

COWLITZ-WAHKIAKUM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BOARD MEETING

General Meeting Room, Cowlitz County Administration Building, Kelso
Thursday, March 24, 2011 - 12:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present:

Representatives:

Pete Poulsen, Chair
Lisa Marsyla, Wahkiakum County
Dan Myers, City of Kelso
Robert Rendler, Town of Cathlamet
Bill Hallanger, Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue
Victor Leatzow, Fire District No. 5
Dan Buell, Port of Longview
Kim Adamson, Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District
Larry Mayfield, Longview School District
Jim Biwer, Kelso School District
Henry Karnofski, Castle Rock School District
George Raiter, Cowlitz County Commissioner

Alternates:

Liz Newman, Port of Kalama
Dale Boon, Port of Woodland

Others:

Corey Balkan, Interwest Benefits
Page Phillips, Senator Murray's Office
Schuyler Hoss, Governor Gregoire's Office

Staff:

Amy Asher
Barbara Kincaid
Steve Harvey
Katie Wells
Bonnie Kelley
Anisa Kisamore
Jennifer Keene
Rosemary Siipola
Melissa Taylor

The monthly meeting of the COG board in the General Meeting Room, Cowlitz County Administration Building, Kelso, Washington, was called to order at 12:09 pm by Chair Pete Poulsen. Introductions were made around the room.

1. Minutes of the February 24, 2011 COG Board Meeting

A motion was made by Victor Leatzow and seconded by Henry Karnofski to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2011 COG Board meeting. **Motion passed.**

2. Monthly Expenditures for February 2011

A motion was made by Bill Hallanger and seconded by Dan Buell for approval of the expenditure list for January 2011. **Motion passed.**

3. Resolution No. 11-03 & WSDOT Resolution No. 11-04: Amending the 2011-2014 Regional Transportation Improvement Program for the MPO and the SWRTPO

Amy Asher reported that we have a request from the City of Longview and Cowlitz County to amend our RTIP which is a document that was approved by the Board back in November. Ms. Asher also reported that the COG is the lead agency for the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization which is made up of five counties (Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific, Lewis and Grays Harbor). As the lead agency, the COG is responsible for adopting and amending the Regional Transportation Improvement Program. Any amendments must come before this board for approval and then are forwarded to the state.

This amendment will add an additional \$148,000 in new funds to the MPO/SWRTPO RTIP for Tennant Way/14th Avenue Intersection Improvements; \$1,390,000 in federal Surface Transportation Safety funds for the 2011 Highway Safety Improvement/High Risk Rural Roads Safety Improvement Program to reduce intersection and run-off-the-road type collisions; and South Cloverdale/Confer Road Safety Improvement project to improve vertical alignment of South Cloverdale Road to address intersection sight distance.

Kim Adamson asked what was meant by “safety improvement.” Ms. Asher explained that safety improvement funds are for reducing traffic fatalities and accidents, such as run-off-the-road type accidents. It includes guardrails or other types of barriers, and anything that would help prevent traffic accidents.

A motion was made by Liz Newman and seconded by Jim Biwer for approval of Resolution No.11-03 and WSDOT Resolution No. 11-04 amending the 2011-2014 Regional Transportation Improvement Program for the MPO and the SWRTPO. **Motion passed.**

4. Annual Report

The 2010 Annual Report was distributed to members and Director Harvey mentioned that this really is an action item because it is in our bylaws that we present an annual report documenting how we spent the funds entrusted to the organization. Steve will most likely be discussing this more in detail at the annual meeting. Dan Buell moved and Larry Mayfield seconded to adopt the Annual Report as presented. **Motion passed.**

Information Items

5. Smart Growth Conference Report – Amy Asher and Barb Kincaid

This is a continuation of Matt Hermen’s presentation last month. Barbara Kincaid and Amy Asher distributed a couple of handouts regarding *Smart Growth*. Ms. Asher stated that “in a nutshell,” *Smart Growth* is a way to build and maintain our towns and cities by providing greater housing and transportation choices and making better investments using our limited infrastructure dollars and also by strengthening existing neighborhoods and cities. It means building urban, suburban and rural communities with accessible transportation choices making access of local businesses. It means questioning economic costs of abandoning current infrastructures within the city and building them further out. It means getting more value from tax dollars we spend; taking a look at spending longer periods of time in our cars. It means new developments are town-centered and pedestrian-oriented with a mixture of uses. *Smart Growth* will be different in each community where it is applied.

