

**BOARD OF ISLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES OF MEETING  
OCTOBER 10, 2007 – SPECIAL SESSION**

The Board of Island County Commissioners met in Special Session on October 10, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of a Legislative Round Table Discussion with the Oak Harbor City Council, Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, and Representative Barbara Bailey to discuss Transportation and other issues of interest to the City and Island County. The special session was held at the City of Oak Harbor Fire Station in the “Classroom,” 855 SE Whidbey Avenue, Oak Harbor, Washington. Wm. L. McDowell, Chairman, John Dean, Member, and Phillip Bakke, Member, were present.

**Oak Harbor City Council Members**

Danny Paggao  
Paul Brewer  
Sheila Crider  
Jim Campbell  
Larry Eaton  
Eric Gerber  
Sue Karahalios

**Island County**

Bill Oakes, Public Works Director  
Elaine Marlow, Clerk of the Board/  
Budget Director

Others Present:

Paul Schmidt, City Administrator  
Karen Couch, Administrative Assistant  
Renee Recker, Executive Assistant  
Mack Funk, City Harbormaster  
Jennifer Meyer, NASWI  
Dina Swires, Washington State Department of Transportation  
Dave Chesson, Washington State Department of Transportation  
Todd Carlson, Washington State Department of Transportation

Press: Jessie Stensland, Whidbey-News Times

There were approximately 21 others in attendance.  
*[Copies of attendance sheets on file with the Clerk of the Board]*

Handouts: “State Route 20, Swantown Road to Cabot Drive - Partnerships for Improvement,” and “State Route 20, Swantown Road to Cabot Drive – Corridor Pre-Design Analysis” provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation in partnership with the City of Oak Harbor and the Transportation Improvement Board. Overview of City of Oak Harbor Tidelands Lease provided by Harbormaster Funk.  
*[Copies on file with the Clerk of the Board]*

Paul Schmidt, City Administrator, acting as facilitator in the Mayor’s stead, called the meeting to order with introductions and an explanation of the evening’s format. Questions will be addressed to Senator Haugen and Representative Bailey with comment following from City and County officials.

1. **Transportation – SR 20**

Senator Haugen and Representative Bailey emphasized that the first priority concerning Transportation is safety then preservation of roads, with everyone involved working in partnership to address those issues. With a lack of funds available at the State level it is all the more important to be creative in how improvements are made and where the money for those

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improvements will come from. It is believed that Oak Harbor should take the lead in that endeavor. Todd Carlson, Washington State Department of Transportation, said that in partnership with the City and the Transportation Improvement Board, along with public input, a phased plan was created to meet the needs of traffic growth that occurs on SR 20. He spoke of the progress thus far saying that while some are not perfect, there is marked improvement to:

- Swantown and Cabot Drive
- Further SR 20 solutions
- Frostad and City limits north
- Regatta and the signal at 16<sup>th</sup>
- Scenic Heights to Sidney
- Curbing
- Round-a-bouts are planned for better flow of traffic
- Elimination of bottleneck at Erie Street

Commissioner McDowell mentioned the following highway improvements as those the County would like the State to consider:

- SR 20 Jacobs to Race – shoulder and alignment improvement (vicinity of OLF)
- SR 525 and Honeymoon Bay intersection improvements with signal
- SR 20 and Banta signal – support Navy’s concerns
- Support Oak Harbor’s need for SR 20 improvements on the south end of town

Council Members spoke of additional issues and concerns, for instance:

- Seaplane base population is counted yet the City does not collect any revenue.
- Better signage and curbing is needed at Erie.
- City must have lots of lead time for improvements to make sure budget adjustments are made.
- Do not always agree with the formulas; another way to examine traffic flow without cameras to simplify the process.
- Need to identify land near Walmart and prohibit further building with something from the State saying what corridor is needed to eliminate growth in that area.
- Further safety improvements south of the City. Better planning requested so as not to waste money by making temporary improvements now.

