

## MINUTES

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS - GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY SPECIAL MEETING 2009 Budget Reduction Decisions

#### March 31, 2009

The Commissioners met in a Special Session in Conference Room 1, Administration building, Montesano, Washington on Tuesday, March 31, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners present included Albert A. Carter, Terry Willis, and Chairman Mike Wilson. Clerk of the Board, Donna Caton, was present to record the meeting. Undersheriff Rick Scott was also present.

This meeting was announced to the public at least 24 hours in advance as required by Washington State law.

#### CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Wilson. He announced that this meeting was called to discuss and make decisions to reduce the 2009 Budget. He has met with individual departments and asked for and received, with the exception of Superior Court, their written plans to reduce 6 percent of each respective budget.

Commissioner Carter made a motion to implement restructuring several departments which includes the Sheriff's Department taking on Emergency Management Services. The restructuring would include staff layoffs of three employees funded by the Road Department as follows: Public Services Director Paul Easter, Assistant Director of Emergency Management Anne Sullivan, and Public Services Administrative Assistant Jan Fargo. Commissioner Willis seconded the motion. She stated that after review of the written plans submitted by each department, it became apparent that restructuring some departments could save a significant amount of money. Emergency Management was under the Sheriff Department years ago, and it would make sense to move it back to that department, try to get more volunteers, and allow the Sheriff's Department to make the decisions during emergencies. She stated that Paul Easter had been a good public servant and thanked him. Commissioner Carter stated that restructuring will help us face the challenges of the future. The current move is to try to save money without passing it on to increased taxes. **The motion was approved unanimously to layoff Public Services Director Paul Easter, Assistant Director of Emergency Management Anne Sullivan, and Public Services Administrative Assistant Jan Fargo.**

Undersheriff Scott noted that, in the past, the foundation of Emergency Services was based on volunteer assistance. The department plans to re-establish the core group and implement a program that covers rural Grays Harbor County. After this is accomplished, they would then look at how they can best work with and assist the cities during emergencies.

Commissioner Carter discussed that the Union is looking at options to save money in the Sheriff Department, with the Sheriff proposing the layoff of two deputies and one correction officer. The requested reduction was short about \$75,000. The plan included reduction of overtime and cash out of leave time, and to reduce 6 hours per month in unpaid time off for support staff. Rick Scott stated that the unions recognize the possibility of alternate funding and they are looking at concessions that they can make. Non-union staff agreed to give up deferred compensation, wellness incentive, and cashing out of holidays. Commissioner Wilson stated that the Commissioners are looking at every area they can cut in order to fully fund the Sheriff's Department. They would like to revisit this topic in a month or so and

draw upon resources to lessen the impact or concessions. Commissioner Willis stated that concessions may be part of the overall solution and that some ideas may take longer to implement.

**ACTION: A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the Sheriff's written proposal preliminarily with the opportunity to amend it at a later date.**

The Commissioners decided to review the remaining departments' written plans to reduce their budget by 6 percent prior to taking further action. Plan highlights are as follows:

Assessor Cherri Rose-Konschu proposed a 6 percent cut of almost \$76,000 by not filling a position left vacant by a retirement, reducing travel, communications, and office supply expenses, and have employees take unpaid time off.

Auditor Vern Spatz cut almost \$50,000 by proposing lay off of a part-time person in recordings and reducing the hours of two other part-time employees. He will shift some expenses to the Auditor's Operating and Maintenance fund.

The Board of Equalization, Disability Board and Boundary Review Board budgets were reduced by 6 percent in the travel category. Civil Service was reduced in professional services and supplies.

Clerk Cheryl Brown proposed to cut \$47,500 by increasing some fees, imposing new fees for services, allow unpaid leave for eight union employees, return \$125 a month a piece for nine months of medical coverage for dependents for one exempt employee and one elected official, reduce spending in supplies, repairs, and maintenance, and to spend interest earned on investments.

Commissioners Willis, Wilson, Carter and Clerk of the Board Donna Caton agreed to refund \$390 a month each in dependent medical benefits. Executive Secretary Molly Copeland will take advantage of the incentive plan offered by the county and waive medical coverage. The balance of the reduction will be achieved by a contra with Molly Copeland stating her intent to relocate in the coming months. Coffee service for meetings will be reduced by \$500.

Environmental Health Division and Planning and Building Divisions of Public Services proposed to impose new fees and increase some existing fees. Commissioners sent these proposals back to the department to look at alternative ways to adjust expenditures.

Coroner Ed Fleming will retire under the County's incentive plan to achieve the requested reduction of just over \$26,000.

Facility Services division of Public Services proposed to cut two custodial positions and the office administrator will accept the incentive plan for early retirement.

WSU Extension has reduced their budget by 6 percent with the exception of \$1,234 which could be picked up by other types of funding.

District Court/Adult Probation has decided to close offices one day a week in Aberdeen and in Adult Probation. They also propose to spend \$36,000 less on indigent defense and \$6,300 less in the pro tem categories achieved by a reduced caseload. Eight employees have agreed to take two days off per month unpaid leave and four have agreed to four days a month unpaid leave. The court also proposed to collect warrant recall and sentence monitoring fees totaling \$13,700.

