



Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Museum

July 15, 2009

Background

The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Wasco County Historical Museum, located in The Dalles, serves as the official interpretive center for the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. The spectacular facility on Crates Point overlooking the river provides exhibits that highlight the natural beauty, geologic history, and rich heritage of the area.

At the request of Wasco County and the Discovery Center Board, and with financial support from the Oregon Investment Board and the Oregon Legislature, in January 2009 Governor Ted Kulongoski designated the Discovery Center and Wasco County Historical Museum an Oregon Solutions Project. The goal of the project was to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Discovery Center by encouraging new partnerships, improving the governance structure, and developing a collaborative business model to help alleviate the debt burden carried by Wasco County and attract future funding for the Discovery Center.

Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, and Keith Mobley, a local attorney from The Dalles area, were appointed by Governor Kulongoski to convene the Oregon Solutions Team. Team members included representatives from the:

- Discovery Center Board and Staff
- Wasco County Court
- City of The Dalles
- US Forest Service
- Port of The Dalles
- The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce
- North Wasco County School District 21
- Mid-Columbia Medical Center
- Bicoastal Media
- SoundVision Productions
- LWA PR, Inc.
- Meadow Outdoor Advertising
- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Columbia River Gorge Commission
- Columbia Bancorp
- Google
- Oregon Economic & Community Development Dept.

- Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- Oregon Investment Board
- Wasco County Economic Development Commission
- High Desert Museum Board

Private citizens from Hood River and The Dalles also assisted the Team and a representative of the Governor's Economic Revitalization Team attended the meetings. The project was funded by the Oregon State Legislature and by a grant from the Oregon Economic Development Program Fund, made available through the United States Forest Service, through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act appropriation and administered by the State of Oregon Economic Development Department and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District.

Outcomes

The full Team met four times between March and June 2009. Six workgroups met more frequently to develop recommendations around key issues and needs of the Discovery Center identified by the full Team: marketing, program & exhibits, operations and maintenance, infrastructure debt retirement, building the endowment, and forming regional partnerships.

Workgroup recommendations were provided to a small group of Team members who drafted the outline for a new business plan for the Discovery Center. The new business plan will integrate input from the Oregon Solutions process, the strategic plan prepared by the Discovery Center Board, and material prepared for accreditation of the museum.

A Board Revitalization Team, including members of the Discovery Center Board and the Oregon Solutions Team, will oversee completion and implementation of the new business plan, restructuring Board membership, and building Board and staff capacity for future funding of the Discovery Center.

Wasco County will be assisted by Oregon Solutions Team members in investigating the possibility of a tax and/or bond initiative to retire the \$663,932 in remaining infrastructure debt incurred when the Discovery Center was constructed.

Individual Oregon Solutions Team members and organizations also made unique commitments, as described below.

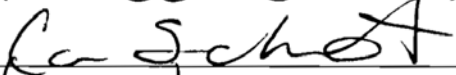
Specific Pledges and Agreements

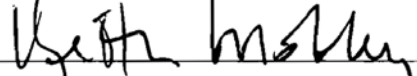
Oregon Solutions Team members recognize that the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Museum, a key attraction of the national scenic area, is a unique and treasured asset to the city of The Dalles, the broader community of Wasco County and the Gorge, and to national and international visitors who can learn more about the physical and cultural history of the Columbia River Gorge while enjoying the natural beauty of the area. The Agreements that follow, while not legally binding, represent a public statement in support of the Discovery Center and intent to fulfill commitments made as part of the Oregon Solutions collaborative process.

Board Revitalization Team

Oregon Solutions Team members will work with members of the existing Discovery Center Board to: a) ensure completion and implementation of the new business plan, b) identify and pursue strategies for attracting and retaining active and engaged Board members, c) define expectations for Board roles and responsibilities, d) seek opportunities to provide training to Board members, and e) build the capacity of the Board and staff to raise money for the Discovery Center. The Board Revitalization Team met on June 29, 2009 and will meet as needed thereafter.

