Snowden Community Council Meeting Minutes 04.03.2024 (04.27.2024)

Council Members present: Roger Gadway (Chair), Chuck Kleish (Treasurer), Tom Montag (Fire Commissioner), Lloyd Olson (Vice Chair), and Jenn Sharp. Absent: Robert Conner (Fire Commissioner), and Chris Stein. There were 9 additional Snowden Community members present, and our Guest Speaker Keaton Curtice, Klickitat County Economic Development Specialist. With thanks for use of the Community Room of the Cherry Lane Fire Station, Roger introduced Mr. Curtice.

Keaton began his presentation by announcing that Jenne Patterson's Broadband Newsletter is now active online; and that Jenne is the County's "real broadband expert". The County expects to "kick off broadband service" in 2025. The County is coordinating State broadband funds with the ISPs bidding to provide expanded broadband service. However, Keaton explained that the larger ISP's, who rate highly as contenders for grant money because of the long-standing scale and capacity at which they operate, are reluctant to bid to provide "open access" internet, as required by the State grants. Open access means the ISP that builds the infrastructure (with public funding) would be required to allow other providers to lease their infrastructure. This would prevent monopolies and allow residents to choose the ISP that best suits them. A small, local start-up is Klicknetworks, based near Klickitat. They have an arrangement to build an internet hub in Trout Lake, which will give them a chance to prove their capability, and hopefully inspire more confidence in the State Broadband Office. In the group's discussion, there was general agreement from the community at the meeting, that large ISPs have received public funding in the past to provide quality internet access to Snowden residents, and they have repeatedly built something that provides little or no improvement to residents, then sell the new service to another company. The larger companies have repeatedly shown no interest in improving rural, difficult to serve residents, and appear to be only interested in making money. Further, as Klicknetworks' owners and operators have visited the Snowden Community Council, many people at this meeting shared confidence in Klicknet to be adaptable to Snowden's rugged terrain and committed to improving or providing internet service at State and Federal broadband standards. Keaton said we can write letters of support for Klicknetworks to the BoCC; but we all must wait for Klicknetworks to prove themselves in Trout Lake.

Mr. Curtice announced that since his last visit, his job has expanded, and he is now both Community Projects Coordinator, and Natural Resources Project Coordinator. As Community Projects Coordinator, he asked us to call him if we want any County support for projects such as neighborhood clean-ups and Fire-Wise projects, or if we have any problems with the County. Discussion included problems with speeding on Snowden Rd., the need for a large chipper in the community, and a fire-wise tool library. Questions regarding Natural Resources were about water quality monitoring, County policy on seasonal streams, and salmon recovery. Everyone thanked Keaton for his time, and he promised to return in July for updates to our concerns.

Roger Called the meeting to order at 7:37PM

Meeting Minutes for the March meeting were approved as corrected and submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Chuck reported that the SCC began the month of March with a balance of $1,950.13; there were donation deposits totaling $260, plus accrued interest of $0.06. With no expenditures, the current balance is $2,210.19. The Treasurer's Report was approved as presented.

The topic of Recycling was **Added to the Agenda.**

Old Business:

Website/Facebook Committee: Anne reported on recent improvements she has made to the website. In discussion, Eric suggested calling the committee the "Communications Committee", to reflect the work on both the new SCC Facebook page and the SCC website. Eric moved to change the name of the Website Committee to Communications Committee; Anne seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Broad Band Committee: Roger said that Keaton Curtice's presentation pretty well summed up where we currently stand in our efforts to get State-standard broadband to Snowden, and all of Klickitat County. Ideas to support Klicknetwork in attracting government funding (assuming they are successful in Trout Lake) included getting a petition before the BoCC, and having talking points and a support letter template on our website to encourage individuals to write their own letter of support.

SEPA Appeal: Roger reported that the County finally set the date of May 20, 2024 for a public hearing before the Planning Commission on the Wilson-Monroe Rezone Application (time and place to be announced). The Planning Commission will then make a recommendation on the re-zone to the BoCC, who will follow up by setting up a combined public hearing before the BoCC that includes both the rezone application, and the SEPA appeal.