Juvenile Court Services will not fill the Diagnostic Coordinator position and will spread the workload to other employees, saving nearly \$93,000. The department will change from four staff per shift to three beginning May 1, 2009, saving about \$58,000. The department will give up use of a county car and will delete six new computers from the budget.

Prosecutor Stew Menefee proposed voluntary salary reductions and to leave a recently vacated records clerk position open. He is applying for a \$95,000 state grant that seems likely to be approved, but in the event the grant money is not funded, the office would lay off two legal secretaries.

Treasurer Ron Strabbing proposed to reduce staff hours. The Deputy Treasurer will retire with incentives and payouts, which will be part of the department's obligation. The remaining staff will be promoted to handle her duties and a lower position left vacant.

Public Health & Social Services is mostly funded by grants. The General Fund reduction would be about 48,000 and achieved by eliminating a vacant community health nurse position.

Central Services has two employees that have volunteered to reduce hours worked to save about \$27,000. Budget Director Rose Elway will pay more of her dependent medical premium and Assistant Marilyn Lewis will take the incentive plan and waive medical coverage.

Superior Court has not submitted a proposal to cut their budget, which at 6 percent is estimated to be \$90,000. Commissioners discussed the cost savings of eliminating the two court recorders and replacing them with audio/video recording systems similar to those used in juvenile and district courts. Eliminating these two positions would save about \$160,000, less the cost of the recording system. Commissioners will ask the judges to look at this idea.

Commissioners discussed other ideas to reduce the budget and discussed whether to fund two more Sheriff Deputies from the road fund for traffic policing.

Budget Director Rose Elway recapped the increases in revenue and decreases in expenditures proposed by each department.

**ACTION: A motion was made, seconded, and passed to continue this special budget meeting to Friday, April 3, 2009 at 9:15 a.m.**

### April 3, 2009

This Special Meeting was held in Commissioners' Conference Room 1, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington on Friday, April 3, 2009 beginning at 9:15 a.m. and was a continuation of the meeting held March 31, 2009. Commissioners Albert A. Carter, Mike Wilson, and Terry Willis were present. Also present were Public Services representatives Kevin Varness, Russ Esses, Dennis Selberg, Budget Director Rose Elway, and Clerk of the Board Donna Caton.

Kevin Varness stated that in the Facilities Division they looked at various ways to save money, and decided it was best to keep staff whole and continue to provide services by the layoff of two custodians. Employees have been given preliminary notice of pending layoffs. The division will implement a team approach and may have to reduce hours worked in some buildings.

**ACTION: A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the layoff of two custodians in the Facilities Division of Public Services and sign the appropriate letters of notification.**

Mr. Varness further discussed options looked at to reduce expenses in the Facilities Division, and noted that recently they started billing the appropriate department if the request for service is not a health and safety necessity.

Rose Elway noted that a Memorandum of Understanding will be presented to Commissioners by the AFSME Union to include payroll forms for voluntary reduction by employees in pay or benefits.

Russ Esses, Road Engineer, discussed the low cash situation in the fund. He presented a handout and outlined the various projects and county match funds necessary to complete those projects. The chip seal program was eliminated for a savings of 1.2 million dollars. He expressed that having students work in the summer actually helps the fund by allowing full time staff to do more work. The maintenance program consists of 60 activities that include preventative maintenance. If bids come in lower, the county could have enough federal funds to pay for some projects. Mr. Esses outlined his presentation and the projects scheduled. He explained that these projects support the economy by creating indirect jobs in the community. Although very unusual, he sent back a funded program on Hill Road, which allowed more funding for the 13 corners Wynoochee Road project.

Mr. Esses stated that his department would continue to seek additional grant funding. Rose Elway prompted discussion regarding billing the granting agencies more expeditiously. Mr. Esses agreed that this would help the current cash situation. He stated road crew rental rates also need to be billed.

Road crew staff members were present and made comments regarding policing of construction sites, people that violate the barriers, and a belief that there would be savings if shifts were four day, 10 hour shifts. Mr. Esses did not support the last comment, stating that people would be more fatigued and it would actually mean more call-out time during construction.

Other items discussed were the many additional hours and maintenance related to storm events and the accident investigation team supported by the road fund. Commissioner Carter stated we have 10 years of clean audits, which helps with funding opportunities. Mr. Esses stated that they are now down three inspectors, which means that engineers have to be used at times. The county has qualified bridge inspectors and provides the service for other agencies. Mr. Esses asked that his department be allowed to reduce by natural attrition when someone retires. The road fund is now paying for three deputies for traffic policing.

10:45 a.m. Brian Shea, Planning and Building Director, outlined the approach that was used in his department to determine how they would reduce 6 percent in the budget. The division has the unique ability to recoup some of the expenses of the division. He outlined the functions of the department and the investment into an employee for training purposes, stating that he has a very skilled and professional team. The fee increase proposed are for larger commercial developers and are more in line with other counties' fees. Grays Harbor does not impose development impact fees. Applications for development are coming in at about the same numbers as seen in recent years. There will be no changes to building permit fees and no decreases in the number of employees or hours worked. Since 2004, the division has covered the expenses with revenue generated. Mr. Shea would like to re-examine the revenue collected on a quarterly basis.

