

**OREGON CASCADES WEST COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
October 26, 2017**

**MEMBERS:** Mayor Sharon Konopa, Albany; Commissioner Anne Schuster, Benton County; Mayor Biff Traber, Corvallis; Councilor Bob Elliott, Lebanon; and Councilor Dann Cutter, Waldport.

**STAFF:** Executive Director Fred Abousleman; Deputy Director Lydia George; Finance Director Sue Forty; Community and Economic Development (CED) Director Phil Warnock; Senior and Disability Services (SDS) Director Randi Moore; Community Services Program (CSP) Manager Jennifer Moore; and Executive Assistant Jennifer Kelley.

**VIDEO:** Commissioner Bill Hall, Lincoln County.

**GUESTS:** City Manager Mark Shepard, Corvallis; City Administrator Scott McDowell, Brownsville.

The Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments' (OCWCOG) Executive Committee Meeting was called to order by Chair Sharon Konopa at 9:03 am on October 26, 2017 at the Cascades West Center in Albany.

**1. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Introductions were made.

Commissioner Anne Schuster motioned to approve the August 24, 2017 Executive Committee meeting minutes, Mayor Biff Traber seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**2. Advocacy Presentation**

Executive Director Fred Abousleman introduced Brownsville City Administrator Scott McDowell and Corvallis City Manager Mark Shepard, and stated that they wished to attend today's Executive Committee meeting to discuss advocacy surrounding legislation. Executive Director Abousleman stated that City/County Managers/Administrators had been discussing this topic at their monthly meetings. City Administrator McDowell and City Manager Shepard had agreed to present to the Committee on behalf of this group.

City Administrator McDowell thanked the Committee, and presented a walk-on handout for reference. City Administrator McDowell stated that at City/County Manager/Administrator meetings, discussions have occurred around policy action and advocacy. Suggestions have been made for approaching these issues, focusing on advocacy for programs and services, building better relationships with Representatives, and bringing more awareness by broadening the context of what is happening in both large and small cities. City Administrator McDowell stated that Oregon Legislature Annual Sessions Amendment, Measure 71 (Measure 71) has increased the Legislature's workload by more than double, and over 4,000 bills were considered this year alone.

City Administrator McDowell stated that he has spoken with Chair Konopa previously, regarding having a subcommittee to engage with one another, find similarities, and develop

plans to move forward. He added that if multiple jurisdictions come together to talk to multiple Representatives simultaneously, a broader base of voters would be represented.

City Administrator McDowell stated that local officials represent a line of defense for their jurisdictions, and currently decisions are being made by people who may not understand the impact of those decisions. He added that by working together and potentially utilizing the skill sets of those who have previously done advocacy work, all jurisdictions would be collectively better represented.

City Administrator McDowell stated that the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) is now overburdened due to Measure 71, creating the inability for action on many issues. City Administrator McDowell suggested starting the process of collaboration slowly, and referenced the handout provided as potential ideas for consideration. He added that there is currently the structure in place for collaboration, via the monthly City/County Manager/Administrator meetings, and suggested potentially inviting Representatives to those meetings on a yearly basis. City Administrator McDowell stated that in initial efforts to reach out to Representatives, there has been positive feedback regarding the potential to hear from multiple officials from multiple jurisdictions, all at one meeting.

City Manager Shepard stated that the City of Corvallis has a robust response to Legislature, and tries to share any information they gain. However, if outreach could be done in a way that reaches multiple Representatives at one time, and those Representatives are hearing from multiple jurisdictions on the same issue, there is potential to have an impact on issues beyond those LOC takes on. City Manager Shepard emphasized the importance of early outreach, as most legislative work is one behind the scenes, months ahead of legislative sessions, as there is not enough time during the sessions to gather all needed information on an issue.

City Manager Shepard stated that jurisdictions need to be more proactive as increases in lobbying are sometimes pushing legislative votes in a way that is counter to what jurisdictions may want.

Mayor Traber stated that having a common voice and consistency makes sense, and having OCWCOG be part of the process makes sense. He added that when there is a common view Regionally, jurisdictions could also advocate on an individual level regarding those concerns, as that could potentially be even more important.

Commissioner Schuster asked whether County Managers would be included. City Administrator McDowell stated that County Managers and Administrators would absolutely be included, and noted that Linn County is lucky to have Ralph Wyatt, two full-time lobbyists, and Commissioners lobbying their points of view.

