

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS

DECEMBER 1, 2008

1. Call to Order – The Chairperson called the special meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.
2. Roll Call - Present: Cmmr. Dist. 1 – Lynda Ring Erickson; Cmmr. Dist. 2 – Tim Sheldon; Cmmr. Dist. 3 – Ross Gallagher.
3. Public Hearing – 2009 Mason County Budget

Chairperson Sheldon acknowledged the overflow crowd in attendance. He noted two televisions are provided for the overflow in attendance.

This is an unprecedented timeout from the budget and now they are around \$500,000 that still needs to be found.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson expressed appreciation for the level of interest from community people in both county services and what kind of stewards they are of public dollars. Times are difficult and people are having a hard time paying their property tax. She explained that only about 10% of the property tax on a house goes towards running the budget they are discussing. A lot of the taxes go to the state. Some taxes are voter authorized for schools, fire departments and other things that are important to run the community. The Commissioners are looking to find the very best use of every dollar, recognizing that most of the services from the Treasurer, Auditor, Assessor, Clerk and courts are mandated by state law. A lot of the offices are still functioning at 1990 staffing levels or below. They are a group of people that are not wasting money. They have made good use of resources over the years and deserve a lot of credit for what they do. She hoped that people would take the opportunity to thank those individuals that put in extra time over the weekends because they work very hard.

Cmmr. Gallagher stated that last year they anticipated some downturns and they have adjusted the budget. They have been reading this past summer about Thurston County budget woes. One major source of income is sales tax; however, sales tax has been declining. In Thurston County they thought they had a growth of 15% in sales tax. Mason County had 6 – 7% growth in sales tax, but it is not at that level now. They also need to think about next year. The adjustments they make will also anticipate if they still continue a downturn for next year. They are asking people for a lot of things to balance the budget. The budget has to be balanced. They could borrow money, but where would they get the money to pay back. They have to move forward and look for the common good of the county. He used the analogy of a wagon wheel. Each spoke or pie shape is an entity of the county government. Each had an arrow pointing toward the common good of the county. They need all departments and elected officials to work for the common good of the county and not just for their particular department.

Ione Siegler, Budget & Finance Director, stated the purpose of the public hearing is to take testimony from the public and Mason County Departments regarding the 2009 Mason County preliminary budget. Copies of the preliminary budget were made available to the public, two weeks prior to the hearing, as required by state statute. Mason County is currently experiencing an economic downturn in the Current Expense (general fund) revenue. They expect the revenue to be \$2 million less than the amount budgeted in 2008. The economic downturn is further complicated by the increased cost of providing services. Property taxes are budgeted at 1% greater than 2008 as allowed by state statute. This results in an additional approximately \$82,000 into the Current Expense Fund and an additional \$88,000 in the Road Fund. There are no 2009 wage and benefit cost of living increases in the preliminary budget because the county is currently negotiating the 2009 contracts. There is one union contract and one guild contract that has been settled. There are about 11 bargaining units. The other 9 unions are in negotiations. The preliminary budget does include a 3% increase for all Elected Officials with the exception of the judges in district court and Superior Court and the Prosecutor, which is required by Mason County policy. Relating to reductions in staff, Mason County will experience layoffs and reductions in staff through attrition in 2009 as the county concentrates on providing

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core services with less revenue. The 2009 preliminary budget is not ready for adoption at this time. They are still working on it to try and bring the budget into balance.

Cmmr. Sheldon asked how much they need to cut to bring the budget into balance.

Ms. Siegler stated, as of Sunday, the County was approximately \$597,000 out of balance. Which means the projected expenditures exceeded the projected revenues for 2009.

Cmmr. Sheldon noted this is the preliminary budget. By law, they don't have to adopt the law until the end of the year.

A question was raised from the public if the AFSCME wage increases had been included as of November 18, 2008 when the budget was provided.

Ms. Siegler responded they have not been included. The AFSCME wage increases would have to come from ending or beginning fund balances through a supplemental appropriation.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated the AFSCME union has a multi-year contract. It calls for a 4.3% increase for 40 employees. The county has approximately 400 employees. There are 11 labor union contracts, which is highly unusual for a small county to have that many separate negotiations.

Another question was raised from the public as to how many FTE's are taken out of the 2009 budget. On November 18, 2008 they said there were 17.5 FTEs cut.

Ms. Siegler stated that some people have not been notified. There are probably another 5 or 7. They are still working on that. The number can change daily.

