

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
SPECIAL MEETING
HAL HOLMES COMMUNITY CENTER**

MONDAY

6:00 P.M.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2005

Board members present: Chairman Perry D. Huston, Vice-Chairman David Bowen & Commissioner Alan Crankovich.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; Superior Court Judge Michael Cooper; Superior Court Judge Scott Sparks; Amy Mills, Treasurer; Joyce Julsrud, Clerk; Bert Marx, Corrections; Greg Zempel, Prosecutor; Sande DeSalles, Marketing Coordinator; Iris Rominger, Assessor; Clay Myers, Undersheriff; Gene Dana, Sheriff and approximately 25 members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

JAIL & COURTHOUSE OPTIONS

LAW & JUSTICE

CHAIRMAN HUSTON opened the continued public hearing to consider proposed options from the Law & Justice Facility to be placed on the November ballot.

GENE DANA, SHERIFF reviewed a power-point presentation including information on the current conditions of the jail and Courthouse. **CLAY MYERS, UNDERSHERIFF** presented the recommendations presented by the Law & Justice committee. **AMY MILLS, TREASURER** reviewed funding options. **SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE MICHAEL COOPER** gave the history of the Courthouse and the increased case loads in the Superior Court. He addressed the lack of space and safety concerns. **SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE SCOTT SPARKS** explained the types of cases that are dealt with in their Courtrooms with the security issues associated with them. He felt it would cost more to wait and build later because of the increased costs of material, labor and possible higher interest rates. **JOYCE JULSRUD, CLERK** spoke of the need for additional storage space and urged the Board's support of placing the issue on the ballot. **JERRY PETTIT, AUDITOR** expressed his safety concerns for employees, public and prisoners. He said Option C recommended by the Law & Justice committee would provide for secure areas. **AMY MILLS, TREASURER** expressed concerns for her staff's health from the environment. She also commented on needing additional space for record keeping. **IRIS ROMINGER, ASSESSOR** said they also needed additional space and had employee health issues as well from the office environment. **CLAY MYERS, UNDERSHERIFF** clarified answers to questions that had been previously submitted by a citizen. **GREG ZEMPEL, PROSECUTOR** felt that last year the public was unaware of the

crisis that the County is in, noting it had not gone away. He addressed the issue of building a separate juvenile facility, claiming it would not be cost effective to build out separately. He explained concerns relating to liability and the County's responsibility for employee, public and community safety.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: **RICK COLE** said he was not a County employee, but works with various departments within the Courthouse. He explained the inadequate courtrooms, which was an embarrassment to the legal system, as well as the extremely small office spaces. He said there needs to be a better facility to handle matters and the Courthouse is currently unsafe and inappropriate conditions for both staff and members of the public. He was in favor of a combination of an increase in sales tax and property tax. **JERRY LAEL** encouraged the Board to place the issue on the ballot with a combination of increased sales and property tax. He questioned if the proposal was going to be large enough. **STEVE HUNT** felt the Courthouse was in bad condition and agreed it needed additional security. He didn't feel the jail was in a crisis and felt the size of the jail cells were adequate in accordance with Federal guidelines. He was in favor of more deputies and courtrooms, but not a new jail. He questioned why there were no "experts" presenting information on how many beds the jail should have. He said he had recommended solutions to County officials, but no one had contact him with questions. **LYNN IMMAMSHAH** spoke of the increased growth in the County. She previously toured the jail facility and said the conditions and its problems including the extreme overcrowding. She didn't feel that property owners should be the only ones paying the expense and it should be a combination of increased sales tax as well. **MIKE RIGERT** said the problems must be addressed and questioned why the voters turned down the issue last year. He felt the public was not aware of the situation and encouraged the County to get the word out. He questioned what the current daily costs to run the Courthouse and jail were as well as what they are anticipated to be. He was in favor of adequate space and safety for public officials, but did not want any luxuries for prisoners. **MIKE DIEFENBACH** explained he had previously worked in the old jail as well as the current jail. He addressed issues of the lack of security, and the poor conditions it is currently in. He questioned if the proposed facility would be large enough. **VINCENT TOMOSSO** asked if the cities had committed for their portion of the increase in sales tax if approved. He also explained the lack of space in the Courthouse and said it needed improvement. **JOHN GRIFFIN** acknowledged the need for additional space, but questioned why the County spent over 2 million dollars to acquire more property when they have the airport available to build as large of facility as they would like. **THERE BEING NO FURTHER TESTIMONY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.**

COMMISSIONER BOWEN explained the Board had asked the Law & Justice committee to evaluate why the issue was turned down by the voters last year and to bring back another recommendation, including addressing all the space needs which would be supported by the departments and officials. He said the committee did their work and he appreciated their time and input. He felt safety was the number one concern for both the county staff and the public.

COMMISSIONER BOWEN moved to approve and direct the Prosecutor's office to prepare the title and ballot language to be presented including a .3% sales tax increase and the remaining funding to come from increase in property taxes. **COMMISSIONER CRANKOVICH** seconded.

COMMISSIONER CRANKOVICH felt the problems were not going away and it was more appropriate to address both problems now (Courthouse and jail), claiming they owe a safe and secure environment to County staff and the general public.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON was unsure how else to present the information to the public, stating there had been many hearings scheduled and advertised. He addressed the banked money that had been set aside that could be used for possible overruns (approximately \$2 million dollars). He said the County needed to acquire the building sites when they became available and would stand behind his decision of doing so.

The Board thanked staff, public and the Law & Justice committee for the hard work and input.

Motion carried 3-0.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON moved to continue the public hearing to Tuesday September 20, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. to review enabling documents for ballot title and language. **COMMISSIONER BOWEN** seconded. Motion carried 3-0. It was noted that the public testimony portion of the hearing was closed, but written information addressing the ballot language could be considered up until the time of the hearing.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Julie A. Kjorsvik

Perry D. Huston, Chairman