

CITY OF COOS BAY CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Staff Report

MEETING DATE August 2, 2016	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
--	---------------------------

TO: Mayor Shoji and City Councilors
FROM: Rodger Craddock, City Manager
ISSUE: Presentation on the Proposed Countywide Museum District

BACKGROUND:

Our County is fortunate to have number of museums, which together plan an important long-term role in the health, education, and economy of our overall community. All of the museums are operated by independent non-profit organizations; but they all share a common challenge - stable operating revenue.

A number of concerned citizens have come together to form an “ad hoc” committee, and they have been working to establish a County Historical Fund in an effort to address the funding issue. A County Historical Fund, which is allowed and regulated under ORS 358.17, is in essence a taxing district similar to our countywide Library District. Formation of a County Historical Fund requires the voters’ approval in a general election.

Joe Slack, a member of the County Historical Fund Ad Hoc Committee, will present relevance on the proposed County Historical Fund which is slated to be on the upcoming general election ballot for the voters’ consideration and the group’s draft master plan (attached).

COOS COUNTY HISTORICAL FUND

STRATEGIC PLAN FEBRUARY 29, 2016

An ad hoc planning group representing Coos County's historical museums, submits this plan to the Coos County Commissioners, requesting that the Commissioners consider creation of a Coos County Historical Fund in accordance with ORS 358.171 through 358.230.

1.0 RATIONALE

“Cultural attractions are at the forefront of those programs designed to stimulate private investment, create jobs, and promote tourism.”

— Roger Kemp and Marcia Trotta, *Museums, Libraries and Urban Vitality*

At a modest cost, a County Historical Fund does great good. When we support history museums, we support Coos County, its people, and its economy.

Museums promote education: History museum programs directly supplement the educational opportunities of public schools, which plays a long-term role in the overall health of Coos County communities and their economies. People who know more about the place they live attach to that place more deeply and make more informed decisions about its future.

Museums promote tourism: Museums rank among the top three family vacation destinations. Trips including cultural and heritage activities account for one-fourth of all domestic trips in the U.S. Visitors to historic sites and cultural attractions, including museums, stay 53 percent longer and spend 36 percent more money than other kinds of tourists.

Museums promote business: According to Cossitt Consulting, "Quality of life issues contribute significantly to decisions businesses make in choosing to relocate, including access to cultural resources that includes a dynamic museum community."

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Plan:

1. Lists the entities defined as history museums to be included in the Fund.
2. Highlights the kinds of services to be provided under the Fund.
3. Describes the organization and structure of the Fund.

4. Outlines the structure and duties of a board to be advisory to the County Commissioners.
5. Describes the powers of individual history museums.
6. Explains the distribution of funds to the history museums.
7. Discusses a process for amending the Plan.

3.0 HISTORICAL MUSEUMS IN COOS COUNTY

3.1 Eight historical museums are part of the Coos County Historical Fund:

1. **Bandon Historical Society Museum, Bandon.** The Bandon Historical Museum, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, has been in operation since 1976. It has two paid employees (1 FTE), a ten-person board of directors, about 40 active volunteers and an annual paid membership of over 350. The museum is operated by the Bandon Historical Society at the corner of Highway 101 and Fillmore Avenue. As of February, 2016, the museum is open six days a week (seven days a week in the summer), eleven months a year. The visitor count for 2015 was over 4500. During the school year, over 400 students come on classroom visits. In addition to exhibiting the historical society's collection, the museum generates articles for the local newspaper, provides speakers for clubs and organizations, fosters publications, sends educators into classrooms, aids family research, generates educational materials and collects and preserves the story of our community.
2. **Coos County Fairgrounds Museum, Myrtle Point.** The Coos County Fairgrounds Museum is a display facility formed in 2005 serving the entire county. It operates part time throughout the year in two buildings on the Coos County Fairgrounds in Myrtle Point. It reports to the Coos County Commissioners and Coos County Fair Board. The source area includes all of Coos County and the Land of the Oregon Myrtle, i.e., from the California Border north to Florence. Dozens of museums and individuals provide and maintain and then take home exhibits. The museum hosts special events, in particular family reunions and model railway enthusiasts. Visitor count runs about 6,000 each year, primarily during Fair in late July.
3. **Coos County Logging Museum, Myrtle Point.** The Logging Museum, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation established in 1986, specializes in preserving the heritage and history of Coos County's logging industry. It is located at 705 Maple Street, Myrtle Point. As of February, 2016, it is open Memorial Day through Labor Day. The Museum's exhibits include archival photos, myrtlewood carvings, and logging tools and equipment depicting the history, culture, and lifestyle of the logging industry from

the golden era of the 1800's through modern times. The Logging Museum also maintains an outreach program in cooperation with countywide educational facilities, researchers, genealogy-based groups and other related organizations in an effort to encourage personal growth and community awareness of the contributions logging has made to the area. Arranged tours or visits are available during winter months.