It was asked what percentage of the overall budget makes up the \$597,000 shortfall.

Ms. Siegler responded the proposed budget is about \$31million; the anticipated revenue is \$26 million. They are trying to get the expenditures within the revenue.

Denny Temple commented that this did not just happen overnight that they got into a \$2 million shortfall. They have been hearing rumors since the summer that the commissioners have been informed they were headed down the road to a shortfall and the county continues to hire people and spend money. They waited until the worst time (holidays) to say you have two weeks and you don't work here anymore. He found that even the state is better than that. He asked why the County is in a shortfall. They had a \$5 million surplus approximately four years ago and now they are at a \$2 million shortfall. He asked where the \$7.6 million went.

Cmmr. Sheldon responded that a lot of it is a drop in the sales tax revenue. Real estate excise tax has dropped considerably. They have added, over four years, a little more than \$3 million to the Sheriff's Department. They hired 11 new deputies and three new sergeants and one new animal control officer. Services cost more money. They are looking at an unprecedented drop in sales taxes statewide.

Mr. Temple asked if they had a plan like the household budget. When you make \$2,000 you don't spend \$3,000. They have a plan to have something held back to help.

Cmmr. Sheldon noted the County does have some reserves. Also, at the end of the year, each year they come to the realization of how many jury trials there were, how much other expenses they have had over the years that add up. He stated they need to realize that all counties are in this situation right now. Mason County is not in a situation that is as bad as many counties.

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Mr. Temple stated he reads the paper that people get a raise and a promotion within the county and get a \$15,000 raise to go with it. He often wonders why.

Cmmr. Sheldon replied the problem is an unprecedented drop in revenue. They have maintained about 400 employees in the county over the last few years. They have not added a lot of employees. The Sheriff's Department has had new officers, but they have been below what they should have been. They've had most of the increases. The drop in sales tax is amazing. When you get only 1% more to operate government and that only amounts to \$82,000 for the year, it is tough.

Constance Ibsen referred to the final published budget for the public. She asked if there would be a detail of the Public Works Department budget as all the other departments. Not an addendum or something they have to put in a public records request.

Ione Siegler stated she would have to check with Public Works. She thought they submitted a detail of the budget that is available. They don't usually publish it unless they have the time.

Ms. Ibsen stated she did not understand it as it is just a print out. All the other departments provide the budget.

Ms. Siegler noted that by the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and the County Road Administration Board (CRAB) they budget public works by cost function. This is what CRAB requires. That is the format that is in the budget. She would have to check with the Road Department for the detail.

Ms. Ibsen wanted to know the number of employees and positions like all the other departments list. She asked why it is not in the document. She questioned if they can have the detail.

It was noted that they are not in the budget document as they are under a different RCW and the CRABoard, which regulates the way they budget. They budget that way in the official legal budget.

Ms. Ibsen felt that it is responsible that all departments come forward with that information so the public can see for all departments what is going on. In the past, in 1998, they had the information that was published. She is concerned because she came back into town and saw a finding from the State Auditor regarding the Public Works Department that seemed to not want to go through the central financial operations and doing its own cowboy thing with the state treasurer. She was concerned because they don't have to do what every other department does.

A question was raised from the public if the County will be cutting officers in the upcoming 2009 budget.

Cmmr. Sheldon pointed out that everything is on the table.

PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

Lila Goaky, North Shore Road Belfair -- Supported the Sheriff and Road Departments. She likes feeling safe and also has nothing but praise on how the staff handled the roads especially during the last winter's storms. They called for help and the deputies were right there. For many years the amount of area they have to cover and the population for the county they should be hiring more staff if they could.

George Funk, Allyn -- Appreciated the county's effort in dealing with the budget problem and paring spending limits down. Everyone is faced with the same problem as citizens to try to cope with what they are dealing with. He offered two comments regarding the North Bay/Case Inlet sewer system. The Washington State Department of Energy loan requires establishment in reserve equal to one year's payments on the debt

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service. That debt payment is \$375,000. The accrued interest on the fund is continued to be in the fund. By the end of 2009, there will be almost \$30,000 of accrued interest in that reserve fund. That interest should be transferred out into the sewer utility fund so it can be used as a source of revenue. Secondly, the combined utility's administration fund does not include any allocations to Hoodspout wastewater system or in 2009 to Hartstene Point Sewer & Water. He assumed county resources are being and have been used on each of the systems. He understood Hartstene is proceeding to a ULID (utility local improvement district). His understanding is that has not been accomplished yet. There will be some efforts in 2009. This budget does not include any 2009 allocations to Hartstene Pointe of the combined utility fund. In the past, it was his understanding that no allocation could be made to Hoodspout because they did not have a budgeted revenue source of something like that. The budget does include an account \$5 million of a state grant for that system. Assuming that the grant includes some planning time. Possibly, some of the administration fund can be allocated there. The result of all that will be simply to reduce the administrative fund that North Bay Case Inlet pays and the other utilities under that jurisdiction.

