



Greater Bandon Association

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"using the MAIN STREET approach"

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Testimony for the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

HB 5005 (relating to lottery bond funding of HB 3562)

Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction:

Oregon's economy is doing just fine. Over the last 13 years, Oregon's economy has grown nearly three times faster than the national economy. Only one state over these 13 years has grown faster economically. But while Oregon's overall economy is doing fine, working families especially in rural Oregon, are not.

For example, the median household income in Bandon is \$30,100 while statewide its \$43,937. The unemployment in Coos County where we live is two percent higher than the state average. And the percentage of students in the Bandon School District eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches stands at 78.4% this year.

Buildings in our historic business district, Old Town Bandon, have gradually deteriorated over time. Two fires, the last in the 1930s, destroyed our entire business district. It was rebuilt rapidly with wooden structures that were meant to be temporary. They have become our Old Town today.

Bandon needs more sustainable living wage jobs. Its economy needs to be rejuvenated. Bandon is blessed with some of the most outstanding natural resources on our coast. Our beaches are spectacular, wildlife is plentiful and outdoor recreation opportunities abound. But, our City government and services are severely underfunded as we have the lowest tax base of all towns in Oregon. We simply lack the resources that we need for this effort.

One bright, positive spot has been our local Main Street organization, the Greater Bandon By-the-Sea Association. Like many of our 90 counterparts in towns throughout Oregon, we are an all-volunteer 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. While our resources are limited, we have been able to do some amazing things.

First, we have tried to make our streets more inviting and demonstrate community pride in our downtown area. Our biggest contribution to our community's appearance has been to work with the City to establish a loan program that enables downtown business and property owners to improve the appearance of their existing buildings and businesses through façade rehabilitation. In the last two years, over \$114,000 in improvements have been made to enhance Bandon's downtown image. One loan recipient was awarded the 2013 "Excellence within Downtown Revitalization" Award for Best Façade Rehabilitation Under \$7,500 for Oregon.

We have undertaken annual spring cleanup campaigns to make Bandon shine. Washing windows, picking up litter, and sprucing up building and landscaping make our streets more appealing not only to visitors but to potential businesses that may want to relocate or make a start here.

Second, we have tried to bring both visitors and local residents into our shops and businesses with activities that show off what our community has to offer and that bring our community together. Our Alive After Five activity every third Friday of the month, for example, shows that Bandon does not roll up its sidewalks at 5:00.

But \$5,000 loans that must be equally matched do not take care of buildings with major structural and restoration issues and we have more and more of those in Bandon. HB 3526 that creates the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant Program begins addressing that issue with capital to support of brick and mortar projects.

And bringing in a few dozen more visitors into a town that already has basically come to rely primarily on tourism for jobs does not provide for much rejuvenation of our economy. We have been exploring more options and we have had several conversations with perspective businesses. But many times projects have failed or stalled because they fell shy of the financing needed to make their project come to fruition.

Often, it also is because sufficient analysis has not been done. Before we get too far along, information needs to be gathered, analysis prepared, opportunities identified and the current demographics and economic base both here and around us fully documented. We need to get a clear snapshot as to where Bandon and the surrounding community is. This will help gain insight to our realistic opportunities for economic success. Any ensuing community dialogue can then be evidence-driven and informed as opposed to being yet another consensus of opinions based upon limited knowledge and speculation.

Again, HB 3526 can help us with the necessary tools to facilitate that community revitalization. Ultimately, the entire Bandon community benefits from a revitalized downtown business district. A vital downtown retains and creates jobs. A healthy downtown protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods. It keeps profits in town, supporting local family-owned businesses and local community projects. And a revitalized downtown increases the community's option for goods and services.

The cumulative success of the Main Street approach and Main Street programs at the local level has earned a reputation as one of the most powerful economic revitalization tools in the nation. The National Main Street Center conducts research by annually collecting statistical information on economic activities in local Main Street programs throughout the country. From a study conducted over the two year calendar period 2013-2014, they found that for every dollar a participating community spends to support the operation of its Main Street program, it realizes \$26.52 in new investment as a result.

HB5005 provides \$5 million in funding to support HB 3562. On behalf of working families not only in Bandon but for rural towns throughout Oregon, the Greater Bandon Association is urging your support of HB 5005.



Harv Schubothe

Executive Director