

City Council Special Meeting
7:35 p.m.

February 17, 2010
CD Tape

Mayor Paul Helenberg called the Special Meeting to order at 7:35 p.m., with the following councilmembers present: Earl Queen, Jack Reilly, Mike Mask, Glenn Pingree. Councilmember Teter was absent.

Approximately forty business and community leaders also were in attendance, including representatives from the school district, Port of Longview, Castle Rock Planning Commission, Castle Rock Park Board and Cowlitz Tourism.

Jennifer Keene, Planner for Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) and staff representative for the Cowlitz-Lewis Economic Development District (CLEGG) explained the purpose of the meeting is to bring together stakeholders to discuss economic development issues in Castle Rock. This meeting will provide information of various plans adopted by the city relating to business development, including the Comprehensive Plan, Community Action Plan and Business/Marketing Plan and to discuss how to implement the marketing plan and how to gain community involvement in the process.

Participants were provided with the following:

- Work Area Profile report using local 2008 data showing jobs by worker age, earnings paid, cities where workers reside and industry type jobs.
- Castle Rock Comprehensive Plan, Chapter VII entitled Economic Development
- Copy of the PowerPoint presentation slides
- Copy of the Castle Rock Strategic Marketing Plan, dated May 12, 2005; including purpose outline, SWOT analysis, Strategic Initiatives with action items listed and Implementation Timeline/Budget
- Copy of the Chamber of Commerce correspondence dated January 6, 2010 to the city council requesting assistance in mobilizing a business team and to support efforts for economic development.

Mayor Helenberg noted that over the last five years, the community of Castle Rock has accomplished or is currently working on the following:

- New subdivision developments; Community Action Self Help Housing fourteen lot subdivision - currently six houses are under construction. The Lois Dye twenty-eight lot subdivision – which should receive final plat approval within the next 30 days.
- Refurbishment of Fibre Federal Bank building and Castle Rock Building Supply
- Development of a downtown parking lot area. Reconstruction of Cowlitz Street West, the main business district, will begin this year.
- New commercial construction which will include a dental office and bank facility will begin this year.
- A new boat launch facility will be open for use in April. This project will not be 100% complete, but will continue to add amenities as funds become available.
- Sports Complex which includes baseball, softball and soccer fields. Residents are also

using this area for access to fishing, dog training and for flying model planes. It also includes 1.1 miles of lighted trail system. Future plans also include development of a community garden and orchard.

- Transfer of utility ownership of Westside customers from Cowlitz County to the city.
- Annexation of the High School property into the city limits.
- \$1.8 million dollar upgrade to the Water Treatment Plant and a \$6.6 million dollar upgrade to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Providing infrastructure to support new businesses.
- Riverfront Trail project. This has been a continual phased project. The next phase will be completed this year and will provide an extension to the north end of town, which will be lighted. Mayor Helenberg stated the city's trail system is heavily used by both local residents and those from surrounding communities.
- Improved signage for the downtown area. The city worked with Department of Transportation to upgrade directional signage.
- Creation of the gateway entrance at the south end of town. One final phase of this project remains to be completed.
- Updated permitting procedures and zoning. Adoption of a more streamlined permitting process will be considered at the February 22nd council meeting.
- Chamber of Commerce banner program. These banners are located along Huntington Avenue. When Cowlitz Street West is completed, the plans include light posts that will be compatible for additional banners.

Ms. Keene stated the most important step in moving forward with economic development plans is to identify the direct community stakeholders and partners. These include local business owners, property owners, the Chamber of Commerce, City Council, Planning Commission, city staff, CLEDD, federal government programs, Port of Longview, Cowlitz Economic Development Council (CEDC), Washington State Department of Commerce, CWCOG, school district, Lower Columbia College, and Cowlitz County.

She noted that Castle Rock needs to focus on what the community already has in place and to use existing plans and vision to move forward. Keene then explained the purpose and responsibility of each listed direct stakeholder/partner.

Keene congratulated the city council on their ability to procure over \$14 million dollars over the last five years in grant/loan funds to extend vital infrastructure in the community. She noted that even with the current recession, the city has continued to look to the future.

Ms. Keene stated the Castle Rock Marketing Plan requires dedicated staff time and funding. However no city staff person has been designated to work solely on economic development. The plan also includes the use of volunteers to complete some of the strategic initiatives and these volunteers will also need to gain direction from a single source. City Planner, T.J. Keiran clarified that no city staff person works solely on economic development; however certain staff members do work on various aspects of development.

Keene stated the chamber has expressed the interest to promote Castle Rock as the northern hub of Cowlitz County. This would also include a customer base into northern Lewis County. Mr. Keiran stated partnering with numerous agencies creates a regional impact. Many federal funding opportunities require projects to be regional in nature.

Keene stressed the importance of working regionally, which includes the city's active participation on the CLEGG board. Ms Keene also identified several federal funding resources and noted that many times the grant deadlines are very short. This requires the community to have applicable information available on short notice. President Obama's administration is now focusing on development of family wage jobs, which Ms Keene felt should help Castle Rock.

