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In the Loop

To: CEDC Board of Directors, CEDC Members and Interested Parties

From: Ted Sprague, CEDC President

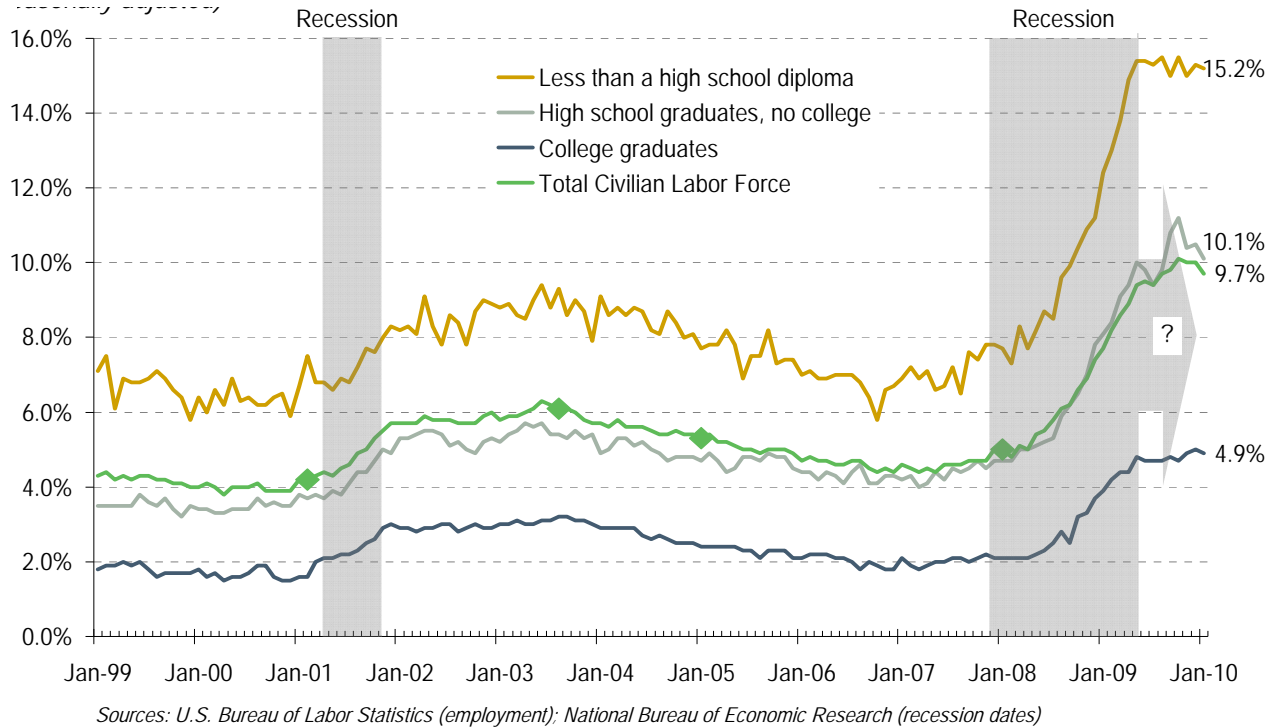
Date: 10/21/10

TIP STRATEGIES - - TURNING A PLAN INTO ACTION

Following our successful roll out of the TIP Strategies plan I have been asked, “OK, what next?” The “what next” question is being answered by the Executive Committee, the Board, staff and people like you. Individuals and groups that want to see a successful Cowlitz County move forward into the future.

I have been speaking to various groups across the county and welcome invitations to meet with others and I have been receiving a lot of positive input regarding the plan. At its most basic, the take away of the strategy is to have a more nuanced approach to economic development. Meaning - - do not simply focus on manufacturing, infrastructure and workforce, but consider for example how downtowns, professional services and education play into the mix. The education question has been especially concerning.

