

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
UPPER DISTRICT COURT
700 EAST FIRST
CLE ELUM, WASHINGTON 98922
SPECIAL MEETING**

TUESDAY

6:00 P.M.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

Board members present: Chairman Alan Crankovich; Vice-Chairman David Bowen; Commissioner Mark McClain.

Others: Mandy Robinson, Deputy Clerk of the Board; Jerry Pettit, County Auditor; Sue Higginbotham, Deputy Administrator Auditor's Office; and two members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

VOTE BY MAIL

AUDITOR

At approximately 6:00 p.m. **CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH** opened a continued public hearing from September 24, 2007 to consider the option to Vote-by-mail for all elections held in Kittitas County.

JERRY PETTIT, COUNTY AUDITOR reviewed a power point presentation and provided the Commissioners with a paper copy of the presentation. He reviewed the presentation and talked on highlights for changing to all vote by mail. Mr. Pettit stated that Auditor Office staffs highest priority is to maintain and improve voter confidence in the conduct of elections while being able to use tax dollars in the most effective manner to comply with federal and state election laws. He explained that HB 1754 was passed in May 2005. This bill allows counties to conduct all elections by mail as long as the county Auditor and the county legislative authority agree to the change. He indicated that most counties in the state have moved or are moving to vote-by-mail (36/39 counties). He reviewed the resolution that the Commissioners adopted early last year opting to remain a poll site county. Mr. Pettit reviewed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Grant and what the grant funds can be used on. He stated most of Kittitas County voters are already voting by mail (70%) and explained the Auditor's office take on voting trends. Mr. Pettit reviewed some of the Con's of voting by mail, indicating that the tradition of a polling place voting creates a sense of community and ritual that some voters prefer. He indicated that some voters feel polling place voting is more secure and reduces fraud. He stated that some voters dislike having to place a stamp on their ballot envelope to vote, he continued to review a list of about ten Cons'. Mr. Pettit preceded to review a list of thirteen items under Pros' and some of the Pros' being that there would be only one type of voting process to manage, voters receive ballots 20 days prior to

election day, drop-off centers could be provided prior to and on election day. He indicated it would provide a consistent voter experience within the County as well as less chance of forgetting to vote or not knowing about an election. He indicated this would simplify the process by reducing number of ballot styles needed to print by half. He explained regarding security and anonymity all ballot signatures are verified before they are counted. He explained they would be able to better serve voters with special needs and it would allow more time to process ballots.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: THOMAS DRYDEN expressed concern for voter's privacy.

JUDY REDDY expressed concern of fraud.

SUE HIGGINBOTHAM, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR COUNTY AUDITOR felt that the cost shouldn't be a factor in the decision making process, and she felt integrity and consistency are key.

THERE BEING NO OTHERS REQUESTING TO TESTIFY THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.

COMMISSIONER McCLAIN indicated he has seen the process being proposed and experienced the vote by mail (absentee) ballots being processed and he indicated it is a very smooth process.

COMMISSIONER BOWEN expressed his mixed feelings on the potential of changing the process and indicated he felt that by taking that away from the voters it's taking away a part of their right to vote at the polls. He expressed not feeling comfortable making the decision for every voter.

CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH indicated he is a "die hard" poll site voter and felt that tradition is huge in his district but realizes the need to be efficient and stream line the processes.

COMMISSIONER McCLAIN indicated he wasn't ready to take the next step and feels that these meeting are a good step to prepare the voters in the event that vote by mail becomes mandated.

COMMISSIONER BOWEN moved to draft a resolution and authorize the Auditor to conduct all elections by mail or poll. **CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH** seconded for discussion. **COMMISSIONER BOWEN** indicated he was willing to work with the Prosecutor and Auditor to draft a resolution. Motion carried 2-1. **COMMISSIONER McCLAIN** - Opposed.

CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH moved to direct staff to prepare enabling documents. **COMMISSIONER BOWEN** seconded. Motion carried 2-1. **COMMISSIONER McCLAIN** - Opposed.

CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH moved to continue the hearing to October 2, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. in the Commissioner Auditorium, Ellensburg WA 98926, for enabling documents. **COMMISSIONER McCLAIN** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Mandy Robinson

Alan Crankovich, Chairman