

**BOARD OF ISLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 26, 2008 – SPECIAL SESSION**

The Board of Island County Commissioners met in Special Session on November 26, 2008 beginning at 2:00 p.m. in the Board of County Commissioners Hearing Room (Room # 102B), Annex Building, 1 N.E. 6th Street, Coupeville, Washington. John Dean, Chairman, William L. McDowell, Member, and Helen Price Johnson, Member were present.

2008 BUDGET WORKSHOP

Review of Revenue and Expenditures Estimates with Budget Director

Ebey's Historical Reserve

Request from Ebey's to reduce the amount of its original request of \$30,000 to \$21,000. Ms. Marlow budgeted \$10,000 for Ebey's. The funding source for Ebey's was changed from the general fund to historical preservation dollars that the County receives. The Board has not yet discussed establishing guidelines for spending the historical preservation dollars but suggested was possibly using the Clark County model. Ms. Marlow's recommendation is to leave Ebey's at \$10,000 and then establish a process on how to distribute the historical preservation dollars in the future.

Board agreed to provide Ebey's \$10,000 from the noted funding source.

Extension

Ms. Feldman asked about how her funding would be distributed. Specifically, in 2008 the Board had given WSU approximately \$15,000 to help fund the receptionist position. Would the Board allow her to use that \$15,000 for another administrative position if Ms. Feldman thought it best for her office?

Board agreed Ms. Feldman can manage the \$15,000

On-Site/Public Health

The Board talked earlier about how to resolve some funding issues in Public Health concerning on-site but wanted to revisit those issues once the full Board was seated and could vote.

In 2008 the Board funded the operations and maintenance on-site program with current expense dollars. The program included staff who received inspection records, evaluated those records, responded to identified problems, ensured compliance, outreach, and education. In the proposed 2009 budget Mr. Higman had to deal with an extreme deficit based upon the lack of buildings being built in Island County and septic permits being issued. He therefore proposed a reorganization to move a staff position funded in 2008 by the septic permit program to the operations and maintenance program in order to mesh together the work being done to respond to complaints and failures and the operation of the low interest loan program.

Discussion with the Budget Director revealed that current expense would not support the operations and maintenance program in 2009, involving about 2 FTEs for work in terms of advertising, outreach, and education. Without that resource in 2009 there would not be a loan program and there would not be anyone to respond to complaints and investigate failures. Three years ago there were 5.8 FTEs in the on-site program; in 2009 there will be 1.8 FTE. Options mentioned were (1) fund program based upon fees (fee charged to the homeowner as septic inspection record is submitted); (2) current expense support; or (3) formation of some form of utility or district whereby anybody who would benefit from the work being done associated with

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protecting water quality and drinking water quality would pay some incremental fee associated with owning land in Island County.

Mr. Higman suggests establishing a fee of \$25-\$30. There are approximately 23,000 septic systems in Island County. One assumption that is being made is that staff believes there is a division of about 50 to 50 alternative systems versus conventional. That is important because the inspection frequency is different. If there is 100% compliance then in the given year there would be about 15,300 inspections. Also, when transferring title in property the homeowner is required to have the septic system inspected and reported to Public Health. On average, a home sells once every five years in Island County, equating to about 2760 inspections annually. The remaining inspections, if based upon a 30% compliance rate, would be another 3670 inspections. If proposing to fund the operations and maintenance program at the same level as last year, a fee would be established of \$26.44. If the compliance rate drops to 20%, the fee would be \$32.65.

Mr. Higman's recommendation is to establish a fee in the Island County fee schedule, reminding the Board that the Board of Health establishes the Health Department fees while the Board of Commissioners is the fiduciary agent. Mr. Higman also presented as part of the 2009 budget an overall proposed fee increase in the Environmental Health fee schedule of 4%, except for the food program.

Discussion ensued about the program, positions at issue, options, and the possibility of suggesting to the state that due to budget constraints the County is not in a position to begin the program at this time.

Mr. Higman would like to re-evaluate the home sales issue, obtain current accurate numbers in terms of how many occur on an annual basis in Island County, and bring forward to the Board of Health on December 15 two proposals: (1) a fee charged to everyone; and (2) a fee charged to just those through home sales and allow the Board of Health to determine which would be the best approach.

