

## BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS

JANUARY 21, 2003

The regular meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairperson Herb Baze. Attendance: Cmmr. Dist. 1, Herb Baze; Cmmr. Dist. 2, Wesley E. Johnson; Cmmr. Dist. 3, Jayni Kamin.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Cmmr. Johnson/Kamin moved and seconded to approve the January 7, 2003 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously. B-aye; J-aye; K-aye.

### CORRESPONDENCE

Announcement that a replacement vehicle for the Landfill pickup was not purchased (the purchase was approved at the January 7, 2003 Commission meeting) due to the recovery of the vehicle.

### OPEN FORUM FOR CITIZEN INPUT

Constance Ibsen again discussed the necessity of fog striping on county roads for safety purposes and asked for a policy in writing. The Board stated they would like into the request and respond back.

### ADOPTION OF AGENDA

**Cmmr. Johnson/Kamin moved and seconded to adopt the agenda as listed. Motion carried unanimously. B-aye; J-aye K-aye.**

### APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

9.1 Adopt resolution for notice of intent to vacate, setting time and place for hearing on Road Vac. File 322 for Tuesday, February 18, 2003; 9:30 a.m.; a portion of Herbig Drive as recorded in Volume 6 of Plats, Pages 140 and 141, Records of Mason County, Washington.

9.2 Approval of agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior for the operation and maintenance of the South Fork Skokomish River stream gaging station.

9.3 Approval of Veterans Assistance Application for Virgil Vant for utilities in the amount of \$101.55; Robert Bauer for Utilities \$400.00.

9.4 Approve Phase I Enhanced 911 service agreement between Mason County and T-Mobile. Fees are paid out of 911 excise tax revenue.

9.5 Approval for Public Works to hire two temporary full-time Road Crew employees and one temporary full-time Chainman Technician III.

9.6 Approval of Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 109-01 (Mason County Franchise Ordinance with TCI Cablevision, Inc), Section F2.

9.7 Approval of a grant contract, #G0300042, for \$100,000 between the Washington Department of Ecology and Mason County as part of the WRIA 14 watershed planning process to conduct an instream flow study and develop recommendations.

Cmmr. Johnson asked to pull out 9.2 on the US Geological Survey on the South Fork of the Skokomish River. He noted that the County pays a portion of the cost of maintaining the monitoring station. What is before the Board is the County's portion of the cost. The other participants are the Skokomish Tribe and the USGS.

**Cmmr. Kamin/Johnson moved and seconded to approve consent agenda items 9.1 through 9.7. Motion carried unanimously. B -aye; J-aye; K-aye,**

### RECESS

The Board recessed until 9:30 a.m. for the next scheduled agenda item.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS

10.1 **PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED FROM DECEMBER 30, 2002 – CONSIDER REVISION TO THE CONVENTION CENTER/FAIRGROUNDS FEE SCHEDULE.**

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Mike Byrne, Tourism & Recreation, noted this is a continuation hearing from December 30, 2002 to consider revision to the Convention Center/Fairgrounds Fee Schedule Resolution No. 115-99. Since the last meeting there has been additional public input from the user groups and also they have looked closely at the proposed fees and revised those.

It was noted the revised draft is in red, blue and black. The red portions are revised from December 30, 2002. Building 13 - Small Hall changed from \$150 to \$120; Building 17 - Olympic Hall changed from \$300 to \$200; Carnival Area previously was \$400 reduced to \$200; Entire Fairgrounds Rental was \$1,500 to \$1,100; rental of entire grounds including parking lot is \$1,200 instead of \$1,600. The other change on page 2 is to add language of "In the event that any lessee shall sub-lease, contract, or provide pre-rented space to For-profit vendor (s) and/or concessionaire(s) during their stated rental dates, events, etc. a flat fee of \$30 per day or \$50 per event . . ."

It was noted there was a number of mixed comments. Each group is unique in the use of the fairgrounds. Over all they felt the input was very positive. In some cases, they were satisfied and other cases there were still issues not resolved. The last time the fees were increased for the fairgrounds was in 1999.

The question was asked how many groups rent the entire fairgrounds without the parking lot that would be charged the proposed \$1,100.

Gretchen Stewart-Jankauskas, Fair Manager, responded there are several groups such as the camping groups (motorcyclists, Holiday Ramblers, Washibagos) that use the entire fairgrounds without the parking lot.

