

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2009

A complete record of this meeting is available on compact disc

Location: Hood River County Administration Building-601 State Street, Hood River, Oregon

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Harold Abbe
Judy Davis
Sara Grigsby
Diana Ross for Dan Harkenrider
Walt Loehrke
Lonny Macy
Carl McNew
Jim Middaugh
Joe Palena
Joyce Reinig

MEMBERS ABSENT

Jeffrey Condit-excused
Honna Sheffield-excused

STAFF PRESENT

Jill Arens, Executive Director
Tom Ascher, Planner
Brian Litt, Planning Manager
Jeff Litwak, Counsel
Kathy Obayashi-Bartsch, Specialist

AUDIENCE PRESENT

Achterman, Gail. Oregon Transportation Committee
Brannan, Gary. Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway
Davenport, Jessica. Skamania County Planning
Lang, Michael. Friends of the Columbia Gorge (FOCG)
Nichols, Rodger. *The Dalles Chronicle*
Moser, Carol. Washington Transportation Commission
O'Neal, Dan. Washington Transportation Commission
Parker, Philip. Washington Transportation Commission
Pitt Jr., Louie. Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Repar, Mary. Stevenson, WA
Stahlman, Kristin. Oregon Department of Transportation
Tell, Jason. Oregon Department of Transportation
Thiemann, Phyllis. Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association

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Others were present during the day.

Call to Order

Chair Reinig called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and role was called.

Approval of Minutes-January 13, 2009

Chair Reinig asked the Commission to review the draft minutes. Commissioner Davis requested a correction on page 7 under the NSA Manager's Report to read "He said a recreation forum *will be...*". Commissioner Abbe made a motion to adopt the minutes with the correction. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Public Comment

Mary Repar of Stevenson, WA many activities occurring outside of the Scenic Area impact the Scenic Area. She provided an article about the Western Governors Association which identified top sites for wind and solar power (see attachment A).

Opportunity for Treaty Tribe Nations to address Commission

As part of the consultation process treaty tribe members may speak about any issue on the agenda or any other matter.

Louie Pitt, Jr. of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs said he testified at the Commission's budget hearing in Salem, OR in support of the Commission. He provided an update on several projects including in-lieu fishing access sites, an administration building in Celilo and a plan for the Wyeth site. He said as part of Oregon's 150th year anniversary, the Governor appointed western and eastern Tribal representatives. He said there will be a meeting of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) next week and they will discuss plans for the 150th anniversary. Chair Reinig thanked Mr. Pitt for his testimony in Salem, OR supporting the Commission's work and budget.

Washington Transportation Commission

A presentation from Chair Dan O'Neal and Carol Moser, member of the Washington Transportation Commission informed the Gorge Commission and audience about future transportation needs and plans (see attachment B). Mr. O'Neal introduced Philip Parker also a member of the Commission who resides in Clark County. The statewide perspective and Gorge-region impacts were discussed.

Commissioners Middaugh and McNew asked about the transportation related concerns of safety and parking at The Hatchery and Doug's Beach. It's recognized that both sites are very popular recreation sites that have parking and traffic safety issues. Mr. O'Neal said there has not been much funding for transportation work in the Gorge area.

Commissioner Loehrke said the concept of taxing miles driven is a deterrent to tourism. He said people who live in rural areas often have to commute distances for work and such a tax may cause people to leave rural areas. Mr. O'Neal said the technology to

measure miles driven is scale-able. He said the pilot project showed that the tracking device caused people to be much more aware of their driving patterns. Ms. Moser said there are many concerns with this taxation concept and rural areas will certainly have concerns, especially as public transportation is not generally available in rural areas.

Jill Arens, Executive Director thanked them for the presentation and said as part of the Future Forum there was discussion about regional transportation. She said there will be a transportation summit in the region and will inform them of the meeting in the hope that they will attend.

Oregon Transportation Commission

A presentation from Chair Gail Achterman of the Oregon Transportation Commission and Jason Tell, Oregon Department of Transportation informed the Gorge Commission and audience about future transportation needs and plans (see attachment C).

Mr. Tell discussed the Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA) projects that specifically impact the Gorge. He said several bridges along the I-84 corridor are scheduled for construction or are underway. He said there are Statewide Transportation Improvements Program (STIP) Projects that are under construction, are completed or are scheduled. He said another program is ConnectOregon, which includes assistance for the Mt. Hood Railroad. He also discussed projects that have been identified for funding by the proposed federal stimulus package.

Ms. Achterman said one of the planned projects of the reconnection strategy is to create the means for a bicyclist to travel from Troutdale to Cascade Locks without using I-84.

Commissioner Grigsby asked about plans for commuter rail in Oregon. Ms. Achterman said the ConnectOregon program is planning some commuter rail in the Willamette Valley. She said railroads are privately owned and there is a difference in class one railroads and short-line railroads. She said commuter rail is typically applied to short-line railroads with the exception of Amtrak which is a class one railroad.

The Commission thanked all of the guest presenters.

Lunch 12-1:20 p.m.

Management Plan Briefing

Brian Litt, Planning Manager and Tom Ascher, Planner provided the third in a series of monthly briefings summarizing the Management Plan to assist Commissioners in future decision-making. This discussion focused on plan provisions for agricultural and forest lands and open space (see attachment D).

