

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
COMMISSIONERS AUDITORIUM
SPECIAL MEETING**

THURSDAY

1:30 PM

DECEMBER 10, 2009

Board members present: Chairman Alan Crankovich, Vice-Chairman Paul Jewell and Commissioner Mark McClain.

Others: Catherine Dunn, Deputy Clerk of the Board; Judy Pless, Budget and Finance Manager; Jerry Pettit, Auditor; Deanna Panattoni, Treasurer; Gene Dana, Sheriff; Joyce Julsrud, Clerk; Marsha Weyand, Assessor; Greg Zempel, Prosecutor; Brenda Larsen, Fire Marshal; Linda Childs, Upper County District Court Commissioner; Joseph Whalen, Human Resources Director; Todd Davis, Noxious Weed Board Coordinator; Patti Johnson, Solid Waste Director; Lisa Lawrence, Solid Waste; Cathy Bambrick, Public Health Administrator; Michael Carpenter, Facilities Maintenance Director; Matt Anderson, Fairgrounds Programs Director; Kirk Holmes, Director of Public Works and Interim Director of Community Development Services; Duke Senter, Information Services Director; Judy Young, Treasurer's Office; Karen Hamel, Kay Kresge, and Sue Higginbotham, Auditor's Office; Clay Myers, Undersheriff; Paula Hocter, Corrections Commander; Bob Gubser, Commander, Sara Keith, Clerk's Office; Cindy Adams, Assessor's Office; Christine Luvera, Lower District Court Administrator; Mandy Weed, Community Development Services; Kathy Jurgens, Department of Public Works; Jim Goeben, Information Services; Robin Raap, Prosecutor's Office; William Holmes, Probation Services; Dora Van Epps, Department of Public Works; Paula Hiatt, Lower District Court.

SPECIAL MEETING

BUDGET

COMMISSIONERS

At 1:30 p.m. **Chairman Crankovich** opened the public hearing continued from December 7, 2009 to consider adoption of the 2010 budget.

Judy Pless, Budget and Finance Manager, began the hearing by explaining there had been a slight increase in the property tax revenue. The General Fund Balance is \$22,505,629. Included in the budget is the wage freeze amount of \$288,154 that has been reduced in the appropriate budgets. The budget ending fund balance is \$1,826,140. The amount of \$168,000 is in the ending fund balance, but has not officially been designated by the Board, which puts the budget shortfall at \$425,154 (\$288,154 plus \$168,000).

Deanna Panattoni, Treasurer, said their department will do without the Loomis Service for transporting money to the bank. She said that

would be a savings of about \$8,000. She said that the Prosecutor's office was looking into the contract.

William Holmes, Probation Services, said the Governor's budget indicates a 10% cut in Juvenile Court programs. **Kirk Holmes**, Director of Public Works, said that the Governor's budget also includes cuts in the Roads programs.

Greg Zempel, Prosecutor, said they are looking at the legal research funds for their office which could amount to \$5,000 to \$10,000 of savings.

Chairman Crankovich asked if there were any more ideas for reductions from budgets or increases in revenues.

There was a discussion of a possible wage freeze. The Unions had voted not to volunteer for a wage freeze. **Commissioner McClain** asked how many non-union positions were lost earlier in the year. **Joseph Whalen** replied that there were 14 non-union people laid off earlier. **Commissioner McClain** said it was not fair for non-union people only to have a wage freeze. **Chairman Crankovich** said that the Board had put the wage freeze idea out as across the board, including Department Heads and Elected Officials subject to Union acceptance. Since they did not accept the wage freeze other methods would be necessary.

Paula Hiatt, Courthouse Union President, asked why furloughs wouldn't work. She said the union had voted for furloughs to make up the amount. **Vice-Chairman Jewell** said that furloughs would put the County into further deficits next year. He pointed out that the Road Fund is losing funds this year from a Levy Shift, as well as the Governor moving County Road monies next year. **Judy Pless** pointed out that the Courthouse Union contract is up for re-negotiation in 2011. **Vice-Chairman Jewell** said that furloughs are a good short term solution, but not for the long term problems.

Chairman Crankovich said this is not a new thing. In March, the Board had asked for suggestions from staff to lower costs. He said he spoke from the experience of a Union member and President.

William Holmes asked what amount was actually needed. **Judy Pless** said that the accounting practices say the County should have two months of operating expenses to actually function. She said in the case of Kittitas County that would be \$1,700,000. **Mr. Holmes** asked why the Board did not raise taxes.

Commissioner McClain said this was not the right time for raising taxes. It may have been good to raise them a few years ago, but now it is too late. **Assessor Marsha Weyand** agreed with William Holmes.

Chairman Crankovich said they don't know if the County has seen the worst and with all the foreclosures, raising taxes is not the answer at this time.

Undersheriff Clay Meyer asked if there was a way to protect current jobs. **Chairman Crankovich** said a wage freeze was the way to protect current jobs.

Chairman Crankovich asked if the group researching an alternative to publishing legal notices has found anything more about savings. **Commissioner McClain** said that might help to bring people back to the County.

Vice-Chairman Jewell said he was so disappointed about this situation and very displeased with the unions not taking advantage of what the Board was trying to do. He said the wage freeze amount - \$288,855 was too much to take out of the fund balance, and the Board has not heard anything that will help this problem.

