
Columbia River Gorge Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 8, 2001

Location: Rock Creek Recreation Center
Time: Meeting commenced at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Anne Squier, Chair	Jim Luce
Kenn Adcock	Joe Palena
Doug Crow	Louie Pitt, Jr.
Don Dunn	Joyce Reinig
Dan Harkenrider	Katharine Sheehan
Walt Loehrke	Wayne Wooster

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED

Dave Robertson

STAFF PRESENT

Bob McIntyre, Administrative Assistant
Jeffrey Litwak, Counsel

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Baker, Nathan. Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Hood River, Oregon
Curtis, Lee. MCEDD
Gabuloon, Mary. MCEDD/DIB
Kahn, Gary. Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Portland, Oregon
Karabut, Diana. Portland, Oregon
Kite, Rhoda and Ira. Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Skamania, Washington
Mazeski, Mark. Skamania County Planning Department. Stevenson, Washington
Miller, Bobbie. The Dalles, Oregon
Newton, Tiffany. Friends of the Columbia Gorge. Hood River, Oregon
Sauter, Dave. Lyle, Washington
Sims, Pat. Portland, Oregon
Weber, Fay. Stevenson, Washington
Wilkins, Maxine. Portland, Oregon
Willis, Chuck. Columbia Gorge Coalition. Hood River, Oregon

THE AGENDA

- 1. Roll Call**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Economic Grant Certification Request**
- 4. Appeal Hearing**
- 5. Director's Report**
- 6. National Scenic Area Manager's Report**
- 7. Committee Reports**
- 8. Other Business**
- 9. Adjourn**

1. Roll Call

2. Public Comment

Pat Sims said she is concerned about a trend she sees developing in public meetings. She has noted a number of anti-Native American comments that she feels are disturbing and not acceptable. She feels this type of racism has no place in public policy.

Chair Squier said it is not her intent to have that type of comment heard.

Bobbie Miller spoke to the Commission about the six-county letter of support for the Gorge Commission budget, and provided feedback on the Plan Review public meetings. She said she feels the Commissioners have no idea what the public has to endure at the hands of the staff. She read a letter written by Mr. Mike Ferguson and his experiences with the Commission staff. Commissioner Loehrke asked Ms. Miller why Mr. Ferguson hadn't voiced his frustrations at one of the public meetings. Chair Squier stated that Mr. Ferguson did have some frustrations, but his problems had been resolved.

Lee Curtis thanked the Commission, and introduced herself as the new Director of the Mid Columbia Economic Development District. She said she looks forward to helping people and working with others to improve the area economically.

Bud Quinn, Skamania County Commissioner, asked the Commissioners to work more closely with local governments. He stated that he feels this isn't happening, and he gets frustrated when he believes no effort is made by the Commission to talk to the County Commissioners.

Chair Squier stated that she is sorry if his perception is that the Commission does not want a better partnership with local governments, but it does. The Commission has proposed meetings, and she hopes the counties will realize the Commission is in a transitory state until the new director begins in July. Commissioner Palena stated that perhaps Mr. Quinn could offer a suggestion on how meetings might happen on a regular basis.

Joe Backus, Skamania County, stated that he has lived in the Gorge for over six years, and has volunteered free legal service to the Gorge Commission, and he hasn't been taken up on the offer. He stated that he is retired and willing to help. Chair Squier stated that she would see to it that the new director gets this information.

3. Economic Grant Certification Request

Chair Squier introduced an Economic Grant Development request from the Northern Wasco County People's Utility District, which requests a \$25,000 grant to help fund the Dalles Area Local Loop, a fiber-optic telecommunications enhancement project (see attachment A). She stated that there was no staff member on site to discuss this request, but one could be reached by phone if there were questions.

Tiffany Newton, Friends of the Gorge, spoke in support of the grant on behalf of her organization. Mary Gale-Wood clarified this request was for a grant, not a loan, and would be used for engineering and planning, not for construction. That would require a separate land use approval. Commissioner Sheehan moved to certify the request. Commissioner Adcock seconded the motion. The Commissioners, except Commissioner Crow who abstained, voted unanimously to certify the request.

4. Appeal Hearing, Friends of the Gorge v. Skamania County

Jeff Litwak, Commission Counsel, introduced the appeal hearing.

Gary Kahn and Nathan Baker, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, presented their oral argument. Commissioner Loehrke recused himself due to prior work on the Planning Commission. This appeal was in regard to approval of a mining operation in Skamania County. Gary Kahn stated that there are a number of county ordinances that were overlooked in this decision, and this mining operation would be visible from eight key viewing areas. He stated that a recreation plan is required, there must be a reclamation plan before the decision, not after it, and there is nothing in the record supporting the quarry will be visually subordinate. He felt based on the lack of evidence, the decision should be reversed and denied.

There was no representative from Skamania County. The Commission deliberated.

Commissioner Sheehan noted that the county had done a lot of work on this, particularly on the wildlife plan, and a very good solution was arrived at.

Commissioner Sheehan moved to reverse the county decision as requested by the petitioner based on a lack of findings adequate to support the decision and violating a provision of law having to do with reclamation and screening provisions.

The Commissioners voted unanimously to reverse the county decision.

5. Director's Report

Chair Squier updated the Commission on important issues.

The Commission had given direction to the staff a few months prior to work with the six counties to work on finding a solution to the ancient subdivision issues in a consistent way throughout the Gorge. She pointed out that with the changeover of directors, there will be some delay in getting this work underway. There will probably be time added since it will not begin until after the new director arrives.

