



Harney County Economic Development

Minutes
Community Response Team
Wednesday February 6, 2019

Attendees:

Laurie O’Conner-Harney County Library	Luke Hemphill-L&M Investments
Tonya Fox-TEC and WorkSource	Jeff Schmidt-Sage DesignWorks
Jan Oswald-Gourmet & Gadgets	Jen Keady-Family Eyecare
Bob Oswald-Gourmet & Gadgets	Forrest Keady-Central Hotel
Kirby Letham-City of Hines	Rick Paul-Community Member
Lola Johnson-HC Chamber of Commerce	Scott Fairley-Business Oregon
Andy Swingle-Selco Credit Union	LaNeva Gilliam-Main Street Group
Fred Flippence-Harney Electric Cooperative	Larry Gilliam-Community Member
Merle Reid-The Pine Room, Reid’s Country Store	Dauna Wensenk-City of Burns
Anna Gahley-Small Business Owner	Judy Erwin-Community Member
Tracy Kennedy-Burns Paiute Tribe	George Heinz-Harney County Biomass
Darlene Hicks-Community Member	Les Penning-Oregon Trail Electric Coop.
Pete Runnels-Harney County Judge	Zelly-Community Member
Patty Dorroh- Harney County Commissioner	Jim Campbell-Community Member
Mark Owens-Harney County Commissioner	Greg Smith-Harney County Economic Development
Curt Blackburn-Jett Blackburn Real Estate	Denise Rose-Harney County Economic Development
Courtney Crowell-Governor’s Office	Brad Attig-Foundry Collective
Rhonda Karges-Burns BLM	Jeremy Pointere-Harney County IT
Heidi Kokhar-Rural Development Initiative	Keith Grunberg-Hunter Communications
Brenda Smith-High Desert Partnership	Samantha Ridderbusch-CenturyLink
Regina Dunbar-FarmShoppe	Bryan Adams-LS Networks
Justin Chase-Mi Wave Internet	Neil Neiwert-Wilderness Wireless
Lee Seckinger-Mi Wave Internet	Michael Bonner-Wilderness Wireless
Jeff Graham-Mi Wave Internet	Kathy Rementeria-DHS
Cheryl Smith-Community Member	

1. **Greg Smith** welcomed the group and called the meeting to order. Brief introductions were made around the room.
2. **Old Business:** January meeting minutes were sent by email with the February agenda. It was moved and seconded to approve minutes. All voted in favor.
3. **New Business:**
 - A. **Regular Reports:** The focus groups will hold their monthly reports until the March meeting in order to provide enough time for the internet discussion.

Harney County Court, Pete Runnels- It's budget time at the county right now so they are busy working through that process. The Opportunity Analysis is moving along on schedule and will identify lands for industrial and commercial growth within the Urban Growth Boundary.

Burns Paiute Tribe, Tracy Kennedy-The new General Manager Sally Bartlett will start soon and she will be attending meetings in the future. The tribe has started building a hemp processing plant on the Old Camp Casino site and a flyer with details was provided. They anticipate employing 30-40 people.

City of Burns, Dauna Wensenk – the new water well and fuel grants for the airport are in and awaiting a decision. The city has been notified that they are still in the running. Dauna read a list of tasks that city employees provide.

City of Hines, Kirby Letham – The Dollar Tree is set to open on February 28th. Kirby is keeping busy settling in and getting acclimated.

Business Oregon, Scott Fairley –The Economic Opportunity Analysis process should help the cities determine if there is an adequate supply of industrial lands. Business Oregon is working with the unincorporated city of Crane on a water system and Scott is meeting regularly with several local businesses.

Harney County Economic Development, Greg Smith – Working on connecting with Local 290 Plumbers for apprenticeship programs and contacts. Five new clients have contacted us in January as well as continued communication with 10 existing entrepreneurs. The website has been updated to show more current CRT information. Representative Findley and Senator Bentz are off to a great start in Salem, representing Eastern Oregon.