Assessor Marsha Weyand asked about the libraries. She asked if the libraries were mandated, as the County should only be concentrating on the mandated items. **Chairman Crankovich** said the Board has tossed around libraries and their usage. They have considered telling the libraries their funding will end with 2010. **Commissioner McClain** said a consideration is to look at funding one Upper County and one Lower County. **Judy Pless** said there would be very little realized savings.

Commissioner McClain said the County has remained more stable at this time than other counties, due to the early start on cutting back. **William Holmes** asked if the Board could direct county departments to cut back the amount equal to the wage freeze. He said he was not willing to put the County in the position of not being able to cash a check.

Cindy Adams, Assessor's Office said the employees have volunteered to take furloughs for the County - Union or not, and they are willing to sacrifice. **Chairman Crankovich** said that furloughs are not subject to Union contract.

Paula Hiatt said she shared Vice-Chairman Jewell's disappointment. She said she didn't understand why furloughs can't work as they do in other counties. **Vice-Chairman Jewell** said that furloughs are a short term idea and they won't work in the long term.

Chairman Crankovich said Chelan County is closing their Community Development Services Department and Yakima County is cutting 37 employees. Furloughs are being used with other methods, wage

freezes, concessions, etc. and these are unusual times no one has experienced before.

Kirk Holmes said he would not have believed he would have supported a tax increase. He expressed concern over the road funds next year. He said that last year he lost positions but it is hard not to consider a raise in taxes.

Commissioner McClain said it would be necessary to cut positions. He asked how to accomplish this.

After a fifteen minute break, **Greg Zempel** suggested the Board retire into Executive Session dealing with Personnel negotiations and Performance issues.

Vice-Chairman Jewell said that before the Board retires, should they treat everyone the same or freeze non-union and allow unions their raises and make cutbacks. He said he wanted to do things equally. The Department Heads agreed to treat everyone the same.

At 2:50 p.m. **Chairman Crankovich** announced the Board would retire into Executive Session for 30 minutes with **Judy Pless, Greg Zempel** and **Joseph Whalen** to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee. However, subject to RCW 42.30.140 (4), discussion by a governing body of salaries, wages, and other conditions of employment to be generally applied within the agency shall occur in a meeting open to the public, and when a governing body elects to take final action hiring, setting the salary of an individual employee or class of employees, or discharging or disciplining an employee, that action shall be taken in a meeting open to the public. No action was anticipated.

At 3:20 p.m. the Board returned from Executive Session and **Chairman Crankovich** announced they would retire into Executive Session for 10 minutes with **Judy Pless, Greg Zempel** and **Joseph Whalen** to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee. However, subject to RCW 42.30.140 (4), discussion by a governing body of salaries, wages, and other conditions of employment to be generally applied within the agency shall occur in a meeting open to the public, and when a governing body elects to take final action hiring, setting the salary of an individual employee or class of employees, or discharging or disciplining an employee, that action shall be taken in a meeting open to the public.

At 3:30 p.m. the Board reconvened from Executive Session and **Vice-Chairman Jewell** announced that each department would reduce from their Salaries and Benefits line item the amount listed on the

attached spreadsheet. If there was no number listed for the department, no reduction was needed. The Department Heads were instructed and Elected Officials were encouraged to use Human Resources as assistance in this process. He said there would be no furlough program but there still would be a gap of \$122,442.

William Holmes said that the proposal didn't seem equal. **Chairman Crankovich** said the Board looked at those who had previously reduced their budget.

Judge Thomas Haven, District Court objected that he would lose the lowest priority in his office but one that is the biggest money maker for the County - Traffic Infractions.

Commissioner McClain said the Board looked at the business practices of the departments and would be looking at them quarterly.

Judge Haven asked the Board to rethink this as the Courts are the civilizing influence on society. **Commissioner McClain** asked if the staff could be paid out of the law and justice fund instead of the Court Commissioner.

Treasurer Deanna Panattoni asked whether the amount on the spreadsheet for the Treasurer's office would go up \$8,000 if they find they are not able to cancel it. She was told it would not.

William Holmes said he has requested that the budget process look at level of service and historically, the Juvenile Court has had a tight budget.

Assessor Marsha Weyand said she thought this was un-fair across the board. She wanted the Board to be aware when the new construction numbers were high, the Assessor's Office didn't get the same number of additional staff as Community Development Services, but did get the same amount of additional work. She asked if the offices could be closed during the day to be able to get the work done. **Vice-Chairman Jewell** indicated that as an independently Elected Official that decision would be left to her.

Judge Haven asked if they could raise fees. **Commissioner McClain** said it can only come out of Salaries and Benefits.

Commissioner McClain moved to continue the public hearing to 9:00 a.m. on December 11, 2009 in the Commissioner's Auditorium for consideration of enabling documents. **Vice Chairman Jewell** seconded the motion. Motion carried, 3-0.

Chairman Crankovich said this has been a very painful process for the Board and he cautioned all to prepare for the worst.

Vice-Chairman Jewell thanked the Department Heads and Elected Officials.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 p.m.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Catherine Dunn

Alan Crankovich, Chairman