Brenda Hirschi , Allen Road, Shelton - Stated she is not present to speak for or against any program. She wanted to address the way the budget has been put together and presented to the stakeholders of Mason County. She has three concerns. 1) The budget documents provided for public information are too complex and too confusing; some people want all the detail and that information should be there and made available. She stated that while using the internet one afternoon she came up with other counties that have provided budget information in a way that would make it much simpler and easier to understand about how their money is being spent. She asked the Board to take this under consideration for the next budget process. 2) The second concern is the way the revenue projections have been made. She sat in on as many of the budget meetings she was aware of and that her schedule would permit. She is concerned that revenue projections have not been scrutinized. This may have been done in private meetings. As a citizen she has not seen that. She would like to have seen that each elected official and department head would come forward in a setting that a citizen could be involved in to justify and provide rationale on why they think the revenues are going to be the level they are projecting. She understands these are unchartered financial times. She does not know what to expect. She would like to see the reasons and rationale with justification of projected revenues. This should be done in a public setting. She asked that the Board look closely at the way revenues are projected for the next budget.

She believed the County met the letter of the law in providing a budget. The document provided to the county on November 18, 2008 is not balanced. She did not know what is funded or what is unfunded. She felt it is all a matter of trade offs. They need to know what is out there; what was funded and what was unfunded. She asked the Board take into consideration the concerns and look at ways to have the people more involved and keep them informed. She did not hear the Board ask how they get volunteers to help with the parks. The money is not there to answer all of these needs. There are critical needs. It may be that the downturn does not turn around quickly. If they had some way to keep people informed, she believed they could have people volunteer.

Lorena Ghylin – Stated she wrote a letter to the Board. She thanked the Board for the new area for the Sheriff's Department. She felt that everything needs to be cut back at this time. She hoped they would not cut the Sheriff's budget. She has not seen anybody out in the Tahuya area and now they are seeing it out there. They do not need to loose anybody. She felt they are throwing money away if they cut the sheriff's budget.

Charles Bevens, Hoodspout – Voiced concern for the Sheriff's Department. He stated that the County does not provide services to Lake Cushman. They maintain their own roads and water system and security that patrol the roads. They are not armed or doing anything they should not be doing. They work very close with the Sheriff's Department and would like to maintain that relationship. They pledge a fairly substantial amount of money to the Sheriff's Department each year. They just had a meeting with the Sheriff recently to pledge their support for the Sheriff's Department. They have a big job. They have a lot of people that cannot

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afford the increases. They don't have animal control services in the Lake Cushman area as they cannot get there. It has to be a major concern before animal control services comes there. They had seven meth labs in their area not too long ago, but now they are gone.

Denny Temple, Wildwood Drive – Expressed his support for the Sheriff's Department. He commended the county on the improvements made through the Sheriff's Department over the last several years. He reminded the Board that the Sheriff's Department gets one-third of the budget. Some counties have 50 to 60 percent of the budget for the Sheriff as compared to 30 percent for Mason County. It is the only office that operates 24 hours a day; 7 days a week; 365 days a year. They need to maintain the staff in the Sheriff's Department. If people are not employed or have money, they will steal. We need people to catch those who steal and bring them to justice. In dealing with the shortfalls and things a lot of it is not the Board's fault. He urged the Board to pay attention to detail. If the staff is recommending they are not doing well, listen to them. He urged the Board to make sure they do not go backwards in the Sheriff's Department.

