

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Preedin Mayor
Nancy Connolly Council President
Andrea Blum Councilor
Jennifer Letz Councilor

STAFF PRESENT:

Cory Misley City Manager
Paul Bertagna PW Director
Joe O'Neill Finance Director
Scott Woodford CDD Director
Kerry Prosser City Recorder
Chad Davis Lt. DCSO

ABSENT:

Gary Ross Councilor

GUEST:

Damon Runberg Regional Economist, Oregon Employment Department

Mayor Preedin called the workshop to order at 5:30 pm.

1. Regional Economy Update

Damon Runberg, Regional Economist for the Oregon Employment Department, updated the Council on employment and labor for the region and the City of Sisters. Highlights included:

- Deschutes County was harder hit by job losses early in the pandemic but recovered faster than the State.
- The job losses were not evenly distributed across the County; Sisters recovered quickly while Sunriver and the county's rural areas took longer to recoup lost jobs.
- Sisters' recovery was driven in large part by manufacturing. The most significant sectors in the City recovered by Spring of 2021.
- County unemployment levels were currently about 2000 higher than pre-covid.
- The supply of workers went down as demand went up.
- Impacts on the workforce supply include businesses like hotels and restaurants recovering from COVID employment losses, replacement hiring of retirees and job hoppers, and an expansion; people were spending after saving during COVID.
- Deschutes County had a very tight labor market, a 1:1 ratio of employees per advertised job.
- Restaurant and hotel wages were out of step with other industries; there was a 30% pay gap between foodservice and other industries.
- Changes to unemployment benefits did not have a clear impact on the labor supply.
- Expanded unemployment created a boost in the labor supply with young people.
- Housing costs made recruiting workers to Central Oregon difficult and created downward pressure on the labor supply.
- The region had posted substantial wage gains.
- An aging workforce would put downward pressure on the labor supply.

2. Discussion of Economic Development of Central Oregon (EDCO) Contract

City Manager Misley reviewed Capi Lewis, our Sisters Country Economic Development (SCED) program manager had resigned. The City was in the final year of a three-year contract with EDCO, and regardless of the program manager's resignation, we would have been discussing the program's future over the next several months. They asked for Council's questions or comments on the contract.

Mayor Preedin said we had to evaluate the program and our options; we had to accomplish the work through other avenues. There were several options; we could end the program, develop a different program with EDCO or bring economic development in-house.

Councilor Blum thought it was a good opportunity to look at our options. Based on our previous presentation, we had a sense of where our business community was, and it was good news that most of our businesses had made it through the pandemic. They would like to continue to talk to EDCO about the program transitioning into something that worked for the City and moved our ideas and goals forward.

Mayor Preedin noted we still had a SCED board that we could lean on, if necessary,

Councilor Letz thought this topic needed more discussion. Sisters was a different community. They asked if we needed to focus on economic development or the support of businesses that were already established. They asked if we had received any input from the SCED board on the topic.

Mayor Preedin said he would reach out to the SCED board for input over the next couple of weeks.

Council President Connolly was excited to look at the program and reimagine and/or streamline services. This was an opportunity to step back and create our new vision of the program.

City Manager Misley reviewed there was a SCED board meeting scheduled for October 19th. City Manager Misley would like Council to have a conversation about the community need and where the funds could be best spent. They suggested the Council come to a conclusion about the program by the end of October. Staff would work on getting more information for Council and follow-up at the October 27th workshop.

3. Other Business

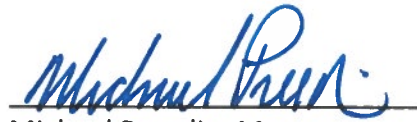
Lt. Davis reviewed that with schools back in session, there were many traffic issues, and they were working on getting people retrained in school zones. There was a speed trailer on McKinney Butte Rd, and they had received good feedback on its placement. The Deschutes County Sheriff Office (DCSO) was in the process of ordering a speed trailer that would be stationed in Sisters full time.

Lt. Davis was communicating with the Oregon Department of Transportation on getting more prominent speed signs and radar at the entrance to the City. They noted there had been a significant shift down in traffic after Labor Day.

The meeting adjourned at 6:27pm.



Kerry Prosser, City Recorder



Michael Preedin, Mayor