

MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY SPECIAL MEETING

February 18, 2009

The Commissioners met in a special session in the Commissioners' Conference Room No. 1, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington, on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, at 2:00 p.m. Commissioners Al Carter, Terry Willis and Mike Wilson were present. Consultant Valerie Lee, Planning & Building Director Brian Shea, Public Services Director Paul Easter, and Clerk of the Board Donna Caton were also present. Guests included reporter Steven Friederich from the Daily World, Leif Nesheim from The Montesano Vidette and an identified citizen.

Chairman Mike Wilson called the meeting to order. The Board met for the purpose of discussing with Ms. Lee, a Consultant from Environment International Ltd., services to be provided in regards to mediation for the proposed Critical Areas Ordinance. Ms. Lee provided background information regarding her experience in engineering, biology, and her current role in public policy mediation. She informed the Board on the process that she uses to mediate the concerns of all interested parties. The services provided for mediation consist of the following:

1. Conduct scoping that includes review of the relevant written materials; interviews with representative groups, staff and election officials; development of mediation design
2. Mediated sessions with all interested parties in an attempt to achieve consensus on key aspects of the proposed ordinance
3. Preparation of a report on any points of agreement
4. Close-out meetings with Commissioners and the County attorney

Ms. Lee stated that she had been contacted by Grays Harbor County to assist with defining differences in the draft Critical Areas Ordinance. She has reviewed the draft ordinance, comments and opinions that the County received in the public outreach phase of planning for the ordinance. The next step will be to convene meetings of all interested parties to listen and facilitate discussions. Ms. Lee anticipates at least two facilitated sessions to fine tune and become familiar with the differences and opportunities for agreement. Any interviews that are conducted will be held as confidential. Ms. Lee emphasized that there is enormous power in talking about the different perspectives and letting the group decide on consensus. The end goal is to have a report for the Commissioners completed by the beginning of April that includes the elements of a lawful ordinance with as much consensus of the interested parties as possible.

Brian Shea noted that FEMA and DOE have strict guidelines on the wording in the document. He said that the State of Washington spent a lot of money to study critical areas and, although our scope is greater than that of DOE, we include and value protection of critical areas, property rights and a promotion of a healthy economy. Urban density differs from rural density and, therefore, the County has a wider scope of responsibility than that of a city. The local legislative body assesses the risk in relation to protection of wetlands, fish, wildlife, etc. He noted that the two largest cities in Grays Harbor, Aberdeen and Hoquiam, use the state guidelines. This makes sense due to the density in the cities.

Discussion continued amongst Commissioners regarding best available science, wetland buffers, the appropriate amount of risk, best management practices, etc.

Ms. Lee stated her first objective would not be for immediate changes, but to negotiate conceptual ideas for the draft. After she looks at the big picture and begins to find consensus, she will commit those ideas to paper. She stated that it would be useful for the Commissioners to be present at the first session to listen to the varied opinions and to assist in starting the mediation process.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
For Grays Harbor County
This _____ day of _____, 2009

MIKE WILSON, Chairman
Commissioner, District 2

TERRY L. WILLIS, Commissioner, District 1

ALBERT A. CARTER, Commissioner, District 3

ATTEST:

Donna Caton
Clerk of the Board