

**Island County Board of Health
Special Session - Monday, April 2, 2007
Minutes**

Members Present: Commissioners: Mike Shelton, John Dean and Mac McDowell; Barbara Saugen, WGH Commissioner; Patty Cohen, Mayor of Oak Harbor; Roger S. Case, MD, Executive Secretary to the Board; Captain Colin Chinn, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy, Ex-Officio Member.

Members Absent: No members were absent.

Call to Order: Chairman Shelton called this Special Session of the Island County Board of Health to order at 2:05 p.m.

Additions or Changes to the Agenda: As this is a special session, the agenda is set.

On-Site Sewage Systems (OSS) Management Plan Workshop:

Keith Higman, Environmental Health Director, began by advising the Board that the goal was to present a plan that meets the requirements of the State's rule and that the Island County Board of Health can accept. The approach will be to build a conceptual model so that the Board can identify relative risk. Staff will work to identify the attributes and benefits of each option. The process will result in Staff's recommendations to the Board. Mr. Higman presented a history of the regulation's changes, detailed the required elements of the "plan", updated the Board with a status report on the accomplishments to date, and identified areas where staff requires Board of Health input prior to plan recommendation completion. At the conclusion of Mr. Higman's presentation, Tim McDonald recognized that funding was determined by the Board of County Commissioners but asked the Board of Health to consider the funding options for recommendation and to be aware of the downsides of fee based programs. Much of staff's time is spent collecting fees, fee revenue is hard to predict and fees tend to hurt goodwill. Mr. McDonald asked the Board to consider a recommendation addressing funding through a property tax under the mechanism of an existing "Aquifer Protection District" which would be the most just and consistent funding tool.

Mr. Higman commented that funding and compliance must go hand-in-hand or the Plan will fail. Chair, Mike Shelton, commented that execution will be "where the rubber hits the road" and agrees with pursuing a program based on a risk-based model. Commissioner McDowell asked about what determines low versus high risk? Mr. Higman responded that risk area is defined by the State rule. Commissioner Shelton suggested that the cost to homeowners is in two categories: (1) the cost to operate the program by the Health Department; and (2) a market developed fee by professionals qualified to do inspections.

Commissioner Shelton asked what credentials would be required for comprehensive system inspections. Mr. Higman does not feel that any additional qualifications would be required in addition to what is currently required for a Department of Licensing on-site system inspector's certification. Mr. Higman said that it was Staff's opinion that homeowners would need to have attended some kind of an inspection training for a minimum level of competency to do self-inspections. Commissioner Dean would like to look at a safety net for individuals unable to pay the cost of inspections.

Mayor Cohen expressed that she did not feel prepared at this meeting to discuss individual points. She likes the clean water concept to spread the cost of the program evenly and feels that clean water benefits all of Island County. Mayor Cohen asked if there was a penalty built into the WAC for noncompliance? Mr. Higman replied that there was no penalty built in and that was left to local jurisdictions.

A discussion followed on timeframes and targets based on risk or other factors. Mr. Higman asked the Board if they generally supported the global 'risk-based' model as presented. Commissioner McDowell commented that he wanted to know the estimated percentage of properties in the various risk categories. Commissioner Shelton said that he was willing to go on record as saying that this is the right approach and reminded the Board that the low-risk group must also inspect annually. He also suggested to the Board that if they allow homeowners to inspect that there must be an education program.

Ray Gabelein, Jr. predicted confusion by the public on various levels of risk. He commented on the fact that many of the State's citizens pay a monthly sewer utility and suggested that annual inspections would be commensurate with that. Mr. Gabelein suggested that he thought a fee-for-service would be more palatable than a property tax increase. He supported the suggestion for a safety-net for seniors and commented that it was his opinion that properly maintained on-site systems were more environmentally friendly than central treatment system discharged into the sound.

Bob Moch was concerned that this requirement would result in "doubling or tripling" the Health Department. Mr. Higman commented that budget presented to the Board would increase the on-site program by 50%.

Jim Pelton, O&M company employee, commented that this regulation has been coming since 2000 and most homeowners are ok with it. He predicted that standard gravity systems would be about \$100 to inspect and that more complicated systems might run \$250. He hoped that this would result in improved accuracy of as-builts.

Ron Brown, Brown Bear, commented that most current inspections are due to the requirement of lending institutions. He advised of the need for inspection standards which do not exist now and suggested the Board set standards on what will be inspected in the form of a checklist. He also suggested an amnesty program for non-permitted systems.

Janet Hall, WSU, advised the Board that she conducts 6-8 free, 2-hour septic education classes a year. She feels that there are a lot of folks who want to do the right thing and agrees on the need for standardized inspection criteria. The classes currently see 30 – 50 individuals per class. The educational component is an important one and can include a web-based certification. Ms. Hall suggested that a property tax on any properties with an installed system made sense.

Steve Markle, owner of a monitoring and maintenance company, wants the evaluation to include an inspection of all parts of a system so suggested that the Health Department must determine what those parts would include. He thought that a utility type of system would drive costs up.

Adjourn: There being no further business, Commissioner Shelton adjourned the meeting at 1:45 p.m. The next Board of Health will be a Special Meeting held on April 3, 2007.

Submitted: _____
Roger S. Case, MD, Executive Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved this 16th day of April 2007
ISLAND COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

Mike Shelton, Board Chair