Cmmr. Johnson referred to the change on page two to add "for profit" vendors. He questioned if a group rented the entire fairgrounds and then subleased each booth around Building 17 to non-profit organizations there would be no additional charge.

Mr. Byrne responded that is correct. The Oysterfest falls into a Class III (non-profit organization per the fee schedule definition) and it does not apply to them.

It was noted there is no further comparison with other fairgrounds in the vicinity as to what their fee schedule is.

Gretchen Stewart-Jankauskas, Mason County Fairgrounds & Convention Center, noted the difference between a non-profit vendor vs. a for-profit vendor is the for-profit vendor would use more commercial vendors and generate revenue that would not necessarily go back to the community; a non-profit vendor would return revenue to the community.

Dave Bowers, Puget Sound Enduro Riders, is an off-road motorcycle club and holds two events at the Mason County Fairgrounds each year. They did discuss concerns with the Fair staff and have resolved most of the issues. They are pleased that camping has only been increased by 20%. The building rental went up 30% and they can live with that. The cost to rent the entire fairgrounds is still at 70 - 80% increase and it is suggested to go with a 20 - 30% increase over a period of three years to get it up to the full rate.

Jo Ann Lewis explained she lives on the Fairgrounds Road and noted she is speaking for herself. She felt the third draft of the resolution is better, but still believes there are areas that need revising. She felt there needs to be definitions of terms such as "entire fairgrounds." If they mean grounds inside the chainlink fence they need to term it so, also Building 17 and exterior booths. She also suggested that the increase of fees should be based on a percentage. The Arena needs updated for the fee suggested. A group can rent an indoor arena from a neighboring county with adequate lighting, seating for 2000 and not have to face the problems for \$300 per day. The average weekly rental income throughout the year is \$1,346 for Thurston County Fairgrounds. Mason County's rental income is \$683 per week for the fairgrounds.

Donald Fifer, President of Antique Farm & Tractor Association, noted they have been renting the fairgrounds for one weekend each year and put on a show of old engines and tractors. They have kept their ticket price to \$2 per

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person and children under 12 are free. The increase in rental could be covered with a \$1 additional on the ticket. To pay another \$1 to the fair for each ticket sold would mean they would have to double their prices. Much of their revenue goes back into the community. They hire a youth group to handle the parking. If they rent the entire fairgrounds they should be able to do anything that is reasonable and legal. They bring in vendors and charge them 10% of gross on the honor system. If there will be an additional charge it will impact the number of vendors.

Dick Lorenz, Co-Chairman for Antique Farm & Tractor Association, stated they heard that all of the people that used the fairgrounds have been involved in the revisions. The only way they found out about the hearing is through the newspaper. Their Association returns back a lot of money to the community. They use ROTC for parking and have scholarship programs that go back to the county.

Fred Barthe was present as an interested citizen and gave the Board a copy of his written comments. He expressed concerns felt that the results of the meeting with the fair did not get incorporated into the revisions. He asked that the Board continue the hearing to a later date for further review.

Richard Byrd, Gig Harbor Kennel Club, asked if the Fair Board has had a meeting. Also, it was questioned if anything was done to bring into effect the older committee to discuss things with the fairgrounds. There is no longer a "fairgrounds" but there is a "convention center." The concern is will there be a good clean fairgrounds with good facilities, or will the staff continue to work on outdated equipment.

Janis Byrd, Shelton-Mason County Chamber of Commerce and Forest Festival, stated the Forest Festival moved from the fairgrounds to downtown. Some of it was economically driven and some was to try and do something downtown. It came to their attention recently that they may not be able to have their event downtown this year because of the construction at Loop Field for Evergreen Elementary School. They could not afford to have the event at the Fairgrounds under the new proposal. She stated that the language makes "for profit" sound bad. She felt they should look at the logic of economic development. The county is being forced to raise rates because revenue is at a shortfall. If rates are raised and events go away they will be in a worse condition. The businesses need to thrive. When the dirtbike off-road association comes to town they spend money in the community. They come and see the community and might want to start a business. At a recent meeting of regional non-profit organizations of which fund raising is very important. One issue that came up is that they have to support each other and they are really only raising money for themselves. The fairgrounds is one way to grow and make the revenue greater. People come for different reasons and may decide to start a business or retire in the community and pay taxes. It was noted that communication could be improved.

Gertrude Beese has been up to the fairgrounds hauling dirt and see young people with parents, horses, bikers. The County has a family oriented facility at the fairgrounds. She hated to see it being priced out of everyone's reach.

