

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS

DECEMBER 2, 2002

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Chairperson Wes Johnson. Commissioners Herb Baze and Jayni Kamin were in attendance.

BUSINESS

HEARING - 2003 BUDGET

Chairperson Johnson announced the purpose of the meeting is to consider adoption of the 2003 budget.

Ron Henrickson, County Administrator, explained he was summarizing the budget in place of the Budget Director. The Current Expense Fund expenditures are estimated at \$22,297,266 and a total budget of \$66,234,201. The County is facing a budget crises. The initiatives have capped the revenue while the needs of the County and citizens and the expenses continue to rise. The County does have approximately \$1million from previous carry forward balances and it allows the County to balance the budget.

The County has tried to review and increase fees. There are cuts in expenditures of the county. The County has tried to look at places where they can be more efficient with delivering services. The situation will be worse next year as there will not be the cash carry forward. The County will have to review again looking at substantial cuts in services. The County will be taking a look earlier next year and form a budget committee in January, 2003.

Anita Latch stated that last year the County budget for the Sea Grant program was \$6,600. This year's projected amount is zero. She urged the Board to reconsider the program as it is important to the shellfish industry and general environmental concerns.

Al Brotche, Auditor, noted they should be adding more staff and they are about to loose a third staff member within the last three years. They are presently working with less staff members than they did 20 years ago.

Mr. Brotche stated he is not asking for additional staff in the Auditor's office, but to maintain some type of reasonable staffing levels to carry out the statutory responsibilities. He noted the Secretary of State's office in an audit of Mason County Elections Department will be recommending three full-time employees in the Election Department. The Auditor's office is one of the busiest offices in County government. Subagents have been established to conduct business at alternate locations in the licensing; but the work load is not decreasing.

Harold Fitzwater did not feel the 2003 budget was adequate. He stated it should include a complete financial statement of the current year's transactions. Also, when adopted the departments are required to live within the budget. Over the last years there have been many budget amendments after the budget is over-expended.

Don Melnick, EDC Board of Directors, urged the continued support for EDC and its efforts to create more jobs in the county.

Bill Dewey, Taylor Shellfish, voiced concern about not funding the Washington Sea Grant extension program. He stated he has worked personally with Teri King and she is respected and is very effective within the county with the different programs she works with and in particular the on-site septic system. Also, at the state level with the on-site sewage regulation review her input has been invaluable. The shellfish industry has expressed they would like to be part of a solution in coming up with \$2000 - \$3000 for keeping Teri King in Mason County.

Pat Sykora, Elections Superintendent, reiterated what the Auditor said concerning the growth in Mason County that has been tremendous and the workload has increased substantially. The Secretary of State states the Election Department should have three staff. New technology is going to require that the County do more. Federal mandates say the punch card systems will be done away with and will go to new technology. It will be running two elections

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at once. Presently, it takes 45 - 60 days to complete an election with three people. She asked for staff to maintain the integrity of Elections Department.

Theresa Ehrich, Chief Accountant, noted they support 60 county departments; 60 special funds and 26 jr. districts, which encompass the transit, port, water and fire districts. There are 200 employees that they take care of retirement and medical for the districts.

In order to complete the grant funding and to make sure the financial integrity is maintained she asked the Board to support the Auditor's accounting department. Met with Board in January and told them goals and objectives. She did not come back to the Board asking for supplemental budgets in 2002.

Jackie Burnett, Licensing Supervisor, noted her function in the Auditor's department is three fold. 1) To provide the citizens of the County with quality customer service in vehicle and vessel transactions; 2) Collection of funds; 3) Training of employees. She asked the Board to maintain the Auditor's staffing level.

Melody Peterson, Assessor's office, President of local AFSCME union. She stated she is finding it difficult to tell staff there are positions being cut while the County is creating other positions. She questioned why the Assessor's office generated revenues are not able to be used for a part-time position being cut.

Constance Ibsen expressed appreciation for Mr. Fitzwater's comment that the proposed 2003 budget is not a very good budget. She asked that it be clarified what are the missions of the EDC and Shelton Chamber of Commerce. It should be clear who is taking care of existing businesses and what are the promotions about getting new business in the county. She noted support of Mr. Dewey's comment about the Sea Grant program in the county. She too has found Teri King very accessible and has a lot of information on water quality issues in the county.

She noted it is not clear what positions are in the Road Department. She questioned if Public Works is looking at a software program for the accounting department. She questioned if there is a duplication of efforts to have an entirely different system in one department. She asked if there were any diversion of roads funds into the general fund in 2002.

It was noted there was approximately \$775,000 funds diverted.

There was discussion about supplemental budgets and that the County anticipate the budget. It was suggested a new budgeting process might help.

The Board closed the public hearing and noted the comments made will be taken into account as they look into further work on the budget. The final adoption of the 2003 budget will be by December 31, 2002 at the latest or the earliest on December 10, 2002.

The testimonies show there are serious concerns with the 2003 budget and the Board shares the concerns. They are well aware it is more difficult to meet the budget in the coming year than in the past.

ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m. due to no further business.

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Wesley E. Johnson, Chairperson

ATTEST:

Herb Baze, Commissioner

Rebecca S. Rogers, Clerk of the Board

Jayni L. Kamin, Commissioner