Brad Trout, Grapeview – Mason County Deputy Sheriff commented that he is working to protect the people. Crime goes up in times like this. The Sheriff has done a good job at bringing staffing up to a minimum. They are trying to protect people 365 days a year. This year alone they had four officers involved in a shooting. He was involved in a shooting four weeks ago. They had a backup within minutes to help with the dangerous subject. The Sheriff has been forced to cut non-essential services. An animal control officer is being cut. In the absence of this position the deputy will have to go out and deal with the neighborhood nuisance dogs. They will have to do civil service papers as well. He felt the Sheriff has done a good job of bringing morale up and get the tools to a 1980 level. He asked that the Commissioners not take deputies off the road.

Mary Jean Hrbacek – Stated she spoke as a private citizen and penny-pinching taxpayer; although her comments are informed by her position as finance manager of the Mason County Sheriff's office. During the budget process Commissioners were asked to provide the priorities of county government to her in preparing the Sheriff's budget. In October a press release stated the Commissioners are committed to preserving county jobs as the highest priority and believe a reduction in the budget can be accomplished without a staffing reduction. As a taxpayer she did not believe the top priority of government is saving county jobs, but providing basic mandated services to taxpayers, public safety and public health. Reductions were directed as a fixed percentage with no discussion of priorities. She asked if officials were asked to justify full time equivalent employee levels with work flow data to support budget requests. She questioned if staff discussions included use of resources available in the local economy. The current Mason County Journal announced that the Parks Department is looking to hire a level 3 Maintenance staff person. She asked if the Parks Department has considered an "as needed" contract for the electrical work of this position instead of having a Journeyman level electrician with full time benefits on staff. With the economy the way it is there are probably electricians looking for fillers in their day. She understands the financial position with the county finds itself in, but personal cuts of any deputies are unwise and not in the public's best interest. Sheriff Salisbury has consistently followed a strategic plan to modernize the department while filling open positions and requiring training for the current staff. The Sheriff's office is facing retirement of baby boomers in the next few years. Sergeants and senior deputies have earned vacation that the Sheriff is unable to grant due to skeleton manning particular during the summer months when the county's population doubles. This places the Sheriff in a no win situation. Either fewer deputies are on patrol to answer calls and less presence in the communities to deter crimes. There will be response times that are longer and tired deputies that are in need of a break. To lose any of the recently hired deputies would severely handicap the present and future of this department. Sheriff Salisbury has been successful in attracting highly qualified men and women to fill open deputy positions, despite the challenges of doing so. The hours are long, the deputies and their families face daily stress, not knowing what the next traffic stop or next intervention in domestic dispute will bring. Candidates for deputy must pass a stringent screening process, including physical, psychological and polygraph tests as well as four months of training to be commissioned in the State of Washington. The pay is hardly commensurate with the responsibilities of the job. The Sheriff and his staff understand that the

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2009 budget cannot sustain the level of upgrades the department has seen in the past two years. It is not in the best interest of the citizens who have already invested in the recently commissioned deputies to lose them because of a poorly conceived county budget. For the first time as a county resident, she sees traffic deputies on county roads, not just reacting to accidents but being proactive in deterring speeders and careless driving. She sees drug cases going to court, sex offenders being carefully monitored and a professional Sheriff's Department carrying out their duties with a high rate of taxpayer approval. She strongly urged the Commission to seek the needed cuts in county spending with the basic priorities of county government in mind.

Kim Russell, Animal Control Officer, stated she is being cut. She just got back from maternity leave. She has enjoyed worked for the past two years for the Sheriff's office. She works hand in hand with the deputies. She lives in Grays Harbor County at the outskirts of the county. She felt that Mason County would be in trouble without an adequate level of staffing. In Grays Harbor she can call the Sheriff's office and they are there within minutes. She personally listens to the radio in Mason County. She hears disturbances constantly, on the radio, where more than one deputy is needed and there may be five disturbances at once. If they cut the deputies they will be in trouble. Animal cruelty cases have risen this year. Deputies are not trained to respond to these situations.

Chairperson Sheldon thanked Ms. Russell for her service. He commented that Grays Harbor thought they had their budget balanced, but they are now back in deliberations trying to find \$1 million to balance their budget.

Pat Swartos, County Clerk for Superior Court, noted that she maintains the records for Superior Court which includes criminal justice records and civil juvenile matters. They were told approx. a month ago to present to the Commissioners a list of their mandated duties. Basically, everything she has to do in her office is mandated by the constitution or the laws of the State of Washington, except passports. She had talked to the Commissioners in briefings how necessary each function that they do in the Clerk's office is and they are not supposed to be a revenue bearing office, except they have been with their passports. They are bringing in income for their passports. With the court collections of their legal financial obligation, that is another area they have been doing very well. Each month they bring in more money for the county and restitution for those that have had crime against them. She does not know what she would do if they have any loss of staff. Every person in her office is necessary in order to maintain the level that they need to supply the necessary functions for the court and public. If they have to cut a person, or more than one person, they will be in trouble for providing court services if they cannot provide clerks in the court they would have to leave at 5 p.m. and court sometimes goes until 7 p.m.

