



MILTON-FREEWATER LEVEE PROJECT TEAM MINUTES

December 8, 2009

The Milton-Freewater Levee Project Team met Tuesday, December 8, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. in the Albee Room of the Milton-Freewater Library. This was the third team meeting to date.

The following project team members present were: Senator David Nelson, Milton-Freewater Mayor Lewis Key, Project Manager Dick Townsend(Oregon Solutions), Linda Hall(City of Milton-Freewater), George Gillette(M-F Water Control District), Vern Rodighiero(M-F Water Control District), Cheryl York(M-F Chamber of Commerce), Chris Shirley(DLCD), Sarah Branum(BPA), Bill Duke(ODFW), Brian Wolcott(WWBWC), George Ruby(ODOT), Scott Fairley(Governor's Office), Herb Bessey(U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Mike Garton(M-F Community Member), Jed Volkman(Umatilla Confederated Tribes), Jonathan Thompson (Umatilla Confederated Tribes), Diane Driscoll(National Marine Fisheries), Stan Heller(Army Corps of Engineers) and Ron Brown(M-F Community Member).

Others in attendance were: Kathleen Cathey(Senator Wyden's Field Rep.), Alice Nelson(Senator Nelson staff), Tracy Schwarz(U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Samantha Bates(East Oregonian Newspaper), Melanie Hall(Valley Herald Newspaper) and Leanne Steadman(City of Milton-Freewater).

Senator David Nelson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Milton-Freewater Levee Project Team. Those present introduced themselves. He asked if anyone had any changes to the October 20, 2009 meeting minutes. Herb Bessey suggested changing the wording on page 3, last Paragraph from "repairs of levee" to "certification of project". The minutes were approved with the amendment.

Senator Nelson reported, although he didn't have an official notice, he had heard that FEMA was going to issue the same initial maps that declared the vast majority of the City of Milton-Freewater to be in a floodplain. He stated Dick Townsend, Project Manager will have the draft copies of the Declaration of Cooperation for the January 2010 meeting.

Senator Nelson turned the meeting over to George Gillette, Chairman of the Milton-Freewater Water Control District (MFWCD). George announced that the MFWCD was notified their insurance would expire December 31, 2009 due to the decertification of the levee. The board members were going to meet and review their options as a district. Worst case scenario would be that all five board members would resign. According to George, the special district would go back to Umatilla County to try and find citizens to step up and apply for the vacant positions. If the board could not be filled then the special district would dissolve and there would be no entity to sponsor a bond measure for the repair and maintenance of the levee. George said the current

board members were going to hold a meeting and discuss their options. He will contact Dick Townsend and Linda Hall of any changes as they occur.

Project Manager, Dick Townsend reviewed the importance of the project and what would happen if the levee was not repaired. This included: increased cost to property owners through mortgage flood insurance; economic decline from imposed building restrictions and additional insurance costs; continued levee deterioration raising safety concerns for lives and property; local community and political pressures; and State and Federal oversight consequences. The Project Team also offered the thoughts that fish and wildlife resources, and public investments (infrastructure) would also be in danger. Next, Dick Townsend reviewed what he felt was the possible timeline for the Milton-Freewater levee project. In the next month or two, FEMA will release another map which will have a timeline of six months to be adopted by the City of Milton-Freewater. Once adopted, that will put into effect the requirement for flood insurance to be purchased by property owners. The election timeline to have a ballot measure go before the voters would preferably be May or November. There are only two elections per year that have a voter's pamphlet and giving voters information on the measure would be very useful. With the knowledge of which election the measure would be placed on, it would allow for the Public Information Committee to get some information out to the voters so they understand the project prior to voting on the ballot measure. The timeline also showed a request to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to perform another levee inspection to be sure all the deficiencies would be included at the time of repairs. Engineering designs and permits would then be drawn and staging of construction would begin. Following repairs and successful engineering certification, accreditation information would be forwarded to FEMA to revise the floodplain map. This could take anywhere from six months to twenty-four months. The timeline was projected over a twelve month period.

Linda Hall, Milton-Freewater City Manager and chair of the Public Information Committee reported there was a lot of unknown information. She posed two questions to the group: "If all the members of the M-F Water Control District resign from the board, then who would sponsor a bond measure?" and, "What amount would the bond measure be for?" The committee would rely on local civic groups and other local board members to help get information out to the community.

Mike Garton asked when the FEMA maps were coming out. Chris Shirley (DLCD) felt it would be less than sixty days. She stated the flood insurance would be tied to property owners who still held a mortgage.

Ron Brown suggested moving forward with compiling information and with preparing the ballot measure for the May 2010 ballot.

Linda Hall quoted a flood insurance rate for a 2500 square foot home with no basement being \$3257.00 per year. Cheryl York stated her home which has a basement would be \$2267.00 per year. Chris Shirley said there was a grandfather clause for older homes.

Dick Townsend informed the project team that the Special Districts of Oregon had a \$6,000 grant available to assist in a community attitude survey.

Ron Brown and Cheryl York both volunteered to be part of the Public Information Committee.

