

**Union County Board of Commissioners Work Session
September 15, 2010**

Present: Chairman Mark D. Davidson
Commissioner Steve McClure
Commissioner R. Nellie Hibbert

Renewable Energy Grant Program Discussion

Commissioner McClure informed the Renewable Energy Committee that because this is a work session the Commissioners will not be making any decisions. The memo received from the budget committee is asking the committee to fund more economic development projects. Commissioner Davidson stated he has looked over the original resolution forming this committee and feels that the projects that have been receiving grants do not reflect the intent of the resolution which seemed to emphasize more economic development projects that will result in community wide benefits, creation of new jobs, retaining jobs, or creating new businesses. Some proposed projects that meet these criteria would be the proposed Imbler School or the City of La Grande public pool. Commissioner McClure reminded the committee that the resolution states that this funding could be used towards feasibility studies. In regards to the last application the committee approved, Commissioner Hibbert did not find it compatible with the resolution.

Howard Butts asked the committee to think about where they would like to see the future of this go.

Tim Wilson stated he struggles on a personal level with the idea of excluding residential projects from being eligible for this funding. Single household taxpayers are the major funders of county tax dollars as a population, and will receive the most benefits from these funds. The solar fair that the Renewable Energy Committee recently put on, targeted residential projects and the Commissioners were aware of this, yet they now want to exclude these types of projects. Businesses won't make a decision to come to Union County based on a renewable energy grant.

Nancy Van Sickle explained that the application does not list any of the guidelines that the resolution set forth and therefore should be reworked. If the original application had set some criteria they would not have received the majority of the applications. Normally when implementing something new, targeting residential is the best approach, after you have done that you begin to target commercial customers. Nancy suggested a portion of the grant money be put towards residential and the remainder offered to industrial projects. Commissioner Hibbert questioned what percentage Nancy thinks should go towards residential. Nancy suggested 10% or possibly put a dollar limit on how much goes to residential projects.

Arthur Bingham agreed that the criteria for the renewable energy grant needs to be reworked.

Howard Butts expressed some concern about the lack of knowledge the committee has on large-scale energy projects, such as schools and the local pool. The committee excels at helping residential owners prepare grants to receive funding for residential projects. He also was concerned with the amount of money they are able to grant not being enough to fund multiple projects when funding a large-scale one. Commissioner Hibbert suggested that the committee may want to look at putting a limit on the funds given to each project. Nancy Van Sickle stated that she is already working with committees on these projects and is willing to be a liaison between the project committees and the renewable energy committee.

Tim Wilson reminded the Commissioners that the board members are volunteering their time and he has been frustrated with the lack of communication and delay between the Commissioners and the committee.

Mark explained that he would like to see the money being used for a community wide benefit rather than a personal benefit because it is ad valorem tax money.

Nella Parks remarked that she is glad to see large projects benefit from this money and that she is working with local schools and businesses in finding renewable energy solutions. She is excited to begin referring these projects to the renewable energy committee.

Arthur Bingham would like to straighten out the situation with Mr. Felley who was denied funding from the Commissioners but promised the funds from the Renewable Energy Committee prior to starting the project.

Commissioner Hibbert asked Commissioner McClure what the intent was when the resolution was signed. Commissioner McClure stated that everything they required was in the resolution. Chairman Davidson said the resolution states that the fund be used for economic benefits. Commissioner Hibbert agrees with the committee that when installing and buying supplies locally for these individual projects they are helping the local economy.

Howard stated when the committee was created it was agreed that the individuals who wanted to install personal projects would be compensated. He would like to formulate a new standard regarding the amount of funding they allot for residential projects. Commissioner Hibbert stated she isn't opposed to residential funding but believes the criteria needs re-structured. Commissioner McClure agreed that the application and criteria needs re-done but he is still unsure whether a percentage should be allotted for residential projects.

Commissioner McClure asked whether the committee would like to draft up new criteria and present it to the Commissioners or would like the Commissioners to draft up criteria. Tim stated he would like this to be a joint project.

Adjourned

Meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kylee J. Ingerson
Department Specialist