In answer to a question from Wayne Lunday, Keene stated the definition of 'regional' is defined in many ways, depending on the specific agency or funding source. The CLEDD board defines 'regional' as two jurisdictions.

Keiran provided an outline of the existing city plans. He stated the city Comprehensive Plan includes three initiatives; product readiness, organization of business development and targeting best opportunities. Also included are goals and policies to meet those initiatives.

Keiran stated the Planning Commission will continue to make recommendations to the council on prioritization of projects. This year the emphasis will be on economic development issues. It is also anticipated that time processing of annexation requests will be required, especially with the newly completed utility transfer.

Mr. Keiran advised that on February 22nd, the city council will be reviewing a proposed ordinance to streamline the development review procedures. After adoption, it will take some time to train staff and local contractors and to update the city website to include access to the new forms and maps.

The Planning Commission has also been working to develop industrial design standards which will further the city's promotion of the south end gateway. Other recommendations to the council would include development of downtown design standards, updating the home occupation ordinance and consideration of a mixed use residential-retail transition area. Keiran also stated the Planning Commission has expressed an interest in developing a 'virtual downtown' tour, which would help developers in siting future businesses. These issues are all included as recommendations in the city's adopted Comprehensive Plan and Marketing Plan.

City Clerk-Treasurer Ryana Covington stated that Castle Rock Chamber of Commerce has continued to work on economic development within the community. In 1989, the chamber completed a strategic marketing plan targeting the promotion of tourism. This plan included two major goals; to create an Exhibit Hall Visitor's Information Center and to develop the area along the river into a community park. The visitor's information center was completed and the city continues to develop the river area as a recreation site.

Other priorities of this plan included the need for downtown design standards, parking and streetscape improvements.

Covington stated that in 2004, the city received grant funding from the Department of Commerce and the Forest Service to develop a Business and Marketing Plan. This plan took a year to complete and was adopted by the city council in 2005. This plan targets business recruitment, retention and expansion opportunities.

Covington explained the process used by the consultants to determine the community's needs. The plan stresses that partnerships must be formed in order to be successful in the implementation of the various strategies.

Mike Vorse, President of the Castle Rock Chamber of Commerce stated the chamber's goal is to get a business team organized, which is one of the first strategies outlined in the Marketing Plan. He stated this would be an action team, with participants willing to analyze and prioritize the strategies and work toward completion of those projects.

Mr. Vorse distributed a 'Castle Rock Business Team Skills and Resources Questionnaire' to solicit interested members for the team. He challenged those present to consider how they would like to see Castle Rock in the next five, ten and twenty years.

Mr. Keiran noted that development of the Business Team is described in Action Item 2.4 of the Marketing Plan, with the goal to provide a favorable and welcoming business climate. Keiran stated it is the hope that many of the stakeholders identified at this meeting will be active members of the Business Team.

Keene explained that her position through CWCOG is to provide regional economic development planning, which limits the CWCOG's ability to work specifically for Castle Rock. Vorse stated this is the reason to seek community leaders to move toward making Castle Rock the northern hub of Cowlitz County.

Local business owner, Jim Worl, described how he developed a local team to create last year's 'I Topped The Rock' event, which was a successful fundraiser for the city library. Steps included asset mapping, identifying stakeholders and recruitment of 50 volunteers. The success of that project is proof that resources are available in this community. Worl provided examples of cities who used themes (such as design standards, murals, etc) to set them apart from other communities in Washington. Mr. Vorse also noted that other successes included the development of business clustering – however nothing will happen unless the community takes the first step.

Ms. Keene added that the adopted Business and Marketing Plan outlines the foundation for steps to be taken – it is the business team that will determine prioritization of tasks and the implementation timelines.

Mayor Helenberg assigned Mr. Keiran to serve on the committee for the purpose of meeting mapping needs. The mayor stated that Castle Rock downtown area has not seen

any significant change in over 50 years. He noted it is time for change; to make this town a little better, get the community on the move and get funds coming in. Mayor Helenberg stated it is fine to come to meetings, but now it is time for people to become involved.

Wayne Lunday noted that in 1965 the Planning Commission had asked the council to zone both sides of A Street SW as commercial. This road is one of the main entries into our city and as this date, the area still is zoned a mixture of residential and commercial.

Mike Vorse stated that in a town this size, it should not be difficult to be able to communicate the need for input and be able to move forward in completion of projects.

Community members and stakeholders are invited to an organizational meeting March 1st at 7:00 p.m. to participate in a 'Futures Game', which will help identify how changes can affect a community over a period of years. This meeting will be held at the Senior Center, 222 Second Avenue SW.

Cowlitz County Commissioner Axel Swanson announced that the state legislature just amended their rules on economic funding to include staffing for specific economic projects. Applications for this funding have just recently been distributed.

Keene stated this is Castle Rock's time to carve out their future for future generations. She encouraged participation in the upcoming March 1st meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Mayor Paul Helenberg

Clerk-Treasurer