

Economic Alliance Update

January 6, 2025

11:08 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Todd Chaput, Richard DeBolt, Josh Metcalf

Guest(s): None

Recorder: Tammy Martin

Public comment: None

Todd Chaput said ADO is in review. Metrics and guidelines have currently been met. Todd said the Department of Commerce may have a smaller budget in 2025 and this may impact future events within the ADO.

Richard DeBolt said .09 has a meeting scheduled for March. There are two applications for infrastructure, and one is for flooding mitigation. Richard said there are four positions needing to be filled; 1 commissioner position, 1 person from the East Lewis County Public Development Authority (ELCPDA), one for the at large and one from small cities. Commissioner Brummer said the ELCPDA will be asking for loan forgiveness. Richard said the ELCPDA would have to ask the .09 Board before they could bring that to the Commissioners.

Richard said the annual banquet is coming up and Brandi Kruse is the keynote speaker. There will be a Hispanic roundtable in February and a bowling tournament in April that will be held in Morton.

Richard said 2024 was considered a success for the Economic Alliance. There are infrastructure projects, recruitments in process and the Hispanic roundtable brought in a diverse group. Richard said the BDO Zone effort helps multiple counties.

Todd said Discover Lewis County (DLC) is using a new software program called Crowdriff and it is a source sharing software. Todd said reels or short-form videos reflect the most viewed forms of social media.

Todd said the City of Mineral received a grant and will be partnering with Twin Transit for an EV charging station. Todd said the Economic Alliance has been successful with grants for tourism projects.

Richard asked the Commissioners what they would like to see the Economic Alliance focus on. Richard said it will be a busy season in their small classroom area focusing on small businesses. Commissioner Swope suggested IPAT. Commissioner Pollock had suggested small businesses. Commissioner Swope asked about using AI. Commissioner Brummer asked for additional assistance for those out in East Lewis County beyond the tourism concept. Commissioner Pollock suggested being cognizant of taxes and the burdens being shifted.

Richard said Benaroya has taken back the industrial park in Winlock. There are three clients that do not include industrial warehouses looking at locations within the Winlock port.

Richard said the cost of doing business in Washington State has drastically increased and the competition between other states has slowed growth in Washington State. Richard said maintaining costs and expenses are imperative to retain the businesses we currently have. According to Richard, the cost of doing business is approximately 30% higher in Washington.

Richard said the EA is helping with the city of Centralia and the nitrate issues.

Todd said there will be a meeting for funding mechanisms. They are proposing an additional Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) tourism tax. This will support the payroll for Discover Lewis County according to Todd.

Meeting ended at 11:47 am