Walter Horton, Lake Cushman resident, spoke in support of the Sheriff's Department. He thought Cmmr. Sheldon was one of the leading figureheads that got Mason County the proper Sheriff's patrol that it needed and got it fully staffed.

Cmmr. Sheldon interjected it is not from the state. The county provides the funding.

Mr. Horton stated they got the funding to get to the proper level. In the last ten years they have seen a great reduction in the meth houses and drug use in the county. That is a direct support to the Sheriff's Department. They have seen the burglaries go down. Lake Cushman does pay revenue in support of the Sheriff's Department to have an officer in the area maybe a little more frequently than some of the other areas, which has greatly helped them. If the County does not keep the Sheriff staff as it is they will have only one deputy covering the whole county. A deputy cannot get from Tahuya to Lake Cushman in an hour's time safely. He encouraged the commissioners to keep the staff level. There is a lot of other areas in the county that they can go to balance that budget. He questioned if the County needs new roofs on county buildings or new buildings with furniture at the County shop. He felt there are key areas they can go back and look at things they considered policy should be done.

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Cmmr. Sheldon noted the county has particular sources of revenue such as the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET). The REET cannot be used for general revenue or law enforcement. It can be used for capital improvements. There are other REET that has to go to parks. They cannot take real estate excise tax and put it in the Current Expense Fund and use it for general government. They have quite a few restrictions such as the Road Fund. They can use a small portion for the Sheriff's Department. They cannot take the road fund and use it in the Assessor's office for staffing to buy furniture. They have a lot of restrictions on how they can use funds and what their purposes are.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson also noted the Public Works building was built out of road funds. The funds could not have been converted to law enforcement or general government. The conditions that the Public Works staffs were working under certainly is as bad as the Sheriff's Department. She also cares about those employees as all employees. To suggest that Public Works continue to work in a building that physically was not capable of moving and is borderline dangerous is not acceptable.

Aubry Hutchinson, President of Lake Cushman Board of Directors, reinforce what the Commissioners have heard. There is money in their budget to hire a deputy sheriff in 2009. They will support that throughout the full year. Lake Cushman community puts in up to \$50,000 for a deputy.

Liana Jone - 4-H Horse Leaders and volunteers have put in hundreds of hours. She noted that 4-H is a very important program in Mason County. She asked the County to continue supporting 4-H. It helps to keep kids off the streets. It gives a sense of responsibility. It provides activities, learning, and growth. This would also benefit the Sheriff's Department by keeping kids out of trouble. She has been in 4-H for 12 years as a youth and as a leader for 13 years. She encouraged the Board to continue thinking about the 4-H program.

Dean Secor, Retired law enforcement, also spoke in support of the law enforcement program. There was discussion about attrition or layoffs. He stated that attrition is still layoffs. He questioned what is a non-essential personnel. If the position was created it was essential in the first place. The clerical staff is equally important and what they do is not out on the street, but they keep the wheels greased and rolling. If the clerical staff is reduced they could be losing a deputy. Staffing levels are very important where he worked. It is difficult for the deputy to know he has to go in alone or wait for backup. It is difficult for the citizen to know that the deputies have to wait for a backup. They cannot gauge the essential prevention that goes on by the presence of a patrol car. You can say a deputy has investigated and cleared a percentage of their calls and the Prosecutor did this. The presence of a marked patrol unit defers a lot of crime that they will never understand. Without the patrol unit, crime will increase. They know the staff levels as well as the street sergeants. The danger to the citizens with a deputy not being able to respond is tantamount. He related an incident where he worked with 15,000 people and two deputies on duty. There were two assaults with deadly weapons calls and they had to choose which one of the two to attend to. They chose to respond to the deadly weapon and then investigated a homicide. How do you tell the family of the victim where they chose to save the other person and not their family member. As crime increases those decisions have to be made. The deputy's primary responsibility is to protect and serve. However, they are no good to the citizen if they cannot first protect themselves. By protecting themselves means having additional people to respond. He has lost three friends to shootings in domestic violence because they could not get to the incident in time. A lot of it had to do with lack of personnel and response time.