4. **Coos History Museum, Coos Bay.** The Coos County Historical Society, formed in 1891, is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Coos History Museum, 1210 N. Front St., Coos Bay (open to the public since 2015) is chief asset of the Society, and the primary mechanism by which the Society fulfills its mission, which is to create a better understanding of life in Coos County and Oregon's South Coast, past and present, and our place in that life.
5. **Coquille Valley Museum, Coquille.** The museum is owned and operated by the Coquille Valley Historical Society and its board of directors. It was established in 2005 by the historical society, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, an affiliate of the Oregon Historical Society, and a member of the Southwest Oregon Museum Association. The museum is located in the former Taylor's Sport Shop at 153 N. Central Blvd., Coquille. It houses a collection of artifacts, photographs and a research library that reflect the history and people of the entire Coquille River system and valley. Bob Taylor, a charter member, donated the building to the society in January 2013. As of February, 2016, eight active members volunteer approximately 1,000 hours per year to operate the museum, manage the collection, and serve as docents. Special tours are arranged for schools, organizations and family gatherings.
6. **Marshfield Sun Printing Museum, Coos Bay.** The Marshfield Sun Printing Museum provides an experience of a frontier era newspaper and print shop from 1891 to 1944 that the community and visitors value and enjoy. It serves as an educational museum along with the building being an anchor of the historic Front Street which was once the main street of the business district of Marshfield (Coos Bay). The museum building was built in 1911 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The museum is operated by the Marshfield Sun Association, Inc., a 501(c)3 corporation established in 1975. As of February, 2016, the museum is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
7. **Oregon Coast Historical Railway Museum, Coos Bay.** The Oregon Coast Historical Railway at 766 S First Street (US 101 northbound) in Coos Bay, Oregon, a 501(c)3 organization, works to preserve an important part of the region's history by providing a place to restore and display vintage railroad and logging equipment. The signature piece is the 1922 Baldwin steam locomotive No. 104, which served in the region's logging industry until the 1950s, currently being restored to historically-accurate condition. Other equipment and large artifacts that have been donated are on display, along with hundreds of photographs, newspaper articles and other material known in train fan lingo as *railroadiana*. The display area is provided by the City of Coos Bay.

8. Wagner House and Rail Depot, Powers.

3.2 DEFINITION: ORS 358.200 describes, as eligible for funding under a county historical fund, “any historical society organized as a nonprofit organization under the laws of Oregon, affiliated and approved by the Oregon Historical Society and including in its purposes the acquisition by gift, purchase or other means and the preservation of historical objects, real and personal property of historical interest, records, material and data for the purpose of which the fund was created, and the acquisition by gift, purchase, or other means, of real and personal property for use in connection with any of those purposes.”

This Strategic Plan further defines history museums as institutions established with the primary intent to collect and share with the public information about the nature and development of human society. They do this by discovering, collecting, preserving, presenting, and interpreting discourse, documents, and objects of material and spiritual culture. History museums may be devoted to the history of a particular place, person, geographical region, a branch of historical science, a particular topic, or a particular historical discipline.

4.0 PURPOSE OF THE FUND

The Coos County Historical Fund creates stable core operating support for Coos County’s history museums. Examples of core support: paid staff providing regular open hours, office and preservation supplies, utilities and fixed costs, and an annual audit or financial review.

Eligible museums may jointly decide on cooperative projects or shared services (e.g., a shared grant writer, webmaster, or artifact cataloger), a jointly owned piece of equipment, etc.

5.0 ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 The boundaries of the Coos County Historical Fund will be the boundaries of Coos County.

5.2 Each Coos County history museum is an independent nonprofit, with powers outlined in section 6.0 below. Each museum governing body independently determines how its share of the annual distribution is to be spent, and each will annually submit a separate budget to the County Commissioners. Each museum governing body will be responsible for spending Fund money in accordance with requirements of the Fund and this Strategic Plan. Each museum will be responsible for its own debt or financial obligations and will not assume responsibility for the obligations of any other museum(s).

