

COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES  
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON  
PUBLIC HEARING

TUESDAY

4:00 P.M.

OCTOBER 21, 2003

Board members present: Vice-Chair Perry Huston and Bruce Coe.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; Gene Dana, Sheriff; Sgt. Clay Meyers and approximately 30 members of the public.

✓ PUBLIC HEARING

2003-BUDGET AMENDMENT

SHERIFF

At approximately 4:00 p.m. VICE-CHAIRMAN HUSTON opened the public hearing to consider increasing the Sheriff's Office 2003 Budget Amendments.

VICE-CHAIRMAN HUSTON explained the recent arbitration results for the Line Deputies. He said the Sheriff's department had requested a budget amendment, and a public hearing was the correct process to consider such a request. He thanked the Sheriff's department for their work in reviewing their budget in detail. COMMISSIONER COE announced the public hearing was to consider the 2003 budget amendment and not the Sheriff's 2004 budget.

GENE DANA, SHERIFF, said the amount needed for the retroactive costs associated with the binding arbitration award approximately \$130,000.00. He explained how he has requested assistance from the county's reserve fund, to help absorb those costs. He said if the Sheriff's department were to stay within the "zero" growth budget for 2004, they would need to cut approximately 6 deputies and then explained the ripple effects for officers and public safety. According to the Sheriff, they had gone over their budget figures several times, and were able to come up with approximately \$50,000.00, resulting from not filling vacant positions.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: PAT KELLEHER announced it was the Sheriff's second budget amendment for the year 2003. He said medical costs were going up everywhere, and would ripple through the entire county workforce, all requesting the same results. He addressed issues relating to the jail population, growth and available beds.

**BOB RITCHIE**, CITY OF ELLENSBURG CHIEF OF POLICE, announced the Law & Justice Council was opposed to any Deputies being cut from the Sheriff's department. He felt staffing was already at the "bare-minimum". As a rural resident, he was extremely concerned of possible cuts, and encouraged the Board to consider going before the voters for a tax increase, or to the general operating budget for funding. **ROY WOODY**, representing himself, asked who required departments to turn in a "zero" growth budget. He said the Line Deputy's had not received an increase in over two-years, and the Board should have been aware of the current situation. He questioned the Board's reluctance to negotiate with the Union. He felt a tax increase was necessary and urged the Board to let the public vote and decide if they want to support the Sheriff's department. **ELLIS NALE**, representing himself, broke down the number of law enforcement officers versus population within the county. He was extremely concerned with public safety and response times, if deputies were cut from the Sheriff's office. He said he would be in favor of a tax increase, and suggested cutting from other departments within the County, to ensure public safety. **SGT. CLAY MEYERS**, responded to the questions that were raised in previous testimony, and addressed liability issues. **JAMES MELVIN** felt the top priorities were public safety and law enforcement. He felt the Deputies have viable reasons for a lawsuit against the County. **JUSTINE MALLONEE** compared zero growth budget versus private business. He said by the time the County employs a Deputy, there is a one-year investment (academy, training etc.) involved. **PATTY KETNER** asked where the responsibility lies with the budget. She said the Sheriff's office could not raise their budget last year; the County forced the binding arbitration, and is now making the Sheriff's department responsible for the budget shortfall. **WAYNE JOHNSON, UNION BUSINESS MANAGER**, questioned how much information was conveyed to the Board of County Commissioners during the union negotiations, and said the Unions last proposal, was actually less than what was awarded from the Arbitrator. **THERE BEING NO OTHER TESTIMONY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.**

**VICE-CHAIRMAN HUSTON** explained how it was his idea for a zero-based growth budget. He referred to the annual budget retreat involving the County Management Team, and said it was where the budget instructions were derived from. He had been very impressed with the department's participation and going through the exercises that are set out in the budget instructions. Due to the Sheriff's Line arbitration, the County must come up with the money to honor the award. He appreciated the public's comments and said it may eventually come to a point of having to put before the voters, a tax increase. **COMMISSIONER COE** reviewed the amount of money that had


been spent towards expanding the corrections center, and commented on the other recent improvements to the existing facility (fire escape routes, additional bunks in cells etc.). He said the Board of County Commissioners have always been willing to assist departments when an emergency arises, and has received numerous compliments on the level of service from citizens. The Board expressed their appreciation to the Sheriff's office, in scrubbing their budget, and finding \$50,000 to give towards the arbitration award.


VICE-CHAIRMAN HUSTON moved to continue the public hearing until 4:00 p.m. Tuesday November 18, 2003, the record to remain open, and to direct the Sheriff's department to work with the Auditor's office on the final figures for the arbitration award, with funds to come out of the operating reserve, minus the \$50,000 to come out of the Sheriff's budget. COMMISSIONER COE seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD

KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
Julie A. Kjorsvik

  
Perry D. Huston, Vice-Chairman