

## **Mayors' Meeting**

**November 5, 2021**

**9:00 a.m.**

Present: Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Erik Martin, Josh Metcalf, Edna Fund, Willie Painter, J. Vander Stoep, Austin Majors, Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes, Katie Conradi, Vader Mayor Joey Schey, Lee Napier, Mindy Brooks, Christine Nahn, Rob Hill, Sarah Kohout, Toledo Mayor Dobosh, Morton Mayor Dan Mortensen, Pam Peiper, Steve Wohld

Guest(s): Peter Lahmann, Frank Corbin, Kyle Markstrom, Nic Scott, Susan DeLaire, Colin Swanson, Eric Rosane

Recorder: Tammy Martin

J. Vander Stoep said the Chehalis River faces two major challenges: major flooding and reduced fisheries. If nothing is done, he said the river will continue to decline and flooding will impact Lewis County. The entire assessed value of the Chehalis Basin is \$20 billion and if not improved upon, the fish and flood problems could create \$10.5 billion in damages. Across the basin, there have been over 100 projects to prevent damages to key areas and the only way for the process to come together to solve the basin problems must be consensus between the representatives from the state and from the fisheries. Edna Fund said the Skookumchuck Dam is a fund dam instead of a preventative dam. At this time, there are three proposals for the dam: remove, alter or keep it in place. The dam provides water by using water banking. The goal of the water banking process is to secure water rights for Lewis County. If an area does not have a tributary of the river, they are not eligible for water rights of the river. These water rights are dependent upon the dam remaining.

### **American Rescue Plan Act funds:**

The Lewis Economic Development Council continues to have stakeholder meetings for water/sewer projects. Becky said there is a community-wide survey. This will provide important feedback about how residents think the money should be spent.

Josh Metcalf said there will be a brief letter outlining the process and intents of water and sewer project updates. They are collecting project data from each city and adding that to the GIS map. Commissioner Swope said there are 493 survey responses to Polco. Commissioner Swope said the more information we receive, the better decisions can be made.

Willie Painter from Lewis County Public Utility District 1 provided updates for the PUD broadband infrastructure deployment. There are an unprecedented amount of state and federal resources, and the goal is to serve those that are unserved or under-served in Lewis County. They are currently waiting to hear if they have been awarded funds to serve the Boistfort area. Willie said the 2020 broadband survey found that 77.2% of residents in Lewis County do not have broadband high-speed internet. Willie said the Broadband Action Team is a community-based broadband action team that helps identify the needs

of Lewis County. Willie said the PUD is partnering with Frank Corbin, who is putting together proposals for sustainable and prospective projects.

Toledo Mayor Steve Dobosh asked for a questionnaire to address his future requests/projects. Mayor Dobosh is concerned about the water rights of Toledo. Commissioner Pollock said Lewis County's largest watershed comes from the Cowlitz River. Commissioner Pollock wanted Mayor Dobosh to know that all of Lewis County is included in the water infrastructure improvement projects.

Mayor Dan Mortensen said the city of Morton is continuing progress on the sewer treatment plant.

Christine Nahn said Senator Murray will be in recess next week and is working on budget bills and infrastructure bills. The senator was able to include Lewis County with the appropriations bill.

Pam Peiper said Congresswoman Herrera Beutler was able to return monies from the federal government through casework.

Chehalis Mayor Dawes said the street projects are closing up and that the city looks forward to next year's projects. Mayor Dawes said there is large growth in Chehalis. The ports have been busy with projects. The temporary fire station is going up and the city has plans to make a permanent station in the future. He hopes that in the future, the fire departments can combine. He said the airport area has seen some recent activity with a new dealership.

Centralia City Manager Rob Hill said they finished up the street-scape construction. Work will begin at the United Learning Center. Rob said the China Creek Phase II is nearing completion. He said that he has been in process of negotiating water rights with TransAlta. He said the growth of the city depends upon water rights.

Kyle Markstom from the Port of Centralia said the Port was provided NEPA approval for the Centralia Station and will finally move that project forward. Peter Lahmann said approximately 7000 people will retire from JBLM in the next year and he is working on a program to provide interns. He said PacMTN is in process of hiring a new director.

Willie Painter said if approved, the \$22.5 million infrastructure bill will support the substation in Winlock.

Commissioner Swope said the Housing Summit was moved to December 2, 2021. This will help cities in Lewis County to be more intentional when dealing with housing needs as well as help effectively plan growth.

Meeting adjourned at 10:13 a.m.