

CITY OF VENETA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEMBERS:

HERB VLOEDMAN (CHAIR)
BRITTANY LEHMAN (VICE-CHAIR)
JOHN TRIBOLET
MARK DAVIS

GINA HALEY-MORRELL
LEN GOODWIN
MAUREEN WRIGHT
(LIAISON)
LEWIS RUCKER

MINUTES

Economic Development Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 2:00 PM
Veneta City Hall — J.W. "Bill" Smigley Room
88184 8TH Street, Veneta, Oregon

Present: Chair Herb Vloedman, Vice Chair Brittany Lehman, Liaison Maureen Wright (phone), Member Gina Haley-Morrell, Member Lewis Rucker, Member John Tribolet, Member Len Goodwin, Member Mark Davis (phone)
Absent: Member John Tribolet
Staff: City Administrator (CA) Matt Michel, Management Analyst (MA) Jacob Thode, City Management Intern (CMI) Jillian Liebersbach
Other: Aliza Benor, Marlon Dziga Harris, Luca Herran, Asia Liberman (UO – IPRE Downtown Commercial Development Project)

1. CALL TO ORDER/REVIEW AGENDA

Chair Vloedman called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. MINUTES APPROVAL

a. Approval of the February 12, 2025, meeting minutes.

MOTION: Member Haley Morrell made a motion to accept the February 12, 2025, minutes as edited. Member Rucker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Downtown Commercial Development Project (DCDP)

Chair Vloedman asked the presenters to come up and introduce themselves: Aliza Benor, Marlon Harris, Luca Herran, and Asia Liberman

The DCDP team thanked MA Thode, CA Michel and their instructors, Amanda Ferguson and Aniko Drlik-Muehleck, for their support and assistance.

The DCDP team stated their report represented preliminary research on zoning regulations, economic analysis of Veneta's market conditions, and case studies from three comparable cities.

The DCDP team highlighted their objective was to create a development plan for the three lots on Broadway, informed by public opinion and the future economic landscape of Veneta.

The DCDP team interviewed Veneta residents, developed a community survey, reviewed economic drainage analysis, and analyzed case studies of comparable cities to develop their report recommendations

Vice Chair Lehman entered the meeting at 2:05

The DCDP team used background research and economic information specific to Veneta which included the 2015 Economic Drain Report which indicated that a very large number of consumers leave the area to find the goods and services which amounted to approximately 15 million dollars of outside consumption.

The DCDP team developed a Qualtrics survey which they made available on the City's website, newsletter and on social meeting. They further stated they promoted the survey through in person outreach to businesses.

The DCDP team's survey received 267 responses and helped inform their recommendations. They also interviewed community stakeholders to develop their key findings.

The DCDP team's key findings included needs for a livelier downtown area, community gathering spaces, residents were looking for visual charm to the downtown area and as well as a safe place to visit.

The DCDP team created a visual word cloud to show the top priorities of city residents which included entertainment, community spaces, indoor recreation and retail. They further stated additional businesses and hotels would potentially serve outsiders and not the current community.

The DCDP team shared the top scoring types of businesses for the downtown blocks included a bowling alley, roller rink, thrift store, and retail store(s).

The DCDP team stated Veneta residents had a strong desire for community gathering spaces including a possible area for a farmer's market and they were very interested in maintaining the visual charm of a rural community; buildings downtown such as the Daily Bread and community center were used as inspiration for ideas for the downtown blocks.

The DCDP's report also cited barriers to foot traffic in the downtown area which included safety and accessibility, parking availability, absence of public restrooms and rest areas.

The DCDP team stated safety was a major concern and noted Veneta had hours that were not monitored by their police contract and burglaries, break-ins, vacant buildings, and the perceived increase in the unhoused population were keeping residents away from the downtown area.

The report highlighted that residents did not want to see marijuana dispensaries, dive bars, chain dining or additional convenience stores in the downtown area.

The DCDP team outlined their recommendations for the three vacant downtown lots which included mixed use space where community gatherings could take place along with indoor recreation and retail opportunities.

The DCDP team stated that safety concerns emerged as a key priority, with residents expressing concerns about the presence of unhoused individuals. They further stated there was strong support for better pedestrian walkways and bike infrastructure.

The DCDP team concluded their presentation by outlining their five recommendations:

- Increasing Community Gathering Spaces
- Bolstering Indoor Recreation
- Adding Retail Options
- Preserving Downtown character and charm
- Improving safety measures.

The DCDP team thanked everyone for their time and asked for questions.

Member Goodwin asked why there was no mention of the existence of the Fern Ridge Service Center.

MA Thode described the Service Center's goals and services to the group.

Economic Development
Committee March 12, 2025

Member Goodwin believed the Service Center could meet some of the needs outlined in the report.