Litt said the land use designations of agriculture, forest and open space comprise 96% of all land in the Scenic Area with Scenic Area designations. He said land designation is an important management tool. Ascher provided a review of each land use designation

and the significant distinctions between various classifications. He said there are new trends in agriculture, such as vineyards and lavender farms that may warrant revisiting future land use designation and Management Plan changes.

Litt noted other emerging issues such as pressure on agricultural lands for residential development and other uses such as locations for weddings. He said the plan's provisions may need to be updated for issues such as criteria for approving farm dwellings, and noted significant changes in similar provisions in the 1990's under Oregon law. He said the guidelines for approving farm dwellings on agricultural land requires the applicant to have current agricultural use at significant levels before the dwelling is approved,

NSA Manager's Report and Assessment Committee Report

Diana Ross summarized the Assessment Committee meeting held earlier in the day. She said there will be a March 3rd meeting of Community Advisory Team (CAT) and the Technical Advisory Team (TAT) and a March 10th Assessment Committee meeting.

Ms. Ross said there is a possibility of using USFS data for a visibility indicator. She said USFS data will likely be used for species health. She said the air quality indicator will likely develop from the air quality agencies and USFS. Chair Reinig said she believes that a human health indicator is also important in the air quality indicator and may attract more support for the project. Ms. Ross also provided an update on indicators for economic, cultural and recreation areas (see attachment E).

The Commission discussed the next steps for the Indicators Project including a baseline report and how to inform agencies and the public about the project.

Ms. Ross said the Coyote Wall recreation plan has been released for public review. She said there are three proposed options (1) no action which would rely upon the current open space plan, (2) authorizing a trail system of existing trails with approximately 10 miles of reductions and only pedestrian use in the Catherine Creek area, and (3) authorizing a trail system of existing trails with approximately 10 miles of reductions and mixed use allowed seasonally in the Catherine Creek area. The last two options require dogs to be on leash.

Rules Committee Report

Commissioner Davis said the Rules Committee met to discuss Urban Area boundary revision issues of minor revision, prioritization of lands and regional analysis. She said the group is looking at these issues globally and have not made any decisions. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18th.

Commissioner Middaugh asked for Rules Committee notes to better understand the issues. Commissioner Davis said meeting notes will be provided.

Director's Report

Jill Arens, Executive Director thanked Litt and Ascher for the presentation. She emphasized the protection that is integral to the Management Plan. Arens said the Oregon budget hearing was held on February 5th and was continued on February 9th as the subcommittee was late starting the hearing. She said overall the presentation went well. Michael Lang, Louie Pitt Jr., and Commissioner Reinig provided public testimony. She said it's unlikely they will make any budget decisions until the Washington budget is finalized. She said the subcommittee is looking for ways to save funds and are not considering the Oregon Governor's Budget as a baseline.

Arens said a recreation projects appropriation request is being developed. She asked for input on projects which may be included in the request. She said Mid-Columbia Economic Development Department (MCEDD) and the Oregon Investment Board (OIB) are submitting an appropriation request for 25 million dollars for economic development. She asked the Commission for their support of the request which was granted.

Arens said a grant request of \$10,000 was submitted by CRITFC, PSU's Institute for Tribal Government and the Commission to host a climate change conference. Notification of the award results will be in September or October.

Arens said in Washington, a proposed bill would eliminate all boards and commissions of which there are over 470 groups in Washington. Yesterday, Governor Gregoire announced the decommissioning of 150 boards and commissions by 2010. The Gorge Commission was not listed.

Arens said the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Nez Perce have indicated their interest in forming a Cultural Advisory Committee. A Government to Government Summit is proposed in Toppenish, WA on or around June 9th which is their Treaty Day. Scheduling a summit around treaty signing time is an excellent way to learn more about treaties and their importance to the Indians. Arens asked Commissioner Palena to provide an update on the Tribal Affairs Committee.

Commissioner Palena, Chair of Tribal Affairs Committee said the group plans to visit all four Treaty Tribes this year.

Arens said the Chinese delegation sponsored by the Mercy Corp will be visiting the area in May. This is the group of Chinese officials that are being groomed for leadership in the Central Committee. The USFS and the Commission plan to conduct a forum at the Discovery Center on May 15th to discuss resource protection and economic development, as well as civic science. After the forum, they will attend a cultural exchange event in Lyle, WA. The cultural exchange is planned by the people of Lyle and the Tribal river people. This is the first time the citizens of Lyle and members of the River Tribes have worked collaboratively in this way.

Arens said the Discovery Center will be the focus of an Oregon Solutions Project to promote long term sustainability of the Center. She said Condit Dam is scheduled for

decommissioning as early as October 2009 but from discussion with Pacific-Corp, it is more likely to occur in October 2010.

Other Business

Commissioner Abbe said the External Affairs Committee met and discussed a draft of talking points that the Commission may use to discuss the Commission and the budget with editorial boards and legislators. He said this draft will be circulated and feedback is needed. If no major changes are made a final version will be sent to all Commissioners.

Executive Session

Chair Reinig adjourned the regular meeting at 2:35 p.m. and said the Commission will meet with counsel concerning current litigation and to consider information exempt from public inspection (350-11-006(1)(e) and (g)).

Adjourn 2:55 p.m.

Chair Reinig adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm and said no decisions or actions were made during the Executive Session.

Minutes approved 3-10-09
Notes taken KOB