Dick Townsend reported the Corp of Engineers has offered to re-inspect the levee to locate any new deficiencies that might need repair. Herb Bessey said the periodic inspection would be under the American Reinvestment Recovery Act (ARRA) program and should be inspected in the next month or two. They will inspect all that they can see, given vegetation constraints.

Dick Townsend thanked Herb and the Corp of Engineers for agreeing to put the levee on the inspection list.

Ron Brown felt if the levee was inspected in a month or two that would not allow enough time to put together all the information needed for a bond measure for the May election. He felt all the deficiencies should be known prior to going out for a bond measure.

A discussion was held regarding bond measures and what exactly should be asked for. Linda Hall felt bond measures were for big projects and perhaps a special levy could be for the operation and maintenance cost associated with the project.

Stan Heller (USACE) said even with the new inspection that may not give the absolute total cost for all the corrections.

Dick Townsend reviewed the steps in obtaining accreditation of the levee. This included obtaining a consultant study and review of the levee deficiencies. Once the repairs are completed the USACE could inspect and return the levee to the Rehabilitation and Inspection Program. Once the levee qualifies for the Corp of Engineers Rehabilitation program, if there is significant flood damage, the USACE would step in and help with repairing the damage. A consultant, USACE or local government could do the certification work and have a project engineer sign off on it. FEMA would then review and recognize the levee repairs. Chris Shirley said the cost of the consultant could be less if they are informed of the whole project from the very beginning.

Jed Volkman (CTUIR) asked once the levee has been repaired and gets accredited, would the USACE continue with inspections.

Herb Bessey said the inspections would continue and notice would be given to the M-F Water Control District of needed repairs and problems.

Jed Volkman suggested setting up a meeting regarding the vegetation to come to a middle ground between the USACE and Tribes. USACE would like to see more of the vegetation removed, but vegetation also helps fish. Having the water meander is very important to juvenile fish and gives them a much better chance of survival.

Herb agreed that vegetation does help the structure of the levee but it doesn't help when there is a 100 year old flood that would rip out all the vegetation. It is very difficult to also see through the vegetation to perform a true inspection of the condition of the levee.

Jed said there was much research that showed vegetation was an asset to levees. He reviewed some documentation.

Brian Wolcott, Chair of Work Group summarized their earlier meeting. He reported \$600,000 was the original budget for levee repairs, indexed for inflation it could equal \$700,000 or more. This did not include certification or accreditation costs. Couse Creek down cutting and levee toe repairs are important issues for fish passage in this area. CTUIR is working with BPA to possibly repair the toe of levee there plus design and construct a better fish passage area. The concrete spillway structure at the Nursery Bridge has failing concrete on both sides. The project is still looking for repair funding and partners to help repair this site. Possible affected partners are CTUIR, BPA and Umatilla County. A USACE design has been drawn for A-Weirs and is in the same area as needed repairs on the levee. Sponsorship is still being considered. BPA and CTUIR will be discussing possible sponsorship for this Corps project. Senator Nelson commended BPA and CTUIR for showing this great partnership.

Brian Wolcott said there's still a need for addressing the long term issue of maintenance of the river and levee. Either reduce flow of the river or put in additional grade control structures. He said there are OWEB and EPA grants available. There was consensus expressed by the Project Team to encourage the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council to explore these. Brian Wolcott will explore getting an OWEB or EPA grant application to determine what options might be possible and get engineering estimates for long term solutions to levee problems and maintenance such as levee setbacks and channel reservoirs.

Senator Nelson felt long term maintenance should also be a part of the team's solution.

Vern Rodighiero suggested creating more levee set back areas to slow the flow of the river, possibly off channel reservoirs.

Lewis Key (Mayor, City of M-F) said that had been discussed in the past and surveys had been completed.

Chris Shirley (DLCD) then spoke saying the FEMA map was expected in the next 30 to 60 days. She presented a brochure, "So, You Live Behind a Levee!" She circulated copies of the brochure that explained in part the notion of "Flood reduction not flood protection". She also stated DLCD would agree to help with public outreach workshops. Linda Hall thanked her.

Ron Brown asked who would be the best agency to take on the district if the M-F Water Control District all stepped down.

Linda Hall said the City, County and Special Districts' attorneys are working on issuing a legal opinion on who would take that role.

Herb Bessey said the original sponsors were Umatilla County, City of Milton and the City of Freewater.

Dick Townsend will be drafting a Declaration of Cooperation for each partner on the Oregon Solutions Project Team for the January 2010 meeting. It will consist of a statement of what he felt each partner can offer and contribute to the project.

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, January 26, 2010 in the Albee Room of the Library with the sub-committees meeting earlier in the day.

Senator Nelson suggested raising \$50,000 in a pool to help get preliminary tasks started.

Chris Shirley suggested developing a form to keep track of time to submit as a match for grant funds.

There being no other business, Senator Nelson adjourned the meeting at 2:57 p.m.

Previous team meeting dates;
September 14, 2009
October 20, 2009