Chair Konopa stated that back when Bill Wagner was Executive Director, OCWCOG would bring in elected Representatives. However, meetings were primarily based around Senior Services. Chair Konopa expressed support in getting back into that routine, but while making sure advocacy would also be more localized, such as by County.

Executive Director Abousleman reminded the Committee that OCWCOG is not authorized to advocate on any issue unless the Board agrees on a position and approves advocacy on that issue. He stated that any advocacy that was pushed forward by City/County Managers/Administrators for OCWCOG support would first need to go to the Board for approval.

Councilor Dann Cutter expressed concerns over duplication of efforts, and stated that theoretically, LOC would be addressing issues in many ways. He added that if OCWCOG is advocating a broad message, some smaller issues may be diluted.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that one larger issue is that our Region needs more transportation dollars. City Administrator McDowell stated that another example could be wetlands. If the City of Millersburg has an issue with wetlands, their State Representatives may do what they can, but if all three Counties bring up the issue, even if the Board does not take a position, the issue still has a broader impact on policymakers.

Mayor Traber expressed support that any advocacy message brought forward would be checked by the OCWCOG Board.

Councilor Cutter asked whether the mechanism to bring advocacy suggestions to the Board already exists. Mayor Traber stated that there is not currently a mechanism to bring issues forward, and added that with wetlands, City Managers could potentially bring solutions to Representatives, making their opinions more likely to be represented in the Legislature. Mayor Traber stated that there is value in having experts discuss these topics.

Councilor Cutter expressed concerns around resources, as well as the potential to dilute a message in order to broaden the appeal, thus lessening the potential impact. He stated that resources would need to increase, in order to make sure current OCWCOG advisory councils and advocacy resources would not get diminished.

Chair Konopa stated that she could also potentially see unintended consequences. She added that every legislator hears from the same lobbyists on a regular basis, and it's unknown what weight those lobbyists carry. Regional perspectives on certain issues could carry additional weight.

Chair Konopa stated that some legislators will occasionally call elected officials and ask their opinion on issues, but that elected official does not represent the Region as a whole. She added that if a committee is formed to focus on advocating for Regional issues, elected officials should be the ones voting on which issues move forward to Representatives. This would protect City/County Managers/Administrators, as elected officials on the Board would be the target of any criticism.

City Manager Shepard stated that concerns about message dilution are important and understood, and that the role of the Board is to decide what to do with the recommendations made by City/County Managers/Administrators. City Manager Shepard stated that City/County Managers/Administrators are accustomed to that role, and would be happy to work within the role of a technical advisory group.

City Administrator McDowell stated that the committee would bring issues forward to the Board, to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that there is a nimbleness in having City/County Managers/Administrators work on these issues, and reiterated that they would be operating as a technical advisory committee to the Board. The Board would ultimately decide what to do. Legislators could be brought in to have a conversation regarding the issues the Board chose as important.

Chair Konopa stated that there may be a need to approach the Board to add a line item to dues for lobbying. Executive Director Abousleman suggested trying the process for one round of legislation prior to discussing fees or dues increases. He added that he has been

doing advocacy for a long time, can manage the process, and the City/County Managers/Administrators will self-regulate as well. He also stated that the process does not need to be complex, as these conversations are already happening at monthly City/County Manager/Administrator meetings.

Commissioner Schuster stated that this process would simply be connecting what already happens at the meetings, with the OCWCOG Board. Executive Director Abousleman agreed.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that OCWCOG automatically accepts the positions of LOC and the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), because our members are AOC and LOC members. He added that OCWCOG automatically supports those organizations, unless our Board specifically dictates otherwise.

Commissioner Schuster stated that AOC is trying to work more collaboratively with LOC, as often the issues parallel each other. This suggestion could be a way to assist in that collaboration. Commissioner Schuster added that Benton County does not always agree with AOC, and all Regional jurisdictions may not always share an opinion on legislature. Executive Director Abousleman stated that if there was not agreement among the Board, the issue would not move forward.

Mayor Traber stated that there could be a subset of individuals that continue to work on an issue outside of the OCWCOG framework, if there is not agreement by the Board.

Councilor Cutter stated that a Council may feel strongly in opposition to an opinion of the City Managers/Administrators, and that relationships between Councils and their Managers/Administrators vary. Councilor Cutter expressed concern that elected officials may not be represented adequately.