The DCDP team stated residents desired different services and retail than what was currently in the area.

Member Haley-Morrell wondered why safety was a problem because hours not covered by the Lane County Sheriff's Office occurred in the middle of the night.

Member Goodwin asked if Veneta participated in the unhoused survey.

CA Michel responded that the city did not participate in the unhoused survey and had only anecdotal information about the unhoused group.

CA Michel shared that the deputies had shared there were some new transients in the area.

Member Goodwin mentioned he was downtown frequently and did not notice the unhoused group.

Member Haley-Morrell stated the unhoused group tend to hang out at the Service Center.

The DCDP team shared that they had learned there was a very concerning incident outside of the Long Tom Bar and Grill and an unhoused person charged a family while they were coming out of the restaurant.

Member Goodwin asked if the team would discuss the low ranking of office space in this downtown area.

The DCDP team responded that a coworking space was the only type of space raised as a need in the downtown area. They further stated most residents wanted economic development but not at the cost of changing the small -time feel of the city.

The DCDP team stated in an interview they heard that there were more and more 30 and 40 somethings establishing their families and wanted Veneta to stay more family oriented.

MA Thode stated he was surprised hotel and office spaces were lower priority and asked the students to elaborate on these findings.

The DCDP team stated a more specific survey about these items might be helpful to understand resident's feelings about these options.

The DCDP team shared that the lack of visibility of the downtown area was something that could impact hotel and office space developers.

Chair Vloedman asked about the height element of the downtown area.

CA Michel responded he and Chair Vloedman had talked about the height element and he shared this information the DCDP team.

CA Michel mentioned the downtown lights could now be seen because of some clearing of trees in the new Dog Park area.

Discussion ensued about the farmer's market moving out of the downtown area.

Vice-Chair Lehman stated it might be a great idea to have a space for an indoor Farmer's Market where the space could be used for different vendors/events throughout the year.

Chair Vloedman thanked the DCDP team for their work on this project and stated the report was great and could be reviewed and considered by a few city committees.

MA Thode thanked the student group and celebrated the completion of their project with a few Veneta momentous.

Member Davis and Liaison Wright entered the meeting via the phone system.

5. GENERAL UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

Member Haley-Morrel shared Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce updates including work on the Distinguished Service Awards scheduled for April 17th at 7:00 p.m.

Member Goodwin shared the Planning Commission worked on lighting standards for outdoor lighting in Veneta and hoped to update watt measurements to lumen measurements which would improve the quality of lighting in the entire city. He further stated safety elements of the lighting standards were also part of the discussion.

CA Michel stated EPUD and the City continue to work together to make street light improvements and hoped grant funds might be available to implement some of these ideas.

Vice-Chair Lehman asked if there was a "Welcome to Veneta" sign along the HWY 126 going East.

Discussion ensued about signage and the downtown area.

Economic Development
Committee Wednesday, March 12,
2025

CA shared the location of Veneta signs found on Google Maps; he further stated there was a sign as you head East on HWY 126 along with signs for the Fern Ridge Library and City Center as you head South.

CONSENSUS: The Economic Development Committee agreed more signage was important and should be considered further.

MA Thode stated he would complete a survey of city signage and add it to a meeting agenda for discussion.

CA Michel stated the transportation system plan and ODOT has a number of "to dos to improve HWY 126" and the CDD Urban will start working on this.

CA Michel stated the HWY 126 expansion project is federally funded and ODOT was optimistic funds would be available for this project.

6. STAFF REPORTS

a. City Management Intern

i. Economic Development Report

CMI Liebersbach gave a brief economic development update stating there were multiple factors influencing both the State and Federal Governments that may have unpredictable impacts and consequences on the economy that cannot be accurately mapped at this time.

CMI Liebersbach shared she and MA Thode reviewed the data collected on Veneta's labor force, provided by the American Community's Survey 5-Year Estimates, and found Veneta had a working population of 4,319, a labor force of 2,391, and an unemployment rate of 4.8%. She further stated that the overall outlook was positive for these workers as most industries would experience some sort of growth with the exception of manufacturing.

CMI concluded her report with an update on recent permit applications for the City.

Chair Vloedman asked if members had any questions.

Member Goodwin asked if the application for Applegate Medical was for an actual business.

MA Thode stated he believed that application was for the repair of a roof and not for a new business.

b. Management Analyst

i. Five-Year Strategic Plan

MA Thode stated staff was seeking direction on how to move forward with the five-year strategic plan.

Member Davis left the meeting via phone at 2:59 p.m.

MA Thode noted a few of the City's economic plans were more than ten-year-old.

MA Thode recommended that the following plans needed to be updated:

1. Economic components of the comprehensive plan
2. Residential building plan
3. Retail market analysis
4. SWOT Analysis

MA Thode estimated updating all four plans would cost between \$40,000 and \$60,000 and he hoped that these costs could be offset with a \$20,000 grant.

