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Rural Economic Alliance updates commissioners

ALBANY — Representatives from the two-county Rural Economic Alliance (REAL) provided Linn County Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker with an update on their goals and progress Tuesday morning.

S. Scott McDowell of Brownsville, Alysia Rogers of Lebanon and Blair Larsen of Sweet Home, said the five-year-old coalition includes the communities of Adair Village, Halsey, Harrisburg, Monroe, Philomath and Tangent.

The trio thanked the commissioners for their continued support.

Although they share many similar economic needs and assets, the member communities also have diverse profiles when it comes to development. For example, Sweet Home has industrial land, but lacks infrastructure. Lebanon has industrial lands but faces wetlands issues. Halsey is well located, but has little available industrial lands.

McDowell said the group recently completed development of a new website, rebranded itself and has completed a five-year strategic plan.

“We want to be able to provide information when we get calls that inform us a company is interested in locating in our area,” McDowell said. “We want to be a one-stop shop and have the tools.”

Larsen said the coalition’s philosophy is that any business that locates in one of the communities is benefiting the entire region.

REAL’s core values are collaboration, resourcefulness, community, approachability and initiative.

Larsen outlined the key long-term goals of the group:

- Retention and expansion of current businesses and industries.
- Recruitment of new businesses and industries.
- Land use (developing a region-wide inventory of available commercial and industrial buildings and available lands.)
- Entrepreneurship to support the founding of new businesses in the region.
- Advocacy to help find funding to be used to support the key priorities of rural businesses.
- Marketing and stakeholder engagement

All three commissioners agreed with



S. Scott McDowell of Brownsville, Alysia Rogers of Lebanon and Blair Larsen of Sweet Home, tell Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker what the Rural Economic Alliance has been up to in Linn and Benton counties Tuesday morning.

the presenters that communities face an uphill battle due to the state’s land-use and wetlands regulations.

Commissioner Nyquist said Oregon’s land use rules can drive property prices up by tens of thousands of dollars for residential housing alone and the cost to mitigate wetlands issues by buying credits can be more than \$100,000 per acre.

Commissioner Sprenger encouraged REAL participants to keep their land use requests in writing before state officials so they can see how the state’s rules are pressuring home construction, home prices and industrial development.

To learn more about the Rural Economic Alliance, visit <https://www.ruraleconomicalliance.com/>.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Were informed by Juvenile Department Director Torri Lynn there were 15 young people from Linn County held for 184 total days; five young people from Benton County for 50

days; and two from Lincoln County held for 22 days in July. The were 53 probation referrals and 185 youth in the Probation Unit. There are 84 youth in the Community Programs Unit. Eleven members of the Tier I work crew completed 184 hours of community service and 13 members of the Tier II work crew completed 306 hours of community service.

- Approved an agreement between Linn County and the Oregon Department of Energy to reimburse the county for any work done by the Planning & Building Department for the proposed Muddy Creek Energy Park near Harrisburg. Not to exceed \$5,000.
- Approved submitting an application to annex two properties on West B Street owned by Linn County into the city of Lebanon. One property is 8,000 square feet and the other is 5,640 square feet. Were told by Property Manager Rachel

Adamec that Colton Schilling purchased a county-owned lot at 30594 Santiam Highway at an Aug. 9 auction for \$67,746.

- Were asked by Eric Morgan, representing the carpenters’ union, to ensure that local labor be used if the Muddy Creek Energy Park is built near Harrisburg.
- Adopted the 2023-24 Fiscal Year pay plan.
- Approved First-Time Youth Wage Agreements with Apex Property Clearing and Recycling, Mercy House International, Sweet Home Figaro’s and Olsen Run Winery.
- Announced submitting a letter of support for the Port of Coos Bay intermodal port project.

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