At a previous Commission meeting, staff had been asked to work to determine the status of the fill material discussed by Mr. Backus. She noted that staff has had a written exchange with Skamania County, and it has been determined that there are not simple solutions to the

problem. There is good reason to delay any formal action at this time, and it is recommended that this be taken up after the new director begins. Commissioner Luce said that he would like to see the correspondence regarding this issue.

6. NSA Manager's Report

Dan Harkenrider provided the Forest Service report. He updated the Commissioners on the 8(O) process, which has received 183 total offers, which represents 261 tax lots. The fieldwork has been completed on all 183 offers. 56 of those are rated high priority for acquisition under the 8(O) process, and letters have been drafted to the landowners explaining how their lands were rated and the basis for the rating. Another criteria screen will be developed for the properties rated high priority. There has been approval for increased staffing for the workload under 8(O), and the Forest Service is currently seeking a Realty Specialist.

7. Committee Reports

Recreation. Commissioner Crow said there was a meeting, and the group looked at the draft monitoring report, and discussed it with Brian Litt, Virginia Kelley, Jeannette Kloos and himself. He said the report is fine-the committee concurs with it. It doesn't have a lot of information about recreational use in the Gorge over the last decade, and it doesn't have much about projecting what the needs will be over the next ten years. That will need to be done as part of Plan Review.

Commissioner Sheehan clarified that the authors prepared a preliminary draft report, which was circulated to members of the recreation committee and the monitoring committee and the county people who were involved. The deadline for comments was several weeks ago and soon a draft report will be put together which will be widely distributed to tribes, counties, commissioners and other partners for comments. That will have a 60-day comment period, which hasn't yet started.

Commissioner Loehrke is working with Brian Litt and the Forest Service to collect data to evaluate state parks in Oregon and Washington to evaluate use trends.

Monitoring. Commissioner Sheehan provided the Monitoring Committee report, and noted that she had already given part of her report during Recreation Committee report. She said there are two reports that are in review now in two committees. Comments for the Cultural Resources draft report were due last week. If there is any indication of a need for the Cultural Resource and Monitoring Committees to meet, a meeting would be called immediately, but if not then the reports will be revised and drafts reports will be widely distributed. Commissioners who are County appointees should be contacting the county officials to be sure they have those reports.

Economic Development. Commissioner Crow stated that at the last meeting, Commissioner Luce presented a proposal regarding the impact of higher electric rates on the aluminum industry, which was tabled. The committee drew up a proposal for the whole Commission addressing the issue. Commissioner Sheehan read the proposal. The Commissioners discussed the proposal and made some changes. The final resolution read:

"Whereas the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act (CRGNSA) charges the Gorge Commission and other local, state and federal partners to protect and enhance scenic,

natural, cultural and recreational resources in the Gorge region, and also to protect and support the economy of the Gorge, consistent with the first purpose; and

Whereas Congress was therefore aware that stewardship is not divorced from economic factors, especially in a region which over the years has seen the rise and fall of several industries including orchards; commercial, sport, and tribal treaty fishing; and timber; and

Whereas, employees of the aluminum industry constitute a substantial proportion of family wage workers and generate substantial secondary economic impacts in many Gorge communities including rural communities where the economies are isolated and employment opportunities locally limited; and

Whereas current challenges associated with energy supply will impact Gorge resources and communities no matter how they are resolved, and because of the high reliance of the aluminum industry on cost-effective power, could have the most abrupt and long-term impact on workers in that industry and the communities where they live;

Now therefore, the Gorge Commission urges that all agencies and entities with responsibility for decisions on management of power resources be sensitive to the impacts of their decisions on all resources of the CRGNSA, including its human resources, and to seek ways to minimize or mitigate any sudden, substantial impacts on those resources."

Commissioner Dunn moved to adopt the resolution. Commissioner Loehrke seconded the motion. The Commissioners voted unanimously to adopt the resolution. Commissioners Luce and Wooster abstained from the vote.

Planning/Finance. Commissioner Reinig presented the Planning and Finance Committee report. The committee had recently looked at the agency budget, and it appears that agency spending is on target, except for legal expenses, which continue to be higher than projected. It is anticipated the agency will overspend state funds by approximately twenty-six thousand dollars. To help balance the books some funds were shifted out of other budget categories. There will also be some small salary savings from open positions. In the next budget cycle the agency will need to plan better for legal expenses.

She then covered the recent budget hearings in Oregon. She spoke about an article in the Hood River News. The reporter attended only the public comment portion of the hearing, in which there was some very negative things said. However, if they had attended any other portion of the hearing, they would have gotten a more balanced story due to the very positive things that were said by a majority of the legislators on the subcommittee. The agency received most, but not all, of the funding that was in the Governor's recommended budget, as was expected. Next biennium Oregon will be separating out the funds earmarked for the Klickitat County land use ordinance implementation. The Commission will need to request those funds from the Oregon Eboard, and those funds will be granted to the Commission if Klickitat County has not adopted their own ordinance. The budget isn't entirely whole, and the agency will need to carefully monitor expenses and workload if it is to stay within budget.

8. Other Business

The agency audit was handed out to the Commissioners for review. Commissioner Pitt stated that it is very important that the agency maintain a presence all the time to help educate the legislators about the Gorge and its issues. Commissioner Palena noted that when the

Commissioners do not extend themselves, they appear aloof.

Chair Squier expressed the importance of Commissioners getting their expense forms in on time as an aid to balancing the books and closing the year.

9. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Notes taken by Bob McIntyre

Adopted the Columbia River Gorge Commission on August 14, 2001