Office of the Governor, Courtney Crowell – Information was shared about workforce housing pilot projects, evaluation of lands, and housing inventory work being conducted in eastern Oregon.

B. Focus Group: Broadband

Judge Runnels started the discussion about broadband and internet capacity in the county with a power point presentation about the history of fiber here and how the warm site came to be located in Burns. He also provided an overview of current services. He then introduced representatives of internet providers for Harney County.

CenturyLink – Samanth Ridderbusch outlined the history of the company's merger with Level 3, who is more of a backbone provider based company. She acknowledged that the process has been challenging and staff turn over has hindered their ability to serve all the regions they now cover. In 2018 investments were made in the county to improve internet infrastructure and they have received CAF (Connect America Funds) dollars for upgrades in the county. They are also hoping that some of the new funding and capital improvement projects (State and Federal) may make infrastructure growth more affordable in rural areas.

Hunter Communications - Keith Grunberg described Hunter Communications and their current markets. They are based in the Grants Pass area and are currently installing in Lake County. While they are not currently in Harney County, the company has expressed an interest in growing their market and Harney County makes sense. They have experience with USDA rural internet development grants and they are Oregon based.

LS Networks - Byran Adams also shared company background. They are an Oregon based network owned by co-ops. He outlined their current fiber capacity in Burns and Hines and the new installation on Burns Butte to serve wireless providers. They have interest from 46 businesses to provide the fiber installation they offered in Burns, but 19 of the businesses are outside the boundary map. Hines was not included in the offer. He described the cost differences in rural provision of fiber versus metropolitan areas and noted that fiber to each home or business is very expensive to the end user.

Mi Wave Internet – Jeff Graham talked about the definition of broadband for the group. It is not specifically fiber but a speed definition. Mi Wave can offer this speed in wireless format in many areas of the county. Since the company has purchased the ESD towers they are able to reach the Crane/Buchanan areas, Diamond Valley. They have planned extensions to outlying areas.

Wilderness Wireless – Neil Neiwert, Founder and Owner shared his company history as well. He had an engineering background and was initially solving a problem in his own neighborhood with internet availability. As the user group grew, cost went down but the shared data caused slow downs. He commented on the similarity to a "land rush" for fiber spectrum and how the demand for additional capacity and the reality of cost in low population areas will continue to be a challenge for rural areas.

Questions and discussion:

What about satellite internet? Wilderness responded that currently the satellite companies can't effectively overcome the distance and latency issues. There is an attempt to launch a Global Satellite ISP but it is just in the testing stages and is at least 5+ years in the future.

Maupin has city wide internet, can we get that? LS Network and others responded; the model is public private partnership and LS was one of the partners. They will not be doing this again. But conversation continued, Bryan ventured that rural internet provision is not a single entity solution, but is likely to be a combined solution of the players currently in place.

Would additional fiber in the towns help with the buffering, poor quality and not getting the speed we pay for? Multiples responded, maybe. General frustrations were expressed and the answers were varied. Some issues could be resolved by more capacity, fiber or something else. But the factor that seems to impact us most here is always usage compared to infrastructure.

Should the county be looking at fiber on poles or does it need to be buried? LS and others responded that for the most part aerial can work but if we hope to attract any tech driven businesses such as call centers or data storage, they will want buried fiber.

Judge Runnels then asked each company representative about ongoing interest in serving Harney County.

LS Network is interested in continuing to provide backbone and even expand but not as interested in servicing the end users. They would like to be able to provide more capacity to the wireless companies such as Mi Wave and Wilderness.

CenturyLink has already met with Judge Runnels before this meeting to provide details about their 2019-20 roll out of expanded service and capacity.

Wilderness Wireless hopes to expand its customer base here and is interested in increased fiber capacity that will enable them to do so.

MiWave also looking at expansion and has already identified a potential growth landscape.

Hunter Communications is interested in coming to Harney County and would be interested in working with a public-private network.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM. The next meeting will be March 6, 2019 at 5:30 PM.

UNAPPROVED

