

**PUBLIC HEARING
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HOME ARTS BUILDING – COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS**

TUESDAY

6:00 P.M.

AUGUST 17, 2004

Board members in attendance: Chairman Perry Huston, Vice-Chairman Bruce Coe and Commissioner Max Golladay.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; Gene Dana, Sheriff; Clayton Myers Undersheriff. There were approximately 40 members of the public in attendance.

PUBLIC HEARING

SALES TAX INCREASE/JAIL

SHERIFF

At 6:15 p.m. **CHAIRMAN HUSTON** opened the public hearing to consider whether a .3 cent increase in the sales tax should be placed on the ballot to fund the construction and operation of a new jail facility and remodel existing structures. He gave a brief history and explained how the Citizens Advisory Group had prepared a floor plan and estimated construction cost of the new facility utilizing the site adjacent to the existing structure consistent with past direction of the Board of County Commissioners.

SHERIFF GENE DANA gave a power point presentation. He thanked members of the Law & Justice Council and citizens who have volunteered countless hours with the proposed project. The presentation included various information such as current inmate safety and liability; Conceptual Master Plans and cost estimates for several options including do nothing (deemed unacceptable); send long term prisoners away; expand in downtown and remodel existing facility; and a new off-site jail or Law & Justice Center outside of town.

CLAYTON MYERS gave a breakdown of the total proposal which would cost approximately \$16,725,000.00 including contingencies, overruns, A/E fees, reimbursements, survey & geotechnical, quality and control testing. The additional operation costs annually would be approximately \$704,000 for staffing (11 positions) and utilities.

SUSAN MUSSELMAN, FINANCIAL ADVISOR FOR KITITAS COUNTY explained bond issues. She said the estimated revenue used for planning purposes would be approximately \$1,380,000. She said without Interlocal Agreements with the cities, the County would receive 60% of the countywide tax collections, or an estimated \$828,000 and the other 40% would be paid out to the cities on the basis of population. She also explained how the County may issue Limited Tax General Obligation Bonds, on their own authority, without voter approval, but a repayment source would need to be identified by the Board of County Commissioners. The current interest rate market, the average interest rate for a 20-year bond issue for the County is estimated at 4.25%.

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PUBLIC TESTIMONY: SHANNON CARLSON representing herself, spoke in favor of placing the issue on the ballot and felt the voters needed to make the ultimate decision. She addressed concerns relating to safety of both the Sheriff's department's employees and inmates; the outdated building, lack of space and outdated equipment. She encouraged support from the cities as well as from the Board of County Commissioners. She asked the Board to not wait until the County is mandated by the State to resolve the problems. **PATTI KETNER** representing herself and her husband, voiced several concerns with the current jail situation and felt the Board needed to address the problems immediately. She hoped that politics would not play a part in the role of the Boards decision, and that they would base their decision on public safety. **JOSH NELSON** asked if the new jail would be a source of revenue from other counties. **STEVE HUNT** representing "People for Ethical Government" spoke out against the jail proposal. He felt the numbers presented by the Sheriff's department were not accurate. He felt if the Sheriff hired more deputies and put them out on the street, so they were more visible, rather than put the money into a new jail, the crime rates would drop. He felt there were prisoners being placed in jail that really didn't belong in there. **RICH ELLIOTT, REPRESENTING THE CITY OF ELLENSBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT** addressed issues to impacts to the current facility. He spoke to the fire and life safety codes needing to be updated (fire alarm system, new sprinkler system). He said if the numbers of inmates in the current facility continue to rise, it will cause problems with evacuations etc. **FRITZ GLOVER, MEMBER OF THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE** said there was a great deal of study conducted by the members and was impressed with the compromises that were done to narrow down the focus. He felt it was a good proposal, including the way it would be paid for. He said a new jail is needed due to the growth of increased inmate population. If the proposal was approved, the court system would also be improved. As a taxpayer, he supported the proposal and felt it deserved to be reviewed and voted on by the citizens of Kittitas County. **AMY MILLS, KITTITAS COUNTY TREASURER** felt the Board should let the voters decide on the issue. She encouraged them to move forward since there had already been a lot of time and money invested including purchasing the surrounding properties. **TRACY WILSON** spoke in favor of the proposal and explained how she had worked in the jail since 1984. She said there were alternatives available and they were being utilized more. She reminded everyone that the court system dictates who goes to jail. Though the County has been good about fixing their needs, something more needed to be done to increase staff safety. **CAROLYN MELVIN** spoke in favor of placing the issue on the ballot. She felt there was a justifiable need for a better facility. **JAMES MELVIN** felt the county continues to lose a lot of money by sending deputies to the academy and then they move on to another place because of the wages are so low in Kittitas County. He spoke in favor of the Board placing the issue on the ballot. He didn't feel the county should be too cheap with the project and still expect it to go a long way. **MORILL WOODY** felt the County has

already spent a lot of money in purchasing property and they should take the Citizens Advisory Committees recommendation and move forward. The next logical next is to place it on the ballot for the voters to decide to complete the project. **WILLIAM WOODY** said he currently worked at the Corrections Center, and it was not a safe place for both the employees and the inmates. He felt the response time for the Corrections officers were significantly reduced because of the design of the current facility. They have been tried placing more beds in the current facility, makes it more dangerous for everyone. He said the entire operations of the facility is in desperate need of repair, and it's got to a point of not being cost effective to keep replacing the items. **WILLIAM HOLMES**, representing himself felt the County needed to protect the people who work for them, as well as those being placed in the facility, or the damage could become extreme. There had been an extreme amount of time and energy spent on the proposal. He felt the Board should allow the voters to decide on the proposal. **WARREN BEED, FACILITIES DIRECTOR FOR KITTITAS COUNTY** feared with the increased jail population, there could be lawsuits filed against the county and they would then be forced to build a new jail.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON reviewed the process and said the timeline was tight to make a decision for the November ballot (September 17, 2004). He anticipated receiving a financial report, as well as waiting for a response from the cities.

COMMISSIONER GOLLADAY felt the cities decision will be crucial in the deciding factor.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON moved to continue the public hearing to Tuesday August 31, 2004 at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioner's Auditorium, Room 109, County Courthouse, Ellensburg, and the record to remain open. **COMMISSIONER COE** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Julie A. Kjorsvik

Perry D. Huston