Rose Elway noted that Parks and Vegetation services will not be reduced. Commissioners decided that any additional charges for septic tanks will be on hold.

Ron Strabbing was present and suggested that his staff would personally have to fund the buy-out incentive that Commissioners gave to their retiree. He stated that the department must employ a Chief Deputy. Staff will forego any wage increases until next year and they will delete travel expenses. The Foreclosure Fund supports one of his staff members. Mr. Strabbing asked that a reserve be funded for future retirement payouts. He will re-distribute the work load and he contemplated unpaid leave for his staff and whether to close one day a month.

There was some discussion about registered warrants to Fire District 5 and to Montesano School District.

Commissioner Wilson stated that he would make contact with the Superior Court Judges.

Rose Elway stated that approval by the Board would be necessary to increase fees in Planning and Environmental Health divisions. She recapped the proposals submitted by each department, noting that resolutions for salary reductions and budget reductions would need to be approved by the Board. The county paid portion of employees' retirement rate will be reduced.

**ACTION: On duly carried motion, all of the proposals outlined and submitted were approved with exceptions noted in these minutes.**

**ACTION: On duly carried motion, this special meeting on budget reductions was continued to Monday, April 6, 2009 at approximately 3:30 p.m. or until after the regular board meeting.**

## **April 6, 2009**

This Special Meeting was held in Commissioners' Conference Room 1, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington on Monday, April 6, 2009 at approximately 4:30 p.m. in Commissioners meeting room, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington and was a continuation of the meeting held March 31, 2009 and April 3, 2009. Commissioners Albert A. Carter, Mike Wilson, and Terry Willis were present. Clerk of the Board Donna Caton was also present to record the meeting.

Chairman Mike Wilson re-opened the Special meeting.

**ACTION: Due to the length of the regular board meeting held today, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to continue this special budget meeting to April 13, 2009 to 3:00 p.m. or as soon as possible after the regular board meeting on that date .**

## April 13, 2009

This Special Meeting was held in Commissioners' Conference Room 1, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington on Monday, April 13, 2009 at approximately 3:40 p.m. in Commissioners meeting room and was a continuation of the meetings held March 31, April 3, and April 6, 2009. Commissioners Albert A. Carter, Mike Wilson, and Terry Willis were present. Clerk of the Board Donna Caton was also present to record the meeting.

Draft meeting minutes were handed out. Donna Caton outlined the decisions that had been made to date:

On March 31, 2009 Commissioners approved three layoffs within the road fund and approved the Sheriff Department proposal with a notation that it could be revised. At the April 3, 2009 continued meeting, the layoff of two custodians in the Facilities Division of Public Services was approved as well as the signing of the layoff letters. At the end of this meeting, all proposals were accepted with exceptions noted in the minutes. This meeting was continued to April 6, 2009 and, deciding not to have any discussions, subsequently continued to today, April 13, 2009.

It was determined that there is only a couple departmental budgets that had not met the goal of a six percent budget reduction. Chairman Mike Wilson stated that it made sense to wait until Budget Director Rose Elway had returned to meet again.

Daily World Reporter Steven Frederich, inquired regarding Superior Court and Commissioner Wilson responded that Commissioners do not have the ability to hire or fire, but that the judges have agreed to look at audio/video technology. Commissioner Carter added that both the Sheriff and Prosecutor are seeking grants, which may take a little time. Commissioner Willis added that unions in the Sheriff office are still discussing options (to reduce their budget).

**On duly carried motion, it was determined that this meeting would continue to Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at 10:30 a.m.** Purchase of bottled water and office hours will be discussed at that meeting.

**April 20, 2009**

This Special Meeting was held in Commissioners' Conference Room 1, Administration Building, Montesano, Washington on Wednesday, April 20, 2009 at 10:30 a.m. in Commissioners meeting room and was a continuation of the meetings held March 31, April 3, and April 6, April 13, 2009.

Commissioners Albert A. Carter, Mike Wilson, and Terry Willis were present. Budget Director Rose Elway and Clerk of the Board Donna Caton were also present.

Chairman Mike Wilson called the meeting to order.

Budget Director Rose Elway reported that several items are pending, such as whether grant funding will be approved under the American Recovery Funding Act for the offices of District Court, Sheriff, and the Prosecutor. She is recapping changes in the General Fund, assigning the budget detail, and calling administrators when necessary. The next step will be to set hearings for the approved revenue and expenditure adjustments.

Ms. Elway recapped the movement and layoff of personnel in the General and Public Services funds. So far five employees have taken advantage of the retirement incentive program that will end on May 15, 2009. Others have agreed to reduced pay or benefits under an approved Memorandum of Understanding with the Courthouse union employees.

It was noted that there is a resolution in place that establishes the hours of operation for most county offices from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY**

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Mike Wilson, Chairman

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Terry L. Willis, District 1

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Albert A. Carter, District 3