

## **Snowden Community Council 02.01.2023 Board Meeting Minutes**

Council Members present: Robert Conner, Roger Gadway, Chuck Kleish, Tom Montag, Lloyd Olson, Jenne Patterson, Jenn Sharp, Dan Spatz, Chris Stein. There were seven additional Snowden Community members present, and our guest Klickitat County Commissioner Jacob Anderson.

With thanks to Fire District #3 for the use of the Cherry Lane Fire Station, Roger called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. The January **Meeting Minutes** were approved, as presented. Chuck gave the **Treasurer's Report**: The SCC account balance is \$1,288.04. The report was approved as presented. Chuck requested the **Addition of "Barking Dogs" to the Agenda**.

**Old Business: Website Committee:** Jenne reported that the Website Committee is on track in training it's members to update and populate the website. She requested everyone to visit the website; and that anyone with documents or photos pertaining to Snowden share them with the website committee to be scanned and archived online. Material can be submitted to the SCC email: [SnowdenCouncil@gmail.com](mailto:SnowdenCouncil@gmail.com). Jenne says that as she and committee members work on the website, we are saving questions for consultant Aaron, with whom we have one more contracted session.

The SCC very much appreciates the attendance of **Guest Speaker Klickitat County Commissioner Jacob Anderson**. The Commissioner had just come from a meeting about the waste and recycling service. The County contracts the pick-up of garbage and recycling. Because of a lack of drivers, this winter's pick-up has been spotty, with some areas well served, and others going over a month without pick-up. Should a failure of service lasting over two weeks happen again, there will be a 40' container in Bingen where people can bring their garbage/recycling. The County is also re-structuring service at the Transfer Station north of BZ Corners to be fair to workers and still prevent long lines waiting for service.

The Commissioner asked to hear Snowden's questions and concerns. First, we discussed the PUD's plans to start using "smart meters" in anticipation of the heavy demands that electric vehicles will inevitably place on the grid. Issues of concern included integrity of the meters, customers' ability to check accuracy and/or opt out of smart meter service, how to fairly impose the additional fees for high demand, and how net metering should fairly charge or credit customers who generate their own electricity. In a discussion about the proposed pump-storage facility, Commissioner Anderson stated that the Gorge is the renewable energy capital of the United States, having abundant water, wind, solar, and forest resources, and plans for needed expansion of our energy storage capacity. Discussion considered the cost to run the pump storage facility, and the wisdom of investing heavily in that technology as opposed to innovations in traditional battery design. The Commissioner expressed dismay for the current practice of not capturing wind and solar energy during periods of low demand, and confidence in the efficiency of the future pump storage facility.

The Council told Commissioner Anderson that our biggest concern is inadequate internet service, which is unfairly due to our lack of access to existing fiber lines that run right through Snowden. Many here lack aspect and/or resources to connect to generally satisfactory Starlink satellite service. As most (all?) of our internet access is conditional on having electricity, if there is a power outage as caused by weather or wildfire – we lose what internet access we have. The community is now more vulnerable than before when we had copper phone lines, as now our phone service is routed through CenturyLink's fiber trunk line. We feel it is the PUD's responsibility to help us.

Commissioner Anderson said that "SEEK" (??) is the non-profit organization that is most appropriate for helping us apply for grant money and offered to provide Roger with their contact information. He said that the County now has Richard Foster in the Economic Development Department who has acquired a \$55,000 grant for a

broadband and equity study. Dan asked if Richard proposes to get a cost-benefit analysis with the study money? Mr. Anderson said that while the County has \$5.5 million in grants available for connecting households to the internet, no provider is willing to do it because they would be required to allow open access for two years.