Comprehensive plans are to be used in creating a place where everyone wants to live and work and enjoy. An example is the City of Woodland. Ms. Asher explained how the city and developers worked together where both benefited from the projects completed. Ms. Asher also mentioned that another plan staff will be working on this year is the transportation systems plan within the Kelso/Longview urban area to provide a sustainable transportation system.

Ms. Kincaid shared about *Smart Growth* in the rural area. She prefers to think of smart growth as “common sense or logical growth.” The tools or strategies shared at the conference are to assist staff in making land use decisions easy to employ in urban areas. The challenge we’re faced with is how to put these to work in the rural areas. The County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee members are going to be asking some of the board members for information about the areas they serve and what we can do to make things better. Livability and good fiscal policies are the goals. In the county plan, the committee members have determined that decisions be made wisely regarding all aspects of the plan. In the bigger picture, the long-range plans need to answer the question, “will this still be useful 20 years from now?” and make sure that the plan looks forward and not just at what is best for now.

The framework is in place for us to work together in continuing the work to put the *Smart Growth* principles to the best use within the current comprehensive plans. Both Ms. Asher and Ms. Kincaid encouraged members to contact them or Matt Hermen in the COG office, for clarification or to answer any questions.

6. Ten-Year Plan Update – Melissa Taylor

Ms. Taylor distributed a hand-out on the update of the *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in Cowlitz County*. The update is required by state statute. Ms. Taylor indicated that ending homelessness is all about systems change – coming up with a plan to ensure people are homeless for as short of a period of time as possible, realizing that homelessness will never end. Working with the Housing First Coalition, several programs have been implemented; the next steps are improving on what is working well. Ms. Taylor discussed the hand-out identifying the work that has been done on this project, and defining what homelessness means and who meets the definition of homeless. Funding comes from the federal government to the state and is then funneled down to the local government agencies. The standards have changed so that strategies being implemented now should be performance-based with measurable outcomes. The Coalition has defined short-term, mid-term and long-term priorities, which were also included in the hand-out.

7. Director’s Report

Director Harvey asked Corey Balkan from Interwest Benefits, who has been working with the medical insurance rate stabilization program, to speak to the members about the plans for a wellness program. Mr. Balkan talked about the plans his team has developed from the planning retreat in January. A result of the retreat is a wellness program for this year. The *Thrive Across America* campaign starts April 1st and is available to all employees whose entities are part of the medical insurance rate stabilization pool. A Southwest Washington Wellness Committee has been established and will be running the *Thrive Across America* campaign. Kaiser is funding a wellness coordinator and has contracted with a wellness professional to guide groups through the process. Feedback from the groups has been good. The fall campaign will be a total health assessment for individuals to identify their own health risks. Mini-grant applications relating to wellness activities are also available for each group to submit. The first round of grants is due to the COG office by April 1st

and the committee will take action on those at their April 12th meeting. The goal is to improve health of employees; healthy employees mean higher productivity and a reduction in medical claims.

The director talked about the three additional handouts: one on the multiple levels of transportation plans required in Washington state; the second is a list of meetings the COG is sponsoring, some of which have already occurred and some are yet to come; and last, but not least, the 50th Anniversary celebration flyer announcing the banquet on April 27th. Invitations are due to be sent out next week.

8. Roundtable

Due to time, the decision was made to forego the roundtable discussion.

Other Business – there was none.

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 pm.

Stephen H. Harvey, Director

Pete Poulsen, Chair

Katie Wells, Administrative Assistant