The Land Use Committee is setting up a meeting with Commissioner Zoller and Planning Director Scott Edelman to discuss the SCC call for a moratorium on all County rezones until the Comp Plan is revised. Complications to the SCC call for a moratorium include 1) County ordinance limits such a moratorium to 6 months – not long enough to revise the Comp Plan; and 2) Moratoriums are limited to areas where proceeding will cause "damage". Roger and Eric of the Land Use Committee answered the question, "What is the appeal and call for a rezone moratorium all about, anyway?" in summary by saying that the county is very inconsistent in granting re-zones, or not, with no apparent reason; and tending to make the process much easier for the applicant (by pre-approving the SEPA with little or no due diligence) and making it very difficult and expensive for neighbors and experts to have their comments heard and be considered before the County (probably) grants the application. The SCC is calling for an up to date Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Klickitat County that takes a comprehensive look at Critical Areas, buildable lands, transportation and evacuation corridors, wild life and natural resources, timber and agricultural lands before opening new land up for development. The revised Plan must outline a clear process in re-zone applications, including a fair hearing of resident and expert comments before approving a rigorously examined SEPA checklist; and finally we want a clear explanation of how land use procedures are conducted fairly and consistently for all concerned. The current Snowden Sub-Area Plan (2009) took time, hard work, and money to fashion, and should not be over-turned by a re-zone allowed in a casual manner. The Plan now clearly states that a rezone should only be made for benefit of the community, not just for private benefit.

Another concern of the SCC is that the County Planning Department needs to post all comments on their website soon after the comment period closes. (In the case of the SCC SEPA appeal, the applicant received comments immediately, however it took weeks, and multiple requests for the SCC to receive the comments. (18 supporting the SCC appeal, 1 supporting the rezone application). The Council voted to approve a motion to pressure the Planning Department to post public comments on their website.

Roger, speaking for the Land Use Committee, announced that they would be forming a work group to prepare for the May 20 hearing; and that the 16 categories listed on the SEPA will be posted on the SCC website for volunteers who feel they have some time and expertise to help prepare our case before the Planning

Commission. The work group now consists of the Land Use Committee (Eric Wilson, Lloyd Olson, Roger Gadway), Fred Greef (wetlands, wildlife biology), Jenn Sharp (oversight, communications).

Snowden Traffic Problems: Jenn reported that there has recently been a survey crew in the Locke Hill curves, and when queried why they were there, the reply was that there was "no current plan", they were just providing data for a "feasibility study". There has been no further plan or action regarding getting more enforcement; or improving the speed limits and location of signs since the March SCC meeting.

New Business:

Recycling: Anne reported that she will be collecting cans and bottles, and will donate proceeds to Washington Gorge Action Program (WAGAP), a local and trusted agency who knows best how to use funds to help the local community. She will ask permission of Chief Long to use the Cherry Lane Fire Station parking lot for collecting donated recyclables on a couple Saturdays a month. In discussion Anne agreed that she will take up Keaton Curtice's offer to help with Community Projects, and ask for resources such as orange safety vests,gloves,garbage bags,grabbers, and even signs to use for litter collection along Snowden Rd.

Fire Commissioner's Report: Tom reported that the new Regional Fire Authority has met twice, and has designated 4 administrative departments: Governance, Finance, Human Resources, and Operations (volunteers). They have a deadline of September 30, 2024 to create and organize the new Authority, which is scheduled to go into effect on January 01, 2025.

Bridge Authority Report: Eric announced that the recently selected design and build contractor began work on April 01. The Aesthetics Committee will hold their first public workshop on April 17 at the Henkle Middle School in White Salmon from 5pm-7pm. The Authority needs public support to pressure Oregon and Washington State legislators to deliver the millions of dollars still promised. The new bridge is scheduled to open in October of 2029.

For the Good of the Order: No additional comments.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:57 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by

Beatrice Lackaff

(Secretary Pro-tem)