

Local officials discuss government, infrastructure



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Wednesday, February 06, 2019 8:50 AM

NNRDA/HDA Economic Development Officer Jan Morrison, Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority Executive Director Sheldon Mudd, Governor's Office of Economic Development Deputy Director Matt Moore and Governor's Office of Economic Development Mining Industry Specialist Joel Lenz.

Editor's Note: The annual Winnemucca Futures economic development forum took place on Jan. 30, and featured Humboldt County's industry and government leaders. What follows is the first of a four-part series.

Winnemucca Futures 2019 highlighted the advancements and trajectory of Humboldt County's government, industries and education. More than 165 people from Humboldt County and other locales attended the event, held at the Boys and Girls Club.

Government and Infrastructure

City of Winnemucca

Winnemucca city manager Alicia Heiser spoke about the city's current and planned projects, including the capacity for expansion.

The city has completed several recreational construction projects in the past year, including the splash pad, playground equipment replacement at both Vesco and Highland parks, and the fitness walking path installed at the Whitworth Recreational Complex. The fitness walking path is free for the public to use year-round and funding was provided by an AARP grant obtained by the Age and Dementia Friendly group in Winnemucca.

Planned recreational projects this spring include new playground equipment for both Pioneer Park and the Whitworth Recreational Complex adjacent to the splash pad.

Heiser said the city plans to have a feasibility study and report conducted to determine whether it makes more sense to repair the pool or construct a new one and to document issues with the pool. She said Bode Howard Memorial Pool is not large enough to hold revenue-generating



swim meets and current known issues include problems with the HVAC system, ventilation and utility room conduits that are corroded.

Heiser said the new sewer plant that was installed by the city just over a year ago currently processes just over 800,000 gallons per day. The capacity of the sewer plant is 2.4 million gallon per day allowing for expansion and new projects.

There are seven water wells throughout the city and Heiser said plans are underway to construct a new well on the east side of town to allow for expansion. The city is also constructing a railroad spring pipeline on BLM land that will allow water that currently runs out onto the ground to be transferred to the east side of town, providing redundancy for the city's most utilized well seven.

Heiser said the city has supported the community in two new programs to contribute to downtown economic development and historic preservation, which include the Nevada Mainstreet program and Nevada State Historic Preservation Office Certified Local Government Program.

Heiser reported that the city's financial state is good as the general fund is stable and consolidated tax distribution (CTX) has been very good this year so far. The only debt held by the city is on the newly constructed sewer plant. Heiser said the water fund capital is low, but has enough for current maintenance.

"The city's role in economic development is making sure that businesses want to be here and that we have the infrastructure to expand when businesses come and bring new employees," said Heiser.

Humboldt County

Humboldt County Manager Dave Mendiola discussed Humboldt County's part in Cyanco's choice of Winnemucca for its solid sodium cyanide expansion location. He also stressed the importance of having a community prepared for an influx of new jobs and residents. Companies look at housing, infrastructure, Internet and community offerings when choosing a location, and if Humboldt County can't provide these things, they will take the business elsewhere, Mendiola said. He also spoke about the I-11 corridor and the county's strategic plan for economic development.

Regarding the water question, Mendiola said the county is in the process of acquiring Star City Water, but also still needs to address the high level of nitrites in the Grass Valley area. In response to the question about the recreation tax initiative, Mendiola emphasized the importance of a future initiative benefiting the rural communities as well as Winnemucca. Regarding the increased traffic from Cyanco and Lithium Nevada, Mendiola said he was discussing additional turnouts and passing lanes on 95 to ease traffic pressure. He said the



county is stable financially, with no debt, and the general fund sits at around \$13 million. "Humboldt County is in a great position to grow and move ourselves into the future," he said.

Economic Development

Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority (NNRDA)

The NNRDA represents five counties in northeastern Nevada, covering approximately 45,000 square miles and making up 41 percent of the state. Executive Director Sheldon Mudd said the main focus of the NNRDA is to recruit business and create jobs, with a focus on community exposure.

Mudd reported that in 2018, NNRDA was involved in \$112.5 million of new capital investment into northeastern Nevada, equivalent to 66 jobs. Mudd said the NNRDA is at a 20 percent success rate for attracting new people who have inquired into the regional area.

The NNRDA has been working on ancillary objectives such as infrastructure and housing to be prepared for community marketing and diversification efforts.

"Going into the future we're really going to try to expose this area to what's out there and target specific industries, aerospace and defense, agriculture and several others that we'll be targeting," said Mudd.

NNRDA Economic Development Officer Jan Morrison spoke about community capacity building, which includes infrastructure, Interstate 11 planning, downtown planning, housing issues, local certified government, and the Mainstreet program.

Morrison reported that the previously projected decline in Humboldt County's population is now expected to grow in the next three to five years, along with the estimated number of primary jobs.

"We've made some huge progress with housing issues in talking to major employers and have some workforce housing developments coming out of the ground this year," said Morrison. "The city and county have worked hard in problem-solving and working to remove some of the economic barriers."

Mudd shared the importance of community groups and local governments working together toward a common goal.

"You guys have a lot going on in Humboldt County and you guys are a shining example of how county and city can work together to make things happen," said Mudd. "We're working on that with some of our other areas but here it's working well and you're really blessed to have a group of folks that are all going in one direction."



Governor's Office of Economic Development

Matt Moore, deputy director for the Governor's Office on Economic Development (GOED) said GOED's focus is coordinating the efforts of all of the economic development authorities in the state. He said Nevada lost over 100,000 jobs during the recession of 2008-2012. Since then, the state has created almost 300,000 jobs and gained 190,000 jobs back, in part because of the efforts of economic development authorities.

GOED was integral in providing many of the financial incentives that enticed Cyanco, for instance. These incentive packages depend on the company meeting requirements like numbers of jobs offered, and do not include actual money. Rather, companies receive tax abatements for a number of years, or fee waivers. Altogether, GOED and Humboldt County offered an incentive package of \$1.5 million.

Moore said only 80 percent of the companies that apply for incentive packages actually meet the requirements. "The pressure is now on Cyanco to meet those metrics," he said.

GOED Mining Specialist Joel Lenz said mining in the state is solid, and is optimistic about gold, as well as copper and lithium. He said the mining industry is countercyclical; for instance, in 2012 when the rest of the state struggled, mining had its heyday, but has slid in recent years, only recently coming out of the slump. He said part of his job is "marketing Nevada" in the mining industry, which is relatively easy because government entities don't attempt to assert control over mining resources.

Humboldt Development Authority

Patrick Gray, Humboldt Development Authority board president, spoke about the importance of Humboldt County's strategic plan, calling it the "roadmap to where we want to go." Grants often require the information provided in the strategic plan, as do efforts to bring the Interstate 11 corridor through Humboldt County. He also spoke about catalyst projects, or projects that spark continued growth, like reinvigorating downtown Winnemucca, and emphasized that economic growth in the county leads to community abundance.

Gray explained how the strategic plan came together in three phases: information gathering, analysis and implementation. The plan includes projects to encourage value-added agriculture like bringing in dairy operations so hay grown in the county remains in the county rather than being exported. It also touches on recreation, public land and tourism.

Gray recounted a quote by ancient Greek mathematician Archimedes, who said "Give me a lever long enough, and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world." Gray said the county's strategic plan is the fulcrum that will allow the county to do amazing things.