Jack Springer spoke as a Master Gardner and noted he has not had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Byrne or Gretchen Stewart-Jankauskas. He spoke highly of the fairgrounds facility. One of the reasons he moved to the area was because it was a quiet and economical place to live. There has been a lot of comment about rent. The Master Gardeners have put a lot of volunteer time into the fairgrounds and continue to put a lot of time. There are two fundraisers and plant sale in conjunction with the Rhododendron sale at no charge. They also staff the extension office and handle all the questions that come in about plants and their diseases. He stated he has not heard much about reducing cost. What are the events specific costs and how should they be charged. Could they mow the lawn every seven days rather than every four days.

Annette McGee noted that there seems to be a lot of questions without answers. After hearing the confusion she urged the Board to postpone the hearing and reactivate the fair advisory board or create a new board asking for volunteers with suggestions. She stressed that Mason County is not a large county. The fairgrounds was built by the citizens of the community, by donations and organizations. She felt that it is not appropriate to raise the rates at this time. She too commented that people may go elsewhere if the rates are too high and it will lower the income. She urged the Commissioners to leave the fairgrounds rates at this time and revisit the advisory committee and see what they come up with.

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Patti Case, Skookum Rotary and OysterFest, expressed appreciation to speak with staff about the rate increases. It shows some attention to customer service. If this is an indication of future service, it may be worth 70% in the base rental rates at the fairgrounds. They also supported phasing in an increase over three years or a period of time. They feel that \$1 per attendee equates to a tax on those visiting events at the fairground. If it is necessary to tax the visitors it was suggested to use a percentage of the gate rather than a flat fee. She agreed that the fairgrounds is an important economic development asset in the community.

The Board noted that Mason County is faced with a problem that other jurisdictions are faced with in other states. The fairgrounds is a very significant community event and important to the economy of the County. The County is faced with revenues not meeting expenses.

Cmmr. Johnson stated that with the discussion and comments made to date it was noted the Board needs to take a continued look at the information and see what can be modified. It was recommended the hearing be continued to resolve some of the unanswered questions and see if anything further that can be done.

Cmmr. Kamin added she did not believe anyone would like to see the rates raised. They would like to see the fairgrounds and convention center to be a stable long-term facility. She hoped this is the first step in looking at the long-term viability of the fairgrounds and what can be done to make it more successful. It is difficult at looking at increasing the fees in light of the economic forecast of the community and state. She hoped to use this as a stepping stone to bring back the convention center long-range planning group. It appears the main areas of contention are in the overall rental fee of the fairgrounds, the dollar admission increase and the parking lot area fee.

A citizen commented that most people understand that the rates will have to be raised. What is questioned is the method used for raising the rates does not appear to be consistent. It was questioned if the fairgrounds has ever been a profit making operation. It is not clear that the intent of the fairgrounds is for profit.

Annette McGee interjected that the contention is with the whole process. The raises are different percentages. She again urged the Board to formulate the committee to raise the rates and get input from the public, which is very important. She believed that the fair staff has done a wonderful job with the resources they have.

Cmmr. Baze expressed appreciation for the testimony and noted that County government has revenue which is to be used for programs and nothing stays the same. They are seeing the impacts of the recession all the way through the state and county. There are businesses in town that are closing up. It is the intent to make the county as efficient as possible. He noted that the Convention Center board will be reactivated.

Gretchen Stewart-Jankauskas noted that they need to have a working set of resolutions. In order to get the calendars out they need to have it approved. The Fairgrounds is about 87% occupancy which means that 87% of every weekend there is something going on at the Fairgrounds. In order to contract they need a working resolution. The increased rates is only one part of the issue.

The Board discussed continuing the hearing for three weeks.

There was a comment that if the Commissioners are going to activate the Convention Center board it will take over a month.

Janis Byrd stated that raising the gate fee \$1 will decrease attendance. The rates matter to people on budgets. They need to be logical about getting the dollars spread out.

Chairperson Baze noted the Board closed the public comment portion of the hearing and will need to come back with a decision.

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**Cmmr. Johnson/Kamin moved and seconded to continue the hearing to February 4, 2003 at 9:30 a.m.  
Motion carried unanimously. B-aye; H-aye; J-aye.**

**OTHER BUSINESS (DEPARTMENT HEADS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS)**

None

**ADMINISTRATION**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Herb Baze, Chairperson

ATTEST:

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Wesley E. Johnson, Commissioner

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Rebecca S. Rogers, Clerk of the Board

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Jayni L. Kamin, Commissioner