City Administrator McDowell stated that City/County Managers/Administrators are ready to move forward as directed.

Commissioner Schuster stated that as Co-Chair of the Housing Subcommittee for AOC, housing could potentially be an issue of Regional interest, and could provide information to take back to AOC. She added that many times, City/County Managers/Administrators are not heard by Representatives, but often they have more technical knowledge than elected officials.

City Manager Shepard stated that there will be lively discussions, and opinions may not always align. He added that within the group, larger issues will not always apply to all jurisdictions in the same way, but stated that this group could act as a "missing middle," providing a needed middle ground between larger groups like AOC and LOC, and individual jurisdictions.

Commissioner Schuster asked how the group would interface with the Board. Executive Director Abousleman stated that the group would approach the Board with a potential issue, and see how/whether the Board wants to move forward. City Manager Shepard added that communication would ideally happen in both directions.

Commissioner Bill Hall stated that he likes the concept, and believes it is worthy of further exploration. He added that Executive Director Abousleman's advocacy experience is under-utilized, and with Board approval, he could be used as another Regional voice.

Chair Konopa asked for the concept to be explored further, with a more comprehensive plan to be brought to the Board. Executive Director Abousleman agreed.

Councilor Cutter expressed that bringing issues to the Board is not nimble, as the Board only meets every other month, and asked for a proposed solution to that issue. Executive Director Abousleman stated that in the past, he has seen Boards set broad policy goals, and trust that the Executive Director and committee members would not advocate inappropriately, or in a way that may bring harm to the Board. There would be an additional understanding that provocative issues would require Board approval.

Councilor Cutter stated that he doesn't necessarily trust City/County Managers/Administrators from other jurisdictions, as he hasn't hired them or built a relationship with them. He also added that LOC is not as effective as would be ideal.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that the group would do their best to make sure there is consensus, and to not act on anything controversial. He added that even if the Board does not take a stance, it would be good to have individuals share information for consideration and collaboration.

Commissioner Schuster asked how maneuvering would occur when topics are controversial. City Administrator McDowell responded that jurisdictions have some issues in common, such as the previous focus on recreational immunity. He added that there will be some controversial issues to face, but those issues would not require Board movement or OCWCOG involvement. He also added that there will be merits to discussing these issues.

Mayor Traber stated that this conversation highlights the need for more communication among jurisdictions.

City Administrator McDowell stated that another approach to representing issues could not necessarily be through taking a particular stance on the issue, but rather pointing out that an issue should be decided at a more localized level than the State.

City Administrator McDowell and City Manager Shepard left the meeting.

### **3. OCWCOG Annual Dinner**

Executive Director Abousleman stated that current registration has the number of attendees for *Celebrate Linn, Benton, Lincoln (CelebrateLBL)* at approximately 180. He added that around \$4,000 in silent auction items have been donated. Executive Director Abousleman stated that when considering sponsorships and donations, the event should roughly break-even, financially. He expressed that OCWCOG had hoped to bring in more in sponsorships and donations, but the fundraising process happened too late in the year for many businesses.

Chair Konopa stated that the Mid-Willamette Family YMCA had created a new event on the same evening as *CelebrateLBL*. Executive Director Abousleman stated that there were other unforeseen events that happened this year, to which organizations donated funds, such as natural disasters.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that all award winners would be present at the event, and most nominees. He added that many businesses approached for sponsorships committed to supporting next year's event, even if they did not support this year's.

There was a discussion about potentially picking an earlier date for next year's event.

Chair Konopa asked whether there were sponsorships or other avenues of support from Albany's senior facilities. Executive Director Abousleman stated that none of Albany's senior facilities had provided financial support.

Commissioner Schuster asked whether these facilities had been approached in-person. SDS Director Randi Moore stated that she had approached them personally.

Chair Konopa stated that while the City loves the senior facilities, they put a large burden on services in the community, in particular services that OCWCOG provides, and it would be nice to see them give back.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that in January, fundraising will begin for next year's event, including a harder press for sponsorships from senior facilities.

Executive Director Abousleman stated that this year's event was a good learning experience, and has led OCWCOG to rethink strategies. He stated that Rogue Ales & Spirits (Rogue) had committed to donating alcohol for the event, but our contact people are no longer working there, so Rogue has backed out of that commitment. Councilor Cutter stated that he has personal contacts at Rogue, and suggested that for next year's event, Board members should possibly get involved as representatives.