It was agreed that conceptually, the Board does not want to use current expense funding for the on-site program.

Concerning the proposed fee increase in the Environmental Health fee schedule of 4% to cover the increased cost of doing business, the Board agreed in concept and asked Mr. Higman to prepare a revised fee schedule.

The Board agreed that due to budget constraints the hydrogeology position will remain at \$48,000.

Planning & Community Development

Concerning programs not included in the current budget are items realistically that the Board would be expected to address; that is, Fish and Wildlife update, Agricultural BMPs, Affordable Housing, and Freeland. Ms. Marlow recommended that the Board fund one more planner position to address the mandated programs.

The Board agreed to fund a planner position.

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Additionally, Planning will have increased costs of doing business. Would the Board agree to an increase in Planning fees of about 4-5%, comparable to Health, to cover those increased costs? Mr. Tate said there has not been an increase in land use permits since 2001-2002. A number of land use permits being charged will not cover the cost of the notice in the newspaper or the yellow sign, much less staff time; Mr. Tate would like to take care of that discrepancy. A fee increase did occur for building permits at end of 2007-2008. Mr. Tate proposes a modest increase each year rather than large increases at one time.

Further discussion on the subject of fees will occur in 2009, well before the next budget process.

Sheriff

There is a proposal to delay the purchase of three vehicles rather than reduce staffing in patrol deputies. Ms. Marlow was assured by Undersheriff Mauck that the Sheriff's office would not return next year with a request for the three additional vehicles.

It was agreed to delay the purchase of three vehicles in place of reducing patrol deputies. Commissioner McDowell was opposed to the idea.

Ms. Marlow confirmed with the Sheriff that he agreed to offer Mr. Banks his .4 FTE civil clerk position to help balance the Prosecutor's budget. Sheriff Brown concurred.

Property Tax Levies

Ms. Marlow reported that the County currently has banked capacity; \$66,000 available in current expense and \$375,000 available in County road. Concerns were expressed about taking banked capacity given the financial impact on citizens, however, the Public Works director remains concerned about the increased cost of doing business in County roads.

Chairman Dean proposed taking \$33,000 of banked capacity in current expense. Ms. Marlow said the effect on the average homeowner by taking the full amount of \$66,000 would be, with a \$400,000 home, less than \$5.00 per year. If the decision was made to take the full \$375,000 available in County roads, the amount would translate to less than \$20 per year.

Ms. Marlow will re-evaluate the issue of fuel. She is reluctant to revise fuel downward because it is unknown whether the decrease in price is temporary. She will remain with her current estimate and if more is needed later, the budget will be adjusted.

The decision on banked capacity will be made at the public hearings on December 1.

Public Defense

A contingency amount will be added to the budget pending further investigation and negotiations.

Staffing Reductions

The Board is comfortable with the proposed staffing reductions. Ms. Marlow acknowledged the difficulty in the budget process concerning staffing reductions and thanked the employees of Island County. She will, with the Board's approval, send out an e-mail to the affected departments asking that positions be identified by close of business on December 3.

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CLOSED SESSION

Chairman Dean announced that the Board would meet in a Closed Session as allowed under RCW 42.30.140(4)(b), that portion of a meeting during which the governing body is planning to adopt the strategy or position to be taken by the governing body during the course of any collective bargaining, professional negotiations, or grievance or mediation proceedings, or reviewing the proposals made in the negotiations or proceedings while in progress.

Returning to open session the Board continued its dialogue about issues discussed prior to Closed Session.

Ms. Marlow recommended that the Board approve the road levy to cover the increased transfer to the Sheriff of \$100,000; the value of that amount to a homeowner would be an increase of about \$4.00. She will prepare a summary for the Board's use at the December 1st public hearing.

Special Session concluded at 4:30 p.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ISLAND COUNTY, WASHINGTON

John Dean, Chairman

[Wm. L. McDowell, Member: Absent when signed]

Helen Price Johnson, Member

ATTEST:

Elaine Marlow
Clerk of the Board