

Good afternoon, my name is Mark Collson a Newport resident, and member of the Aquarium Advisory Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to background you on the appropriation that Representative Gomberg and Governor Brown have supported and put in the budget.

In the early 80's, when I was Mayor of Newport, the coastal economy was suffering from a decline in fishing and timber industries. As a response the Yaquina Bay Economic Foundation, an incubator for economic projects in our region, undertook seeking a replacement for these declines. After multiple years of research, they decided on an aquarium.

About this time the state formed the Regional Strategies Program. We chose Tourism as our strategy. I was in my third term as mayor when appointed to chair the Attractions Development committee. Our three counties' proposals were reviewed, and the Aquarium was ranked the top project. We were awarded a \$1 Million dollar grant.

I am here supporting a multi-year updating plan, having completed Phase I, seeking your approval for \$5 Million in a project you had a major hand in creating. We are truly "shovel ready". Communities along the Oregon coast have benefitted from the 15 Million visitors to the Aquarium since 1992. 96% of those come from outside our county and 1/3 from out of state. Newport's Chamber estimated our economic impact to exceed \$100 Million annually to the County.

In my view the State made a wise investment early in the Aquarium's development and will create a significant return on investment to the central Oregon coast in the coming years with this investment. Thank you for your time.