Finance Director Sue Forty stated that she had talked to many potential sponsors, and repeatedly had issues with being too late in their budgeting processes. She added that some organizations were also very specific in who they support through donations, such as only supporting programs or organizations that help children.

Mayor Traber stated that *CelebrateLBL* also does not have an established identity as an event.

Councilor Cutter asked whether the event is just paying for itself. Executive Director Abousleman confirmed this, but stated that last year we had zero event recognition for *Meals on Wheels*. This year, OCWCOG had *Tapas and Treasures*, and will host *CelebrateLBL*.

Mayor Traber stated that other benefits should be explored, like visibility for the agency, and the recognition of local leaders. Benefits should be compared with costs to determine whether the event is worth doing in the future.

There was a discussion on potential media outreach strategies.

#### **4. OCWCOG Program Updates**

Mayor Traber asked about the *Safe Rides to School* program, and funding from the transportation bill.

CED Director Phil Warnock stated that new funding in the transportation bill was for infrastructure projects. He added that rules had not yet been written regarding application and disbursement. He anticipated that schools would need to have an action plan identifying need, and stated that OCWCOG wants to make sure communities are well-positioned to receive funding.

Chair Konopa asked about an economic development study email she'd received, and asked whether funds were needed for the study. Executive Director Abousleman stated that OCWCOG, Oregon State University, and Linn-Benton Community College are each

contributing \$1,500 to costs, which total \$9,000. Commissioner Schuster stated that Benton County will be contributing \$1,500, as well.

Mayor Traber asked to get more details at a later date, regarding the interviews that will be conducted in the survey. He stated that he wants to make sure that the interviews will serve the purpose of understanding what large regional companies would like to gain out of economic development, as well as if they are willing to contribute financially.

Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that the study is exactly the project requested at the last economic development meeting, where the budget discussed had been \$7,000-\$10,000. He added that in discussions with Steve Clark and Greg Hamann, there had been a consensus that for the study to be the most cohesive and informative, it would need to be more formal. Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that interview questions had not yet been determined. He added that the second piece to the study was determining how to select businesses.

Mayor Traber clarified that he was not necessarily interested in knowing the specific questions that will be asked, but rather the topic of questions, and a general idea of who will be interviewed. Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that 15 total businesses will be interviewed, with five smaller, medium, and larger in size.

Chair Konopa stated that the consultant from EcoNorthwest is part of the cost, and based on what the City of Albany has spent previously for similar services, \$9,000 seems affordable.

Commissioner Schuster asked whether Linn County has committed any funds, as the study was Commissioner Roger Nyquist's idea. Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that Linn County has not contributed funds.

Councilor Cutter asked whether the study can move forward prior to having all the funds. Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that it cannot, and contracts still need to be signed.

Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that OCWCOG's Meal Site Coordinator, Diane Harvey, had retired. CSP Manager Jennifer Moore will be recruiting for that position, and has potential new visions for the *Meals on Wheels* program.

Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that he would be doing another viewing of a potential new space in Corvallis for the *Benton County Veterans Services Office*. He added that OCWCOG has been working with Samaritan Health Services staff on possible configurations, and making sure we have enough space.

Executive Director Aoulosleman stated that Finance Director Forty may be helping the City of Toledo with finances, and that OCWCOG is looking at potentially doing some staffing recruitments for members.

## **5. December Board of Directors Agenda Items**

Items presented for the December 7th Board of Directors meeting agenda were as follows:

### **1. Consent Calendar**

- a. Approval of previous Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
- b. Financial Update for the period of July 2017 – October 2017

### **2. OCWCOG Budget Committee and process for Fiscal Year 2018**

### **3. Senior and Disability Services Structure**

### **4. Program Update Question and Answers**

### **5. Topic of Regional Interest**

**6. Other Business**

**7. Adjournment**

Executive Director Abousleman stated that a proposal for City/County Manager/Administrator advocacy would be added to the Board agenda.

CSP Manager Moore stated that a memo would also need to be added, in order to change the name of OCWCOG's *Senior Meals* program, for compliance reasons.

**6. Other Business**

Commissioner Schuster asked about a previous suggestion of holding monthly meetings relating to broadband. CED Director Warnock stated that logistics are still being worked out, but current plans are to send updates via email.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 am.

*Minutes recorded by Jennifer Kelley.*