2. **Puget Sound Partnership**

The availability of partnership funding to help ease the burden of new regulatory mandates such as increased septic tank regulation and increased effluent limitations was discussed. The availability of grant money was suggested to help the different needs and Representative Bailey encouraged contact with the State to learn of the various resources and avenues available. It is important there be a partnership and agenda of what is to be accomplished, there must be a plan.

Commissioner Bakke said that Island County is already actively participating by having citizen groups, salmon recovery efforts, a county-wide surface water monitoring program, and other efforts. He said the County is trying to keep up with the State, to know what the County’s role is, and how to participate. Currently there are near shore resources, mechanisms developed, and staff at the ready.

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So far attempts to have local representation appointed to a Partnership board have been unsuccessful. It was suggested that dialogue on that subject would best be had at a Council of Governments meeting.

3. **Budget and Revenue**

Unfunded mandates continue to place a financial burden on local communities. Revenue options were discussed as those being available grants and having the appropriate information submitted to the State by May of 2008 so as to have an impact on the budget in 2009. It is important to know in advance what is needed, be concise in the request, and work collaboratively. Senator Haugen felt the issue of grants to help with unfunded mandates is another matter best discussed at a Council of Governments meeting.

City Administrator Paul Schmidt spoke of a concern surrounding the impact of the Public Records Act and the unintended costs to comply. Senator Haugen and Representative Bailey both agree that it is the right of the people to ask for and be given public information. While it is believed that the State should not help local government fund the expense they are open to any creative way to help lessen the burden of using taxpayer dollars.

Of concern as well is the passing of the new septic regulations and the cost to homeowners, above all those with limited resources. Those in attendance were reminded that the Legislature does not enact any laws that the people do not ask for and at times, those new laws are not without cost. City and County officials were encouraged to contact both Senator Haugen and Representative Bailey when issues such as this one causes concern or does not make sense, they will look into it.

4. **Department of Natural Resources Marina Lease**

Mack Funk, Harbormaster, read from a statement saying that the City does not enjoy the same financial benefit as would a port district in a like situation. He asked the Legislators to consider revisiting a proposed law granting cities the same type of status as port districts. If such a law were passed it would save the City \$50,000 per year, money that is desperately needed both for dredging and to rebuild the marina.

Senator Haugen and Representative Bailey agreed that for such legislation to become law, it is important to work with cities and build a coalition with other ports in like situations. The State will revisit the issue with a final report completed about June 2008.

5. **Upcoming Legislative Issues**

The one biggest issue for Island County is the new University location in Marysville North and a major decision will be made in this Session. To have the University in such close proximity to Island County will be a tremendous economic development tool for years to come and help with transportation issues.

Also mentioned as upcoming Legislative Issues:

- Acceleration of the public works trust funds list for more infrastructure, cable issues;
- Bills passed in the last Legislative Session and the impact on local communities;

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- New laws surrounding the offender re-entry program and how resources will be used in that area;
- Pension policy and costs likely to funnel down to local governments and local school districts.

Senator Haugen complimented the County on taking the action it did concerning mental health. She believes we all will see positive benefits from that decision.

There was brief discussion concerning the scoring criteria for grant applications and if those criteria could be reviewed for smaller jurisdictions. Commissioner Dean spoke about some unease with the strings attached to grants and the sometimes burdensome and complicated paperwork. In response it was said that grants are available for smaller jurisdictions and while it is agreed that the grant process can be at times difficult, Representative Bailey encouraged everyone to not give up as the result is certainly worth the effort. Grants are not available to private citizens.

**Closing Comment:**

Everyone agreed the Round Table Discussion was productive and such meetings between local officials and State Legislators should occur more often as they are without doubt, beneficial to all concerned.

The Legislative Round Table Discussion adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
ISLAND COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Wm. L. McDowell, Chairman

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John Dean, Member

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Phillip Bakke, Member

**ATTEST:**

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Elaine Marlow, Clerk of the Board