



CHARLESTON OREGON SOLUTIONS PROJECT TEAM MEETING NOTES—APRIL 29, 2009

The Charleston Oregon Solutions Project Team met for the second time on April 29, 2008 in the OIMB Dining Hall from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The following members and interested parties were present: Sen. Joanne Verger, Rep. Arnie Roblan, Jeff Griffin, David Ford, Rusty Shield, Kathy Westenskow, Robin Elledge, Jeff Bishop, Jon Souder, Mike Graybill, Ron Kreskey, Megan Harper, DeWayne Jackson, Wendy Williford, Betsy Boyd, Karen Hyatt, Francis Somday, Nancy Hunter, Trish Mace, Jessica Musicar (The World), and project manager, Steve Bryant.

After introductions Steve Bryant offered comments about the Oregon Solutions process and his observations after several weeks of involvement in this project. He mentioned several similarities with an Oregon Solutions project in Vernonia where that economically challenged community is grappling with the need to form unique partnerships to replace their flood-damaged schools. After exploring the untapped potential of the Charleston area, Bryant challenged the group with a quote from renowned urban planner, Lewis Mumford who, upon visiting Oregon in 1938 offered this challenge to Portland business leaders (Steve paraphrased the quote—here is the actual quote):

"I have seen a lot of scenery in my life, but I have seen nothing more tempting as a home for man than this Oregon country. . . . You have a basis here for civilization on its highest scale, and I am going to ask you a question which you may not like. Are you good enough to have this country in your possession? Have you got enough intelligence, imagination and cooperation among you to make the best use of these opportunities? "

Steve then reminded the group that over \$200,000 has been spent on studies for the Coos Head and Charleston area over the past twelve years and that, for the most part, much remains to be learned and accomplished from the work that has already preceded this project. We now have a unique opportunity to tie together a number of loose ends from these studies if we think in big terms. For example, this area has numerous "spoke attractions and features, but it still lacks a central hub linking all of those activities. The challenge now is to connect the dots and to identify the appropriate scale and location of partner agency facilities and public amenities.

Next, Steve and the group reviewed the large aerial map of the Coos Head and Charleston area with a focus on each of the publicly owned lands and tribal property. Craig Young mention that the U of O has traditionally managed its 100 plus acres on Coos Head as a nature preserve. David Ford suggested that the whole of Coos Head should be considered

in our deliberations from the perspective of encouraging more activity in Charleston. Rep. Roblan suggested that we think of this Oregon Solutions project as creating the hub facility as an orientation point for activities centered around streams, estuaries, and the ocean. Often people come here because of one or two state parks and they would benefit from a central orientation point that would lead them to other area points of interest.

Jon Souder said that while he likes the approach of considering the larger vision several of the participants, like the Coos Watershed, have immediate needs for space and there needs to be a sense of urgency in this project. Sen. Verger responded that there isn't any reason that the connectivity issues couldn't be worked after the initial phase of development to meet the more immediate needs; however, she cautioned that development in Charleston faces challenges due to its unincorporated status. Hopefully, the Oregon Solutions process will help us overcome that challenge. Rep. Roblan said that bringing these organizations together will create synergy particularly if we plan for future needs as well as present needs. Steve Bryant suggested that one way of planning for the future is to undertake this project in phases as suggested in the draft project description with phase three being the focused look on how we connect the surrounding publicly owned and tribal lands.

Craig Young mention that it was Jeff Bishop who challenged him to think big and to not underestimate the potential of this project. Jeff responded by saying that, for example, the public would be interested in understanding the activities centered at OIMB and that we need to think of OIMB as an economic generator of activity that could be expanded upon. Craig said that OIMB is searching for a mechanism to provide staffing for a public visitor space including offices and personnel that have some interest in or obligation to a public information center.

Jon Souder offered that foundations such as Kresge like projects that have public/community functions and that we should be able to find support for the public interface piece.

Ron Kreskey said that Charleston needs visitor amenities and that we need to improve the appearance of the downtown district, particularly Boat Basin Drive. In fact, the Port is pursuing an ODOT Enhancement grant to make sidewalk and pedestrian improvements which will support at least Phase I of this project. The project team asked the Co-conveners to write a letter of support for this grant application which was due on Wednesday [Martin Callery drafted the letter and it was signed and sent out the next day].

The group then discussed the need to continue to work on ways to get people to come into Charleston even after this project is completed. Supporting activities such as additional retail, overnight accommodations, and other visitor attractions would help. However, a challenge is the lack of buildable space for these uses. Sen. Verger mentioned the attraction of eco-tourism activities and Charleston's ideal location. At the same time she said we should focus on activities that add to rather than change Charleston's unique character.

BLM has worked quite a bit with tourism and promotions. If this group identifies tourism as a goal another group that we might want to invite to the project team is the Chamber of Commerce.

Jeff Griffin suggested that the group consider how private investment might be interested in this facility. It was then suggested that the South Coast Development Corporation might be another entity that should be invited.

Jeff Bishop urged the group to stay pragmatic. You are talking about something that both complements and enhances by adding value to the current activities, particularly OIMB. Craig Young said that OIMB is recognized on an international basis. OIMB has drawn people from 50 different countries over the past several years as well as bringing in grant money in from state and federal sources.

The group then began a review of the Draft 1 Charleston Coastal and Ocean Life Complex Project Description

INTRODUCTION

The following modifications to the Introduction were suggested:

1. Mention that Charleston's population grows from 5-6,000 in winter to over 30,000 in peak season.
2. Include the number of visitors that come to the area state parks.
3. Include the number of public sector jobs in the area (each agency will need to provide an estimate).
4. Highlight the economic impact of OIMB to the area (every million dollars of research supports 42 direct jobs).
5. Expand description of what Charleston is other than "just the fishing port once you cross the bridge."
6. List the culturally significant sites in the area.
7. Add a new section with a paragraph describing the span of responsibility of each partner agency in the area.
8. Consider adding the Coos Historical Society as a partner agency (invite Ann Donnelly to the next meeting).