MA Thode stated he hoped this work could start in early summer with the City awarding a contract in late summer. He further stated this project would take about six to nine months.

MA Thode shared the second option would be for the EDC to approve an update of only the Economic Development Analysis, Retail Market Analysis and SWOT which would take approximately three to six months.

MA Thode stated the third option would be to only update the economic development plan which again could start in the summer with an award issued by the end of the summer.

Chair Vloedman asked if members had any questions.

Chair Goodwin asked if it was time to look at the comprehensive plan.

MA Thode stated the comprehensive plan was updated October of 2024. He believed most of the materials were up to date except for the economic elements.

CA Michel stated the EDC's guidance on this matter would help with the economic development budget package for the year.

CA Michel asked the Committee if they felt the 2015 study was credible or did they believe things had changed enough to support the need for a new information.

Chair Vloeman stated that the DCDP team's report today showed that the data was out of date.

Vice-Chair Lehman also believed the numbers were not accurate based on what was happening in the community.

Liaison Wright recommend the committee ask City Council for a complete overhaul of the economic plan.

MA Thode clarified Liaison Wright statement and confirmed she wanted to overhaul the entire plan.

Discussion ensued about the visibility issue in the downtown area and the height of buildings allowed there.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Lehman **made a motion to direct staff to update all economic components of the Veneta's Comprehensive Plan, including updating the City's Economic Opportunity Analysis, Residential Buildable Lands & Housing Needs Analysis, and Retail Analysis.** Member Haley-Morrell seconded the motion. **The motion passed (6-0).**

ii. Next Steps Downtown Lot Development

MA Thode shared that the city planned to present the DCDP team's findings and recommendations to City Council and establish a focus group for local business owners to further discuss the downtown area with the goal of developing a conceptual design. He further stated the city would post the report to their website.

Member Goodwin asked if a strong recommendation from the Economic Development Committee would be helpful.

MOTION: Member Goodwin **made a motion to support the DCDP report and its findings.** Member Haley-Morrell seconded the motion. **The motion passed (6-0).**

Chair Vloedman asked if members had any questions.
There were none.

iii. Regional Economic Brand (verbal)

MA Thode gave a quick update to the new City branding initiative.

MA Thode reported that the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce was doing a great work on their website providing the branding resources for Veneta businesses.

MA Thode stated Logo Launchers was set to roll out this new brand starting April 1st.

Vice-Chair Lehman shared that she recently noticed a post saying “#engage #enjoy” without the City name and she believed “Veneta” should be added to those tag lines otherwise the post could be talking about any location.

Chair Vloedman asked if members had any questions.
There were none.

7. OTHER

a. Collaborative Economic Development Organization (CEDO)

MA Thode shared he wanted to reach out to the Collaborative Economic Development Organization which was an offshoot of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce which focused community engagement. He was interested in how they could help with the downtown project.

MA Thode shared the CEDO's goals were to advance economies by creating accessible jobs and fostering prosperity through initiatives that connect education, innovation, and entrepreneurship while strengthening community partnerships.

He further stated Stephanie Laurel Freeman, of West Lane Fitness, was a board member and they were having an annual conference that Mayor McCoy would be attending. He shared the event was scheduled for March 20th at 11:30 a.m.

Chair Vloedman asked if members had any questions.
There were none.

CA Michel updated the committee on the middle mile fiber project and shared the City was pushing forward on this project with LCOG and Douglas Fastnet.

MA Thode asked the members on the phone if they could hear the student group well with the new speaker phone.

Liaison Wright stated she could hear the speakers much better with the new phone.

Economic Development Committee
Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Ms. Blake stated RAIN Catalysts was working with Chamber on a work event scheduled for Monday, March 24th at the Grange.

8. NEXT MEETING

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURN

Chair Vloedman adjourned the meeting of the Veneta Economic Development Committee 3:29 p.m.


Chair Herb Vloedman
Vice chair
Brittany Lehman

ATTEST:


Jennifer Mirabile, City Recorder



Tue 3:24pm

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEMBERS:

HERB VLOEDMAN (CHAIR)
BRITTANY LEHMAN (VICE-CHAIR)
DALEN CORBETT
MARK DAVIS
LEN GOODWIN

GINA HALEY-MORRELL
JOHN STEPHENS
JOHN TRIBOLET
MAUREEN WRIGHT

PUBLIC COMMENT SIGN-IN SHEET
Wednesday, March 12, 2025

NAME	ADDRESS	EMAIL ADDRESS	TOPIC
Danae Pape		danaepepapeautomotive inc.com	
Heather Blake		heather@raincatalysts.org	Economic Development

Economic Development Committee Public Sign-In Sheet
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
