

**BOARD OF ISLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES OF MEETING
SPECIAL SESSION FEBRUARY 25, 2004**

The Board of Island County Commissioners met in special session February 25, 2004, convening at 10:30 a.m., following the 10:00 a.m. RTPO Meeting, held in the Island County Courthouse Annex, Commissioners' Hearing Room #102B, 1 NE 6th Street, Coupeville, Wa. William J. Byrd, Chairman, and Mike Shelton, Member, were present. Commissioner McDowell absent due to a previous meeting commitment out of County. The meeting was called to allow County Commissioners' participation in a joint Council of Governments meeting with Elected Officials from Island County, City of Oak Harbor, City of Langley, Town of Coupeville, and Port Districts. Topics for discussion included: (1) Rural Economic Development; (2) Restoration of the Airfield at Monroe Landing for Public Use.

Council of Governments' members present: Nancy Conard, Mayor, Town of Coupeville; Neil Colburn, Mayor, City of Langley; Ed Van Patten, Port of Coupeville; Larry Eaton, City of Oak Harbor

Number of County staff members, members of the public and press interested in the topics scheduled, and presenters, attended the meeting.

Rural Economic Development

Bill Massey, Oak Harbor, gave a Power Point presentation on "Infrastructure as it Relates to a Community's Economic Development" [sales and use tax for public facilities]. State initiative passed in 1997 and Island County and San Juan County became eligible for funding. Funding source will provide some \$500,000/year for Island County for rural economic development, which when building new infrastructure to support businesses is a small amount. Important to make those funds go a long way and use it to the best ability to provide jobs. Job retention leads to job creation. Reviewed the six primary goals established by the legislation [RCW 82.14.370]. Important points within the goals: job retention; job creation; be ready for opportunities. Three basic precepts of real estate: (1) Location, Location, Location; (2) Be ready to accommodate; (3) Government attitude. Job creation means: Readiness; Fast-track permits for projects; Priority to job creators; and Customer service with can-do attitude.

Island County has a desirable quality of life, but somewhat geographically challenged. Two areas of particular interest: Keep in mind that infrastructure that benefits existing businesses will support expansion and provide an opportunity for complimentary support businesses, leading to new opportunities for those who are job creators. Important when looking at these areas and potential to provide economic development to consider:

- establishing priorities for job retention
- surety in permit process
- look at fire flow
- look at sewer collection system and treatment system
- protection of launch and harbor area/aquatic habitat
- continue to update comprehensive plans

- process in place prioritizing economic development high on the ladder
- protect job creators from encroachment
- look into allowing stormwater retention on site .

Recommendations

1. The County not hire any new consultants, but create an advisory board to recommend priorities to the Board of County Commissioners for dollars available from sales and use tax.
2. Leverage funding to the maximum.

Opportunity to Restore the Airfield at Monroe Landing

Sharon Hart, Executive Director, EDC, put together a briefing/discussion bringing in folks with information about the opportunity to restore the airfield at Monroe Landing. The owner's future interest is to upgrade facilities for private tenants and hangers currently on site, and encouraged community leaders to research the issue of public/private partnership for the site.

Hand-out: Washington State Department of Transportation Washington Aeronautical Chart

Presenters/Discussion Participants included:

John Sibold, Director of Aviation, Washington State Department of Transportation
Stan Allison, Manager, Aviation Operations, Washington State Department of Transportation
Jeffery Robb, Airport/Marina Manager, Port of Port Angeles
Clyde Carlson, President, San Juan Airlines

Mr. Sibold discussed state and federal programs that offer both technical and financial assistance. Without an airport, the community is disadvantaged when it comes to economic development, an important asset especially for isolated communities. WDOT will be going through a process, and will be working with the RTPO, to define airports of state-wide significance. A hand-out was given to Ms. Hart about airports in the federal system, defining how airports qualify as NPIAS (National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems) that FAA feels important to aviation infrastructure to the country. Qualifications include: location of the airport, driving time and physical distance from the airport. There are about 64 such airports in the state that qualify for federal assistance. Federal dollars flow to those airports (\$150,000) for maintenance. The state encourages acceptance of federal funds and will match money with local jurisdictions to maintain the airport. The burden for operating the airport always falls back to the local jurisdiction. These are usually very small rural airports, run for example, out of a county planning department or part of a local jurisdiction, but primarily by volunteers in the community.

The Oak Harbor airport is fairly protected in terms of encroachment. There are three major issues that would have to occur at the Oak Harbor site:

1. Public agency ownership of the airport;
2. Feasibility and safety assessment;
3. Marketing analysis of potential market.

Federal programs that can help small communities:

Essential Air Service program (ESP). Rural communities very isolated with large driving time to get to any air service. Example, Moses Lake.

Community Air Service Program. Intended as a marketing tool. For example, Bellingham received \$300,000 award last year to help market increased air service.

Carriers in the vicinity: Island Air; San Juan Air; West Isle Air, using small non-pressurized aircraft that fly in and out of small communities. Airlines have to make money in order to operate and his guess was there would have to be a guarantee of about 50 seats from this market, probably equating to \$200 – \$250 per ticket to SeaTac. Primarily the customers attracted would be business travelers rather than leisure travelers or tourists.

Mr. Robb reiterated the points made by Mr. Sibold and the importance of finding out what the community wants to do as far as economic development and investing in infrastructure. He observed that the airport needs some work. Port Angeles lost service from Horizon because Horizon became too big for the particular market served, and as a result of not being protected by EAS listing of the airport. The experience with Horizon pulling out was intense and the economy in the community impacted as a result, but not completely devastated because San Juan provides exceptionally good service from Port Angeles to Boeing Field. As far as operating costs, the Port Angeles Airport terminal lease is \$18.00 per square foot as opposed to SeaTac at \$264 per square ft.

Mr. Carlson noted another financial impact and explained about flying to Boeing Field rather than SeaTac: although

San Juan Airlines can fly in to SeaTac, it is required to have a fifty million dollar liability insurance policy. To clarify the ticket price, he noted that it included deplaning at Boeing airfield and passengers taken by van to SeaTac. He said that the Oak Harbor airport to run again would have to be re-certified by the FAA, and his observation was that there needed annually to be 16,000 enplanements to even break even .

As far as volume the last year Harbor airlines operated, Mr. Allison indicated that type of information could be obtained from an airport master record form that would show the number of operations and enplanements. He flew in this morning and used the airport and was quite aware of two cars along the road off the end of the runway. Note that the runway width is 25' and minimum runway width is 60' for certification by FAA, in addition to safety area around the runway 120' centered. There will need to be some significant improvements made.

WDOT is sponsoring a meeting to talk with federal officials about the Essential Air Service program and the Community Air Service Program in Olympia on March 19.

Council of Governments members agreed that Sharon Hart pursue the issue, and plan to make arrangements at a future meeting to continue this subject and hear from a representative of the FAA to provide further information on topics of a more regulatory nature, and a representative from the Washington Community, Trade and Economic Development office regarding legal structures available to elected officials when discussing actual ownership and operation of the airport.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ISLAND COUNTY, WASHINGTON

William J. Byrd, Chairman

Mike Shelton, Member

[absent: Wm. L. McDowell, Member]

ATTEST: _____
Elaine Marlow
Clerk of the Board