The Council expressed to Commissioner Anderson that our experience is that private entities are repeatedly paid public money to build infrastructure, which these entities turn around and sell for another round of profit with no regard to the service or safety for the public in the area supposedly served. The PUD's mandate is to support the provision of non-existent or failed essential public utilities. Council members stated the PUD is showing both lack of vision and actions to help rural Klickitat County residents have adequate internet access. They could support us by working with communities to get grant money. Since providers are unwilling to serve the citizens, the PUD should seriously consider using eminent domain to take over fiber lines that exist in the public right-of-way, work with communities to get grants to pay for last mile connectivity, and work with internet companies to provide service. The Council told Commissioner Anderson that we greatly appreciate the County has dedicated staff and secured a study grant to support rural broadband needs. We continue to need the County's active support, especially in communicating our situation to the PUD, and reminding them of their mission and responsibilities.

Commissioner Anderson moved on to praise the efforts of Snowdenite Leah Becknell (present at the meeting) for the great job she did transitioning County Behavioral Health Services being poorly provided by a private company, to a new high level of service under the management of the County Health Department. We are all very proud of Leah for her good work in improving these vitally important services to our Community.

Courtney Road has been greatly improved, and paving will be finished this Spring. The embankments are not a problem. The County has spent \$6.5 million dollars to improve Courtney Road; and is committed to keeping reflectors in place at the edges of roads, and maintaining painted road stripes. Commissioner Anderson is beginning a process, which may take 6 to 10 years, to rebuild the Locke Hill portion of Snowden Road. Inflation has raised County expenses by 6.5%, while tax income has only gone up by 1%, creating great pressure on County budgets, that are slow to adjust.

Logging companies can be held responsible for damage to County roads caused by their large trucks. He encouraged residents to video road conditions before and after a logging operation, and report documented lingering road damage to County Public Works.

Jenne described the hardships of neighbors who live on Sleepy Hollow Road, which is NOT a primitive road, as it is sometimes presumed to be; and asked when the County plans to improve it?

Regarding getting Cherry Lane Fire Station connected to adequate and reliable internet, the Commissioner suggested Starlink as a possibility, if FD#3's budget would allow it.

When asked about the County's plan to update the Comp Plan, Commissioner Anderson said that they have been unable to attract applicants to be Long Range Planner, and so are considering hiring instead a contractor to facilitate the Update. He pointed out that Klickitat is one of last counties in Washington where rural Community Councils still meet; and that of those, Snowden is already the ONLY one with an approved "updated " plan. (Good job, Snowden!) The Council thanked Commissioner Anderson very much for all his time, for coming to meet with us, and his frank responses to our concerns.

**Broadband Committee:** Dan reported that the SCC hosted a workshop on January 11 at the White Salmon Library with Carrie Pipinich from MCEDD explaining the importance of, and how to respond to the FCC internet

access map ground truthing effort. The meeting had attendees besides ourselves, and was very successful, especially with the announcement and message delivered widely in the Gorge News.

**New Business.** Chuck wondered what to do about incessantly barking dogs. He was advised during discussion that a County Ordinance sets a limit of 10 minutes on this nuisance; and that the County now has a website where complaints can be made anonymously, and a Compliance Officer to (hopefully) follow through on the complaint.

**Election of Officers:** Debby moved and Lloyd seconded the motion to approve election of SCC Officers as presented at the Annual Meeting in September, 2022, which is as follows:

Chair: Roger Gadway; Vice Chair: Jenne Patterson; Treasurer: Chuck Kleish; Secretary (pro tem) Bea Lackaff (not on Council). The motion passed unanimously.

**Fire District #3 Report:** Now that all major construction is complete, Fire Commissioner Tom Montag reported that Fire District #3 is moving through it's punchlist, including at Cherry Lane, installation of a new stove and a radio tower for communicating with fire trucks, and upgrades to security cameras, bathrooms, and planning for new no -maintenance landscaping. District #3 Fire Chief Wes Long will address the March 01 SCC meeting, with invited guests from the Husum/BZ CC also in attendance. Chief Long will speak about the expanded DNR Wildfire Ready Neighbors program.

Roger **Adjourned** the meeting at 9:35PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by

Bea Lackaff

SCC Secretary (pro tem)