One of the components of the plan is to assist in the recruitment of “talent” by improving our quality of place. In order to facilitate this we truly need to look at our education system here and statewide to learn how we may improve the number of citizens who obtain a high school diploma and beyond. The reason this is important is made clear when you study the unemployment numbers and how recessions affect people with varying education levels. According to the most recent employment statistics, Southwest Washington has the State’s highest unemployment as a region (#1 Clark, #2 Wahkiakum, #3 Lewis and #6 Cowlitz). Not surprisingly, our region also has some of the lowest bachelor degree attainment in the State. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics the US Unemployment rate for all citizens in January 2010 was 9.7%, but for those with a bachelor’s degree is was 4.9%. For those with less than a high school diploma it was 15.2% (see graph).



I do not advocate that all people should get a bachelor’s degree and I understand that is not a path everyone is able to take in life, but our numbers are below other more successful economic regions and we cannot ignore this situation. As we try to improve our quality of place, the education attainment question will be wrestled with into the future. I welcome your thoughts and ideas.

TAKE SOME TIME OUT TO CELEBRATE THE VICTORIES

Another aspect of the TIP Strategies plan is to work with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other funding agencies to get our industrial sites as “shovel ready” as possible. On Tuesday at the Mint Farm Industrial Park we celebrated a very positive step in that direction. Led by Longview City Manager, Bob Gregory a crowd gathered to cut the ribbon on the completion of South Weber Avenue, opening up an additional 93 acres for industrial development.

The event was highlighted by remarks made by Mr. Jacob Macias, EDA regional representative. Mr. Macias pointed out the strong spirit of collaboration we have in Cowlitz County and our ability to wade through the grant process to come out the other side with a completed project. I was especially proud to be a part of the program so I could congratulate CEDC Vice-President Mary Brown for her work on the project. This grant was one of the first assignments Mary took on when she was hired over two years ago and without her diligence it would have been a much more difficult process for everyone.

Congrats to the City of Longview!



Jacob Macias addresses the audience



Dennis Weber cuts the ribbon

Photos courtesy of Mr. C's

SAVE THE DATE - - ECONOMIC SUMMIT 2010

Our Annual Economic Summit with the Kelso/Longview Chamber of Commerce is set for Wednesday, December 1st at the Cowlitz County Regional Conference and Expo Center. The event will be highlighted by last year's CEDC Annual Meeting Speaker Dr. Arun Raha, the State of Washington Chief Economist. If you attended our annual meeting last year you will remember Dr. Raha as an intelligent and humorous speaker and we are thrilled to have him back for this event. This is an evening event so plan to arrive at 5pm and the speakers will begin shortly thereafter. To RSVP or sponsor the event, please contact the Chamber at 360.423.8400 or ajohnson@kelsolongviewchamber.org

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RECESSION DOES NOT STOP THE GENEROSITY OF COWLITZ COUNTY

There are several ways to measure the quality of a community or society and one measure is how well the community takes care of those in need. By that measure we are live in a very high quality community! The Lower Columbia Community Action Program (CAP) recently held a challenge grant campaign and raised over \$128,000. The campaign started on October 1st and the community donated over \$45,000 (\$10,000 over the goal). The challenge was set up by Tim Welch and his wife, Lee Hutton-Welch as they agreed to match each community donation up to \$35,000. Alan Rose, CAP's development and community relations director then announced the Welch's would match ALL donations from CAP employees and board members at a two-to-one ratio. When all donations were added and the Welch's match was included it added up to \$128,000 to CAP. It is heartening to see the generosity of individuals and groups in our community. In the time I have lived here the community always seems to come through on food drives, fundraisers and volunteerism! This is just another aspect of what makes Cowlitz County a great place to live, work and play.