VISION STATEMENT

The group began a discussion about the tentative title of the project. Should it reference "estuary" and/or "watershed"? Perhaps it should emphasize the unique characteristics of the inland bay and the land and sea connection. Steve said that branding is very important and that we might not yet be ready to settle in on a name until we complete the project description. It may also be important to recognize that we need to name both the complex of interrelated components and the specific element described in Phase 2.

Craig mentioned a similar partnership in Florida involving the Smithsonian and the creation of an Ecosystem Center. Perhaps "coastal ecosystem center" should be

considered. He also suggested that it will be important to connect this facility to the ongoing intellectual enterprise at OIMB. Sen. Verger said that the name needs to state what this is and what this is not. Ron Kreskey offered that the current vision statement excludes reference to private enterprise and that we should include that possibility.

Betsy Boyd asked, are we talking about a multi-use or multi-user facility? Perhaps shared user facility is the correct term. David Ford said that it seems like education is a big part of this and we should focus on the education and research aspect of the project. Craig said that OIMB works with 4,000 local school kids and that they have an agreement with SWOCC to work with their students. In addition, OIMB conducts numerous seminars that often require going elsewhere due to space limitations in Charleston. It would be ideal to keep more of this economic generating activities within the community.

EXISTING ELEMENTS

Rep. Roblan suggested enhancing the description of how the Port supports the other partner activities. Jon Souder echoed that the description needs to characterize the relationships of the various programs to each other. We should also change the order to describe the partner activities before discussing the properties. In addition we should expand the description of Coos County's role in the area including properties that they control including the fishing pier, the visitors center, and Bastendorf RV campground.

The conversation again returned to naming issues. Sen. Verger suggested "Charleston Coastal life Complex". Craig urged caution about using the name "life" in the title.

Wendy and Francis discussed the process that the Tribe is going through within their membership to create a vision for their property on Coos Head. They are not yet at the point where they can say they can be a partner in a project like this but they are encouraged by the discussion. They also mentioned that they are trying to acquire Gregory point.

PHASE 2 ELEMENTS COMMENTS

It was agreed that each agency needs to submit comments to Steve on their space requirements for the next draft.

The Tribe was then invited to describe their plans for Coos head. Francis Somday discussed the current clean-up activities on the site and progress toward obtaining clearance for further development on significant portions of the property. There are two aquifers on the property. There may be a portion of the site that is OK for groundwater use. Oregon DEQ is really doing a lot of work to make sure the site is cleaned up. The GSA encouraged tribe to apply for the site as a seat of government. The tribe is now working to formulate a vision. Francis said that their approach will be to listen as

participants in this process and work to keep one another informed. He emphasized that there is a native culture and history here. Some of this has to be private. Other parts of it can be public. The Coos head site holds great educational opportunity and economic opportunity. They are asking the question of what will draw people to Coos Head and Charleston. Crystal Sojii is working with the tribes as a planner/facilitator. Word is that a destination resort won't work for this site. They've had to pull back on their initial schedule because of the contamination issues. Because there are structures on the facility and the Navy is on the site, they received a million dollars to run replacement water lines to the site. They expect that their planning process will be complete by mid June followed by setting up zoning for the site and developing a phased construction plan. The federal government put some restrictions on the deed but as property is cleaned up these restrictions will be lifted.

This property is the only property returned to the tribes from the federal government, this property is VERY important. Tribe views Coos Head as "all we have". If other lands were in the inventory of the tribe there may not be so much pressure to do so much on this one spot.

Kathy Westenskow from BLM talked briefly about their property on Coos Head. They have no active projects although they have been in discussions with the Tribe regarding lands surrounding the Tribe property. The Tribes are looking for the right piece of federal legislation that is moving and can be used as a vehicle for discussing ownership transfer.

Steve Bryant suggested that the group form a siting committee to begin matching the facility needs with candidate properties. Jeff Bishop said that if the Coast Guard property was under consideration sooner is better than later and that contact should begin with the congressional delegation. The group agreed to have a siting committee meet to explore site options before the next meeting. The committee members will be Sen. Verger, Craig Young, Mike Graybill, Jeff Bishop, and Jon Souder. Steve Bryant will provide staff support.

Betsy Boyd has had preliminary discussions with Smith, Wyden, and Defazio's offices regarding legislation to authorize a transfer of Coast Guard property. A primary condition of their support is likely to be that there be no net loss of housing. CG authorization happens annually, and every other year alternating between bills that originate in the House and Senate. There are frequent opportunities to fold property transfers into legislation.

Jeff Bishop suggested that we should start working with delegation and start work to establish highest and best use for the present Coast Guard property. The housing is mostly for itinerate personnel. If you are pursuing your dream your project may involve some form of federal appropriation. Regarding Port properties as an option, giving up any income producing property will be challenging. The Port is actively looking to acquire additional properties in the Charleston area. The Port does not want to have any negative impact on our mission.

Sen. Verger expressed the concern that the Coast Guard site is not all that visible. Ron Kreskey reported that this is not the only federal property under discussion. Winchester Bay is also working on this.

Rep. Roblan thought that there might still be Port property that might accommodate this kind of project. The marina has great vistas; however there are parking needs. Still, we need to keep all these locations on the table. Jeff Griffin suggested that we begin a search of available properties in the one to three acre size.

Steve indicated that the group may soon want to seek partner agency support for employing additional technical expertise for concept development and planning work.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the full work group will be Tuesday, May 27 at 9:00 a.m. in the OIMB Dining Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.