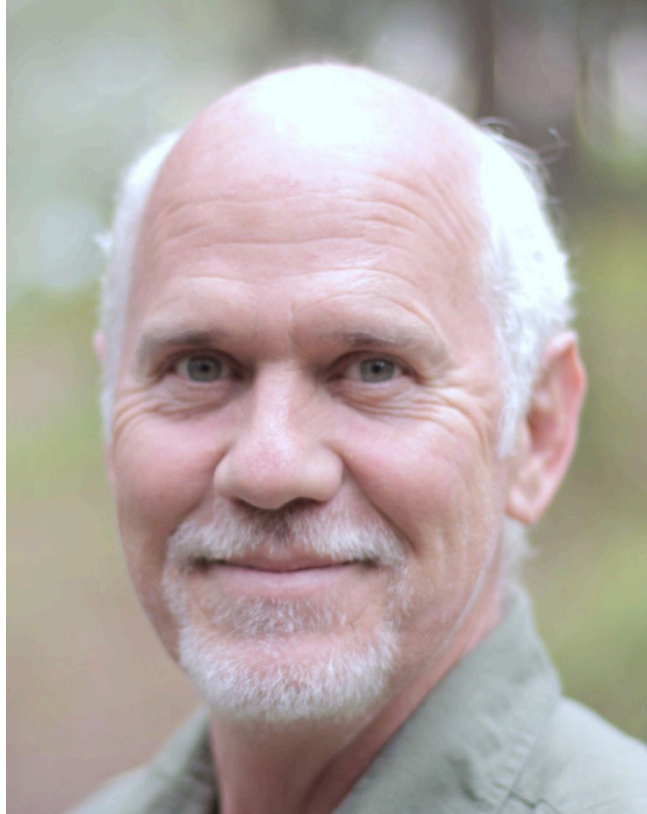

In My View: The People Who Show Up

March 6, 2023



I attended the monthly meeting of the Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority last Thursday (2/23/23) in the middle of a blizzard. I had to put my truck into four-wheel drive just to drive downtown, but felt it was important to attend this meeting.

When I arrived at the County administrative building, it was all locked up. The County staff got a snow day and it appeared that there was no one there. I made calls to a few Tri-Agency Board members to see if the meeting was cancelled. I got a response from Tri-Agency Chair Wes White who assured me that the meeting was proceeding as scheduled.

I knocked on the door and was let into the building by County Counsel Joel Campbell-Blair who came in on a snow day to help with the meeting. This was a good sign since Joel has been diligently serving as Tri-Agency staff because the agency has no staff of its own.

The two Harbor District representatives Brian Stone and Wes White showed up before the 3 pm start time. Unfortunately there were no representatives from Crescent City or Del Norte County. For a meeting to have a

quorum to conduct any business there must be at least four members including one from each of the member agencies.

Undeterred, Chairman White got on the phone to try to roust a few more members to attend the meeting. Eventually Supervisor Darren Short and Councilmember Blake Inscore arrived. I applaud the dedication of these four responsible Board members for showing up in the middle of a snow storm to take care of business.

There is an old saying, “The world is run by the people who show up.” Besides the four Board members and staff, there were only two members of the public in attendance, economic development consultant Mike Bahr and me.

Generally, this Board only meets once per month, so it would have been unfortunate if this meeting was cancelled. There is a lot of work to do to put this agency on a good course to drive economic development in our community. Last year, the City, County and Harbor District reached agreement on how to share the cost of paying off an old debt that accrued because some businesses defaulted on loans.

Moving Forward

Tri-Agency is now positioned to plan for future activities. Once the meeting got started this was the main topic of discussion. The Board talked about the possibility of inviting local tribes to become partners or members of Tri-Agency. There is a history of successful cooperation between the City and County and tribes to work on regional projects that are a benefit to all.

This led to a discussion of a possible name change and then a recognition that the joint powers agreement needed to be amended and updated. The original agreement was adopted in December 1975, nearly 50 years ago. As you can imagine, there are many sections of this agreement that are outdated or irrelevant.

It was recommended by County Counsel that it would be most effective to dissolve the original agreement and create a new joint powers agreement from scratch. At a prior meeting, it was the consensus of all members in attendance that this economic development agency should continue, so there were no disagreements with this proposal to reform the agreement.

The other major topics discussed were how to fund the agency and what projects the agency should focus on. Clearly offshore wind energy is a potential future source of funding, businesses, and jobs, but there was an acknowledgement that this is a medium-term prospect. They wanted more near-term projects.

The original purpose of the Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority was “to provide a united, coordinated, orderly, positive and more effective means for implementing and carrying into execution an Economic Development Action Plan and Strategy for the general benefit of all the people of Del Norte County.” This premise is still valid.

In the spirit of this original intention, I recommend this reformed agency identify projects in the updated economic development plans that have been adopted by each of the respective member agencies.

The Crescent City Harbor District has a 10 Year Strategic Plan 2018-2028. Del Norte County has an approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic (CEDS) Plan 2019-2024. In 2021 Crescent City adopted an Economic Development Strategic Action Plan (EDSAP).

All these plans have been vetted through an open public process and include many projects of value to the community. Each of the individual agencies can continue to develop the projects that they can do by themselves, but this regional economic development agency can focus on some of the projects that require or would be strengthened by multijurisdictional collaboration.

Actions Speak Louder

In previous meetings, I have heard a lot of talk and not much action but that seems to be changing. I was pleased that Chairman White exercised his authority to appoint some of the members to ad hoc committees to work on these topics in between meetings. In this way progress can be made and reported back to the full Board for action at future meetings.

One committee will work with the County Counsel to begin drafting a new joint powers agreement. Through this effort the mission can be updated, new members can be considered and a new name can be contemplated. One name suggestion is Redwood Regional Economic Development Authority.

The other committee will look at the economic development plans of the City, County and Harbor then suggest possible projects that the Tri-Agency or successor can work on.

I am encouraged to see tangible forward progress by the people who showed up. I respect and appreciate their tenacity to brave the weather and attend this meeting.

On a related note, I would like to express my gratitude to the first responders and utility employees who also were out in the blizzard responding to emergencies and repairing our infrastructure. When my power and internet went out for more than 12 hours on Thursday night it was inconvenient, but these heroes were out in the storm working through the night to restore the amenities that we too often take for granted.

Thank you for showing up.

Footnote: You may have noticed some changes with my column. I have had some fruitful conversations with Triplicate Publisher David Thornberry and Regional Editor David Rupkalvis. They want to “drop the left thing.” They believe and I agree that my columns should be judged by my content, not by a left/right label.

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