THE PORT OF WOODLAND OPENS THE DOORS TO A NEW OFFICE

On Tuesday of this week the Port of Woodland celebrated the opening of a new office in downtown Woodland and the 50th Anniversary of the Port. We at the CEDC are happy to congratulate the Port on both accomplishments! New Port Executive Director (and CEDC Board Member), Nelson Holmberg has proved to be an excellent partner and advocate for economic development in Cowlitz County and we are very pleased to have him and the Port as strong members of the team.

COWLITZ PUD LAUNCHES 2010/11 RATE DISCOUNT PROGRAMS FOR LOW-INCOME SENIOR AND DISABLED CUSTOMERS

Low-income senior (age 65+) and disabled customers of Cowlitz PUD can now make an appointment with Lower Columbia Community Action Program (CAP) to determine if they qualify for a discounted electric rate in 2010-2011. CAP manages the low-income discount programs for the PUD. Customers can apply for a discounted electric rate by calling CAP at (360) 425-3430, ext. 231 through November 5. The PUD offers discounted electric rates ranging

from 5 to 25 percent for qualified low-income customers who are age 65 or older — or are disabled and earn a disability income. During 2009-2010, a total of 703 PUD customers qualified for a discounted electric rate.

“Participation in the rate discount programs grows a little every year and we want to see that trend continue. We encourage all seniors or disabled customers who believe they may qualify to contact CAP or the PUD to find out more,” PUD Board of Commissioners President **Ned Piper** said. To be eligible for either rate discount program an applicant must have had Cowlitz PUD electric service for the past 12 months at their current residence and meet certain income requirements based on household size. A qualified senior or disabled customer in a one- or two-person household, with a gross annual household income under \$14,750, would receive a 25-percent discount. A higher income threshold is applied for customers with larger households. All program requirements and qualifying income levels are available at www.cowlitzpud.org or by contacting CAP or Cowlitz PUD. Customers can only participate in one of the rate discount programs, even if they meet the requirements of both. Questions about the rate discount programs can be directed to CAP at (360) 425-3430, ext. 231 or to Cowlitz PUD at (360) 423-2210 or WA toll free (800) 631-1131.

TAKE THE TIME TO VOTE AND GET IN YOUR BALLOT

There are several initiatives being put in front of the electret this fall and many decisions will need to be made. The CEDC does not and cannot support individual candidates for office, but we are asked for our view on initiatives, levies and other items of interest to the community. Admittedly, we do not always take a position, but it allows us an opportunity for debate. Our Board is made up of leaders from both the public and private sectors and there are no shy one’s in the group, so when these topics come up, there is plenty of discussion. Our process also allows for many opportunities to weigh in. The issue is first discussed at a Policy Committee meeting, followed by an Executive Committee meeting and finally the full Board votes. The Board reviewed recommendations by the committees on Initiatives 1100, 1105, 1082 and 1098.

After much debate the Board decided to take no position on the “alcohol initiatives” 1100 and 1105. While the initiative will have impacts on municipal budgets, will end state control of liquor distribution and sales and could have social impacts, the group did not believe strongly enough that the EDC specifically should take a position.

The Board is in favor of supporting Initiative 1082, lifting Washington’s ban on private workers’ compensation insurance coverage and encouraging bringing competition into the state.



October 21, 2010

Washington states per worker costs are the second highest in the nation according to the National Academy of Social Insurance. The initiative will create authority within the Office of Insurance Commissioner to regulate private insurers and certify that they are able to provide benefits and follow the rules set out in workers' compensation laws. In addition, it will create a joint legislative task force to propose legislation to the 2012 Legislature conforming the state's existing laws to the new system.

The Board voted to oppose Initiative 1098 which would establish a state income tax. It was clear to the Board that establishing a state income tax would take away one of the advantages we have over our competition in the recruitment or expansion of business in Washington State. When we are recruiting in other states, one of our marketing strategies is to emphasize our lack of personal and corporate income tax. This initiative strips away that advantage. The income tax will also have an impact on small businesses organized as S corporations, limited liability companies and partnerships. Small businesses would be negatively impacted by this initiative.

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