive Director Richard DeBolt, State Labor and Industries (L&I) Apprenticeship Program Manager Jody Robbins, L&I Apprenticeship Utilization Specialist Jim Kaltenbaugh, Winlock Mayor Brandon Svenson, Toledo Mayor Steve Dobosh, Chad Hancock of the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Chehalis City Manager Jill Anderson, Meja Handlen, Pam Peiper of U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler's office, Vader Mayor Joe Schey, Centralia City Manager Rob Hill, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Lands Division Manager Cynthia Wilkerson, Christine Nhan of Sen. Patty Murry's office, Community Development Director Lee Napier, Toledo City Clerk Michelle Whitten, Brian Calkins of WDFW, Sarah Kohout of Sen. Cantwell's office, Cody Duncan of TransAlta, WDFW Southwest Regional Director Kessina Lee, Fire District 5 and 15 Chief Dan Mahoney

Guests: Edna J. Fund, Nic Scott, The Chronicle, Susan DeLaire, Frank Corbin, Jeremy Clevenger

Recorder: Rieva Lester

### **Apprenticeships**

State L&I Apprenticeship Utilization Specialist Jim Kaltenbaugh ([james.kaltenbaugh@lni.wa.gov](mailto:james.kaltenbaugh@lni.wa.gov), 360-902-5373) provided an overview of the state's apprenticeship program and reviewed specifics of the Public Works Apprenticeship Utilization programs.

Jim noted the following:

- Apprenticeships are a formal training agreement approved by WSATC and registered with the Department of L&I, Apprenticeship Section
- Include at least 2,000 hours of supervised on-the-job training
- Participants must attend at least 144 hours of related supplemental instruction
- Most apprenticeships take two to four years
- More than 4,500 employers across the state participated in registered apprenticeships in 2020
- 2,196 journey-level workers received completion certificates in 2020 and will make an average of \$86,000.

## **TransAlta / IPAT lands**

TransAlta Business Developer Cody Duncan discussed TransAlta's proposed land transfer to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes said his concerns about the land acquisition proposal is the possible introduction of endangered species to the area.

Cynthia Wilkerson of the WDFW said the state has proposed using the site for the western pond turtle, the Oregon spotted frog and the streaked horned lark. She said improving their numbers could ease restrictions elsewhere. She discussed fencing and other regulatory assurances means to limit those animals from encroaching on neighboring properties.

EDC Executive Director Richard DeBolt said the idea of introducing endangered species to the area does not make sense.

Lewis County Assessor Dianne Dorey said TransAlta was valued at \$587 million and generated \$6 million in taxes for Lewis County. She said it now generates only \$2.169 million and that if the transfer were to take place, that would be replaced by \$48,000 in funding from Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, an amount she had previously thought would total \$154,000.

Dianne discussed the tax implications the transfer would create. She also discussed lands WDFW already owns in Centralia, such as Hayes Lake and a 10-acre site between Hayes Lake and Plummer Lake.

Commissioner Swope asked if the mayors would like to draft a follow-up letter to WDFW regarding the proposed land transfer.

Centralia Mayor Sue Luond said the city is drafting its own letter. Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes said Chehalis has submitted its own letter.

Dianne noted that if TransAlta is no longer paying taxes, everyone throughout the county will have to pay more to cover levies. She suggested the county commission its own study.

Mayor Luond reiterated that not only would the county no longer receive taxes, the county's taxpayers would have to pay even more to cover the lost revenue.

Richard DeBolt said the EDC is reviewing TransAlta's study and agreements to determine how the land transfer would affect Lewis County.

Peter Lahmann discussed pictures he took showing a lack of management of the Hayes Lake area.

Cynthia Wilkerson said WDFW has an agreement with the City of Centralia that states that the city will provide cleanup efforts at the area.

## **Impact fees**

Winlock Mayor Brandon Svenson said the city's population is growing rapidly and that it expects to see the city's population double to roughly 3,000 residents in the next seven years. He said he has concerns about growth management, especially for its schools and fire department. Mayor Svenson suggested the creation of an up-front impact fee.

Fire District 5 and 15 Chief Dan Mahoney expressed concerns about what challenges and dangers unmanaged growth will create, noting that the Winlock Fire Department's ratings will suffer negative increases, leading to increased insurance costs.

Mayor Svenson said he has spoken with developers, who indicated they pay impact fees elsewhere.

Mayor Dawes said individual cities can charge impact fees.

Chief Mahoney said he has increased staffing by using savings from providing its own transfers, etc. He said the district now bills for calls on Interstate 5 that do not involve Lewis County residents.

Vader Mayor Joe Schey said his understanding is that impact fees would be a city-level decision.

Mayor Svenson noted that development in the Urban Growth Area (UGA), such as construction at Mickelsen Park, is outside Winlock's jurisdiction for impact fees but affects fire needs and could affect the city's fire ratings.

Dianne Dorey discussed the monies taxing districts get for new construction.

### **Request for infrastructure priorities**

Commissioner Stamper said Sen. Patty Murray's office has asked the county and cities to put together a list of infrastructure priorities for which federal funding is needed. He said her office has set a March 15 deadline for submissions.

Christine Nhan of Sen. Murray's office said the senator is compiling a list of the area's infrastructure needs and priorities, noting that the Biden administration wants to move quickly on an infrastructure package.

Toledo Mayor Dobosh said the city needs funding for a new water-sewer line.

### **COVID-19**

Lewis County Public Health and Social Services Director JP Anderson said the county has received notification that it will receive allocations of the Johnson and Johnson vaccines. He said three mass vaccination clinics are planned. The group discussed vaccination efforts.

### **Legislative session update**

The group discussed a handful of proposed bills, including

- HB 1152
- HB 1253
- HB 1540
- SB 5141
- Travel tax

Commissioner Stamper said discussions regarding marijuana regulations in unincorporated Lewis County (Ordinance 1271) would be held at a later time.

Mayor Dobosh said Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) students at Toledo Middle School recently won a \$15,000 prize in the nationwide Samsung Solve for Tomorrow contest.

Richard DeBolt said the EDC will hold an Economic Summit on May 6. He said an employee fair will be planned for late June.

Former Commissioner Edna J. Fund invited the group to attend the Office of the Chehalis Basin Strategy public meeting planned for 6 to 8 p.m. March 9. She also encouraged area residents to respond to an upcoming survey regarding the 2021 Southwest Washington Fair.

Meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.