

Jordon Cove boss says LNG project needs assist from Oregon's Congressional delegation

BEND — Betsy Spomer, president and CEO of Jordon Cove LNG, asked delegates to the OSBCTC convention to help her lobby Oregon's Congressional delegation to support the proposed \$6 billion private investment in Coos Bay.

"There is essentially silence from the federal (Congressional) delegation from Oregon," Spomer said, noting that only U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader has publicly supported the project.

"We need your help to get these guys off the fence," she emphasized. "... And I think the number one person we need is Sen. (Ron) Wyden."

Veresen, a Calgary, Alberta, British Columbia-based company, wants to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal and supporting power plant and pipeline (Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline) on the North Spit in Coos Bay. It will be built with private funding under a project labor agreement (PLA) with the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council and the Northwest National Construction Alliance, which consists of

the Carpenters Union and Operating Engineers Local 701. Construction is anticipated to span 42 months, with an average workforce of 900, and a peak workforce of approximately 2,100.

Spomer says the project has support from the community, unions, the county, and other local institutions.

But in March, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) denied Jordon Cove LNG's applications to build and operate the terminal and the pipeline. The company has filed for a rehearing. Spomer expects a decision on that will come no later than October.

Spomer told delegates the biggest weakness in their case is lack of Congressional support.

"I think that's what it's going to take if we're going to turn this thing around," she said.

Speaking at the convention the following day, Sen. Wyden said he did what he promised he would do—and that was to let the process play itself out.

"On the export question, I know passions run really strong

on this," Wyden said. "Both sides are weighing in with everything they've got. We've got strong supporters, strong opponents—it spreads all across the political spectrum."

Wyden told delegates that when he was chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Secretary of Energy was planning to go on hiatus for a couple of years after having initiated a number of energy projects in other states.

"I said you're not going to do that to the people of Oregon," Wyden recounted. "You're not going to cut off the opportunity for us to really make the case—both pro and con."

Wyden said he lobbied appointees to the Energy Department, asking them to give Oregon the chance to make it's case—and to not cut off the application process.

"I pinned every one of them down," he said.

Wyden's request was granted.

"I have told both sides, that I will work with you every step of the way—it's now in the FERC process," he said.

...Mohlis retires from building trades

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velopment Commission. John Kitzhaber named him "team leader" of his Economic Development transition team after he was elected governor in 2014. Mohlis also has served on the Management-Labor Advisory Committee on workers' compensation, the Oregon State Apprenticeship Council, and the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council, to name a few.

Mohlis was raised in Waterloo, Iowa. He spent a year and a half at the University of Iowa, unsure of what he wanted to do. He met his wife, Debbie, at college. In 1977 they moved to Bozeman, Montana, where he entered the bricklayer apprenticeship program. He soon became an active member of the 35-member Bricklayers Local 5. He phone-banked for area politicians and attended building trades council meetings. As a third-year apprentice he was elected a trustee of the local. Later, he served as financial secretary when the incumbent officer stepped down.

When construction slowed down in Montana, Mohlis trav-

eled to Salem in February 1988 to work on the Marion County Correctional Facility. After three months he returned home for his wife and young daughter, moving the family to Redland, Oregon, later that year.

He transferred his book to Bricklayers Local 1, and met then-business manager Jim McNannay. In May 1989, McNannay hired Mohlis as a business agent and organizer. When McNannay retired in 1994, Mohlis ran for the seat. He served four terms before taking the job as executive secretary of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council in 2005. He succeeded Wally Mehrens of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, who retired.

In October 2010, Mohlis succeeded Bob Shiprack, who retired as executive secretary of the Oregon State Building Trades Council.

On reflection, Mohlis says he probably is most proud of the purchase in 2000 of the Mason Trades Building in Northeast Portland. The space includes offices and a training center. "It really helped us ramp up our training program," he said.

At the 2016 OSBCTC con-

vention, Mohlis said it hasn't been a one man job. He recognized all the volunteer union leaders who run building trades councils throughout the state.

"It's so important to have these local building trades councils on the ground, watching the projects in their area, watching the local politics," he said. "I can look anybody in the eye and say: we have building trades councils in every corner of this state that are minding the business and doing the right thing for our members and contractors."

Mohlis continued: "I am so grateful and so lucky to have had the opportunity to go to work for you and your families, and the men and women of the building trades. It's an honor and a privilege."

In retirement, Mohlis will do some traveling, and spend time with his son, daughter, and two grandchildren (a third is on the way). He will continue as a trustee on the Western States 401(k) plan, on the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. board of directors, and on the board of the BULL Session golf tournament. He also is considering doing some work as a consultant.

'You saved my town'



GOP state rep says Building Trades worked with him to save Prineville

BEND—The Great Recession of 2008-09 impacted Crook County more than any county in the state of Oregon.

"We had the highest unemployment in the state. We had the highest food insecurity rate. In every statistic that you'd be embarrassed about, we led it. It was dire," State Rep. Mike McLane (R - Powell Butte) told delegates attending the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council convention.

Prineville—the largest town in Crook County with a population of 9,100—had been struggling long before the recession hit. The wood products industry was spiraling downward, and its largest employer, Les Schwab Tire Centers, had relocated its corporate headquarters to Bend.

So when Facebook, Google and Apple rolled into town with plans to build gigantic data centers, they were welcomed with open arms.

While Prineville is best known for timber and tires, "we started to be known for technology, the third T," McLane said.

But then a new fight developed, this one over the state's

tax policies known as "central assessments." McLane said the uncertainty threatened future growth of the data center industry in the state.

So in 2012, McLane, then a freshman legislator, sponsored

a bill to bring some tax certainty to Oregon. "I was a freshman legislator, not quite sure what I was doing, and not quite aware of the forces I was taking on," he said.

That's when he met Joe Es-

monde, a union rep for IBEW Local 48, and John Mohlis, head of the Oregon Building Trades Council.

"They said they would help," McLane said.

Long story short—with support from the building trades, the Legislature passed a bill, dubbed "the Facebook bill," that changed the tax structure for data centers, and the companies that run them. As a result, Facebook, Google and Apple continued to expand their data centers in Prineville, creating hundreds of union construction jobs.

"I am incredibly grateful to you ... you saved my town!" McLane told delegates. "Your brothers and sisters are working in my district, saving my town from utter despair."

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— State Rep. Mike McLane
R-Powell Butte, Dist. 28