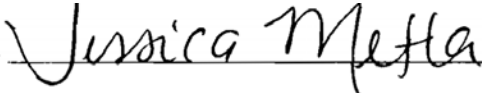
Bill Dick 

Carina Schmidt 

Keith Mobley 


Curtis Baker _____

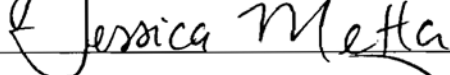
Lee Weinstein 

Jessica Metta 

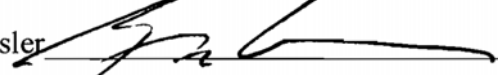
Completion of Business Plan

The Wasco County Economic Development Commission will provide project management services through their contract with the Mid Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) to complete the new Business Plan for the Discovery Center. Total cost for approximately 40 hours of work is estimated to be \$2,500. Elements of the Discovery Center Board’s strategic plan, recommendations from the Oregon Solutions Team workgroups, and the museum accreditation document will be assimilated to complete the draft Business Plan begun by the Oregon Solutions Team. Travel Oregon, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department and the Port of The Dalles will each provide \$500 to MCEDD to supplement the Wasco County Economic Development Commission investment in completing the plan. The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce will assist in developing the Marketing component of the Plan.

Joan Silver 

Jessica Metta 

Todd Davidson 

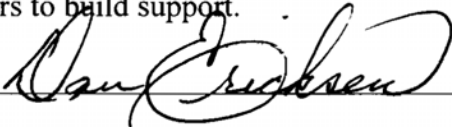
Lynn Schoessler 

Andrea Klaas 

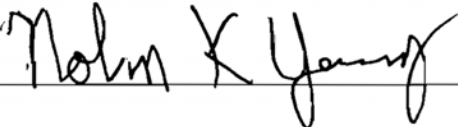
Dana Schmidling 

Debt Retirement/Reduction

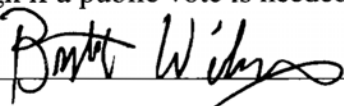
1. The Wasco County Court agrees to investigate the possibility of a tax or bond measure to retire the \$663,932 remaining in infrastructure debt for the Discovery Center. This effort will include discussions with the Chamber of Commerce, the Oregon Lodging Association, hotel/motel owners and operators in the area, and other community leaders to build support.

Judge Dan Ericksen 

2. The City of The Dalles will continue to consider, each fiscal year, contribution of up to \$25,000 to cover any annual shortage in debt retirement funds from any approved tax or bond.

Nolan Young, City Manager 

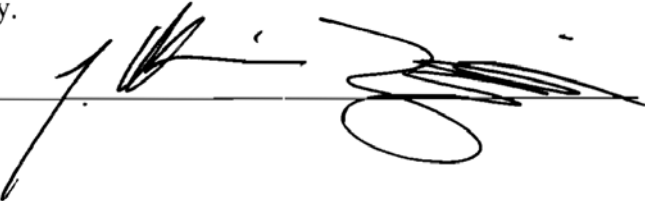
3. Brett Wilcox pledges \$25,000 to the Discovery Center conditioned upon successful agreement to retire the debt through a tax or bond measure, or to help fund a campaign if a public vote is needed.

Brett Wilcox 

Marketing

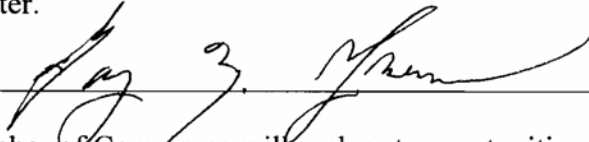
1. Meadow Outdoor Advertising will provide the Discovery Center with a free billboard for one year, location to be determined upon discussion with Discovery Center staff and dependent upon space and location availability. The design process should begin right away, and Meadow is prepared to meet with Discovery Center staff as soon as requested.

Meadow will also take on the project of establishing a permanent Governmental Unit Sign (GUS) for the Discovery Center on I-84 east of the Fish Bridge visible to westbound traffic. Meadow will find an acceptable location, secure a ground lease from a willing landowner, acquire the permit from ODOT, and then build, design and install the sign display.