5.3 ADVISORY BOARD: The Coos County Commissioners will appoint a five-member Advisory Board with limited and defined powers. In its advisory capacity to the Coos County Commissioners, this board represents the public and the eligible museums countywide. The members will be selected from among candidates recommended by the Coos County Historical

Fund member museum group. Terms of appointment shall be for four years. A maximum of two terms may be served consecutively.

5.4 The charge of this board will be limited to the following:

- (1) Oversee a distribution method for the County Treasurer to use in distributing Fund money to each museum.
- (2) Provide oversight of shared countywide cooperative services or projects.
- (3) Recommend projects for funding under the Coos County Historical Museum Common Fund to the County Commissioners.
- (4) Advise the County Commissioners on including newly established history museums eligible for support under the County Historical Fund.
- (5) Preserve the autonomy of the individual museums while fostering and enhancing cooperative services or projects as jointly determined by those museums.

5.5 The ultimate authority for administration of the Fund will reside with the County Commissioners. This in no way restricts the advisory board in fulfillment of its designated duties. The advisory board will not intervene in the affairs and policies of individual museums. Any powers not vested by statute with the County Commissioners will be assumed to reside with the individual museums.

6.0 POWERS OF THE MUSEUMS

Museum governing bodies will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of their respective museums. The authority of each museum governing body shall include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Hiring, firing, setting standards, working conditions, and pay scales for museum staff. Museum staff will be employees of their respective museums.
- (2) Fiscal authority over the museum including budgetary, payroll, and auditing or reviewing functions. Any museum may create a reserve fund within its budget to restrict Historical Fund money for building construction or maintenance. Each museum will provide a copy of the museum's annual audit or financial review to the advisory board and County Commissioners. The rights of each museum governing body over each museum's fiscal affairs shall be abridged only in that the museum must spend County Historical Funds for museum purposes.

- (3) Control over the physical facility of the museum including building maintenance and necessary repairs. The museum buildings and their contents will remain the property of the museum, unless museum space is rented or leased.
- (4) Formulation of rules and policies for the governance of the museum and for the provision of museum services.
- (5) The right to accept, use, or expend any funds, or accept, use, or divest itself of any real or personal property, donated to the museum.
- (6) The right to enter into contracts, apply for grants, and take any other action that furthers the interests of the individual museum.

7.0 FUNDING

The history museums will be funded under ORS 358.171 through 358.230 by a continuing levy as established by the voters of Coos County at the rate of 10 cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation of properties within Coos County. Funds will be distributed as follows in order to create the ability for each community museum to cover necessary core operating and infrastructure costs, now and into the future, to meet the educational and cultural needs of the population it serves, and to contribute to the economic well-being of Coos County:

- (1) Bandon Historical Society Museum – 9 percent
- (2) Coos County Fairgrounds Museum – 9 percent
- (3) Coos County Logging Museum, Myrtle Point – 9 percent
- (4) Coos History Museum – 37 percent
- (5) Coquille Valley Museum – 9 percent
- (6) Marshfield Sun Printing Museum – 9 percent
- (7) Oregon Coast Historical Railway Museum, Coos Bay – 9 percent
- (8) Wagner House and Rail Depot, Powers – 4 percent
- (9) Coos County Historical Museum Common Fund – 5 percent

The Coos County Historical Museum Common Fund will be administered by the County Commissioners. Funds will be available through application by any Coos County history museum that is included as a member of the Coos County Historical Fund. Applications will be reviewed by the Fund Advisory Board which will make recommendations to the County Commissioners.

When a Coos County Historical Fund is created and a tax levy for it approved by Coos County voters, all eight history museums will offer free admission to all Coos County residents.

8.0 AMENDMENT PROCEDURES

Should any museum decide to withdraw from the Fund by action of its governing body, or fail to follow the requirements of ORS 358.171 to 358.230 or of this Strategic Plan, its funds may be withheld. Funds previously allocated to that museum shall be proportionately allocated to other eligible museums.

Should a new Coos County history museum seek inclusion in the Fund group, the advisory board will determine if it meets the definition of a history museum outlined in this Strategic Plan and will make a recommendation to the County Commissioners regarding its eligibility. Adding a new museum will necessitate changing the distribution formula, and the Advisory Board will recommend a new formula to the County Commissioners in that circumstance.

The funding distribution may be reviewed as necessary by the Advisory Board and recommendations for changes made to the County Commissioners. Any changes shall be approved by all of the parties, including governing bodies of the member museums and the cities.