Chris Zukin 

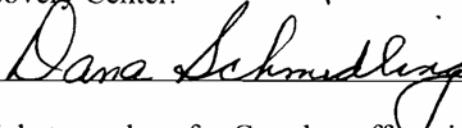
2. Bicoastal Media has pledged and is already providing \$30,000 in radio time for 200 for the Discovery Center.

Gary Grossman



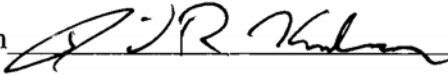
3. The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce will seek out opportunities for cooperative marketing with the Discovery Center.

Dana Schmidling



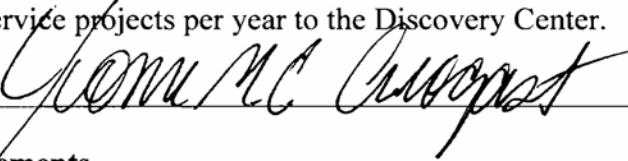
4. Google has purchased ticket vouchers for Google staff to visit the Discovery Center. Google intends to set up a Google Moderator Series to encourage Googlers to generate ideas for exhibits and marketing, based on their experience at the Discovery Center, and Google will share results of the Moderator Series with the Discovery Center. On July 15, 2009 Google will host a community outreach event on The Dalles Google campus to benefit the Discovery Center.

Dave Karlson



5. The Mid-Columbia Medical Center will work to identify marketing and program partnership opportunities with the Waters Edge building and as the River Front Trail is developed. Mid-Columbia Medical Center will commit a minimum of two employee volunteer service projects per year to the Discovery Center.

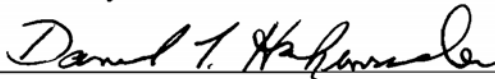
Yvonne Arbogast



Other Pledges and Agreements

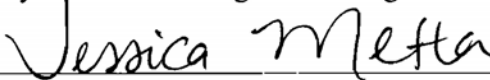
The U.S. Forest Service pledges \$5,000 to purchase a high resolution, remote controlled theater projector for the Discovery Center in the summer of 2009.

Dan Harkenrider



Upon completion of the Discovery Center Business Plan, MCEDD pledges future assistance to the Discovery Center staff in grant writing

Jessica Metta



Columbia Gorge Community College will seek opportunities to integrate the Discovery Center into regional economic strategies and Dan Spatz agrees to serve on the Board of the Discovery Center starting in the summer of 2009.

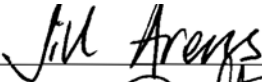
Dr. Frank Toda

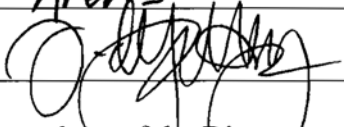


Dan Spatz




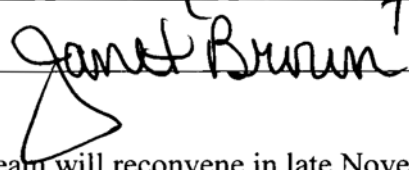
As Executive Director of the Columbia River Gorge Commission, Jill Arens will work to strengthen relationships among the four treaty tribes and the Discovery Center. These efforts may include introductory meetings, ideas for Native American cultural events or displays at the Discovery Center, classes or programs on various aspects of tribal culture, outreach and education. Jill will continue to identify and encourage regional partnerships in the Columbia Gorge across geographic, political, cultural and tribal borders. Jackleen de La Harpe, Project Manager, PSU Institute for Tribal Government, will assist Jill in these efforts.

Jill Arens  _____

Jackleen de La Harpe  _____

The Governor commends the members of the Discovery Center Oregon Solutions Team for their efforts and commitments made in this Declaration of Cooperation, The Governor's Economic Revitalization Team supports and will work with the Discovery Center Board as appropriate to reach their goals.

Ray Naff, Director of Governor's ERT  _____

Janet Brown, Regional Coordinator, ERT  _____

The Discovery Center Oregon Solutions Team will reconvene in late November or early December 2009 to provide a follow-up status report for the Governor's office.