Bev Wendell also supported the Sheriff's Department. He is a volunteer with the Sheriff's department. He urged the Board to keep the law enforcement level.

Bobbie Hanna, Represented by Judd Hildebrant, stated he heard rumor they would close down MCRA and Sandhill. In past years they have tried to run baseball tournaments there. To run a state tournament they have to pay \$1,000. The only way to recoup that is through concessions and raffles. At other facilities they are allowed to charge for parking. He also understands it is against some county ordinance. They have offered

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to volunteer to prep the fields and that became a liability. They do pay for an insurance policy that insures any kid under an organized practice whether in an open field. He does not want to volunteer his time to replace anyone else's job.

The Board encouraged him to talk with John Keates, Parks Director, who is well informed.

Guy Lusignan noted he supports the Extension Service; 4-H and other programs. The Extension Service helps people learn how to live. It is very important that people in hard times know how to grow a garden and take care of whatever they have. It is important there is a resource to get information. There is an old saying that says if you give a man a fish he eats for a day but if you teach him how to fish he can eat for a lifetime. The Extension Service is teaching people how to take care of themselves and is very essential.

Fran Steven, Olympic Middle School Asst. Principal, noted they have many programs that they have partnered with WSU Extension office. Everyone of their children get nutrition. Both in 6th and 7th grade. It is very much hands on so the children can go home and prepare something healthy. They have really done a good job of doing that. They just implemented the program called media smart youth, which has really had some positive effects on their school. Students had the opportunity to look at media in a different way as it affects them and their nutrition and health benefits. He came and supported those kinds of programs that keep the kids in a healthier place that makes them healthier adults.

Frank DuMars – When he moved out to Star Lake it was not safe to take a 45-minute walk around the lake. The parents had to drive their kids a few blocks to the school bus stop because of vicious dogs. There were drug dealers that people knew about. Kids could not play in the playground without an adult present because of fighting. They had to remove the playground equipment, and close the restrooms because of vandalism. Anything that was not guarded or locked up was stolen. Elderly people living alone were afraid because it normally took over an hour for response to a 911 call for help. Since they added the second animal control officer. It is safe for anyone to walk around anytime with no dog problems. Dogs have killed no more cats. There is still a drug problem, but it is getting better as more dealers are leaving Star Lake in handcuffs. Mason County helped the Sheriff's Department set up a neighborhood watch and has drastically reduced the stealing and problems in the park. The last time they called out the Neighborhood Watch volunteers for a serious problem, the patrol car beat them to the incident and a backup arrived at the same time the volunteers arrived. Cmmr. Gallagher comes to their board meetings and gives them information and addresses concerns. The Star Lake community is concerned that the budget cuts and the Sheriff's Department will loose all the progress that was made to improve the quality of life and safety. He felt the Sheriff's Department is one of the last places to cut.

Kent Rasmussen, Dewatto Bay Development, also voiced support for the Sheriff's office. They have been noticing with the down turn in the economy an increase in property crimes directed to their company. The deputies have done a great job responding. There is a concern for safety of the people. There have been minor things like stealing diesel, wood, and vandalism, stealing tools.

Lane Adam supported the Sheriff 's Department. Sheriff Salisbury has used a grant from the state for sex offender registration and keeping them under control. He is using the grant money to pay salaries for two officers. They are not just men and women in uniform. They are the homeland security and first responders. They deserve the respect and money to do the job. He noted that two of the deputies saved her mother's life. They came into a fire and saved her mother's life. The deputies did not have to be there. It was not their first call, but they were the first responders. She felt the County turned down a 3% raise and would not ratify a contract that was only a 3% raise and to take payment. It is now in arbitration. Arbitration could give them twice what they would have settled for. She did not understand this. She can remember when her husband was on patrol, 14 years ago, he had to spend two hours wrangling cows back into a farmyard. He could not back up anybody. She did not think they want to go back to three on patrol with a sergeant. Animal control was non-existent in that type of capacity. To go back to three deputies has got to be the biggest back step

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ever. If Sheriff Salisbury can pay two deputies to work, now they have to have DNA on all domestic violence, every sex offender in the county; keep track of the over 200 sex offenders in the county. Two people are awfully hard. They get calls from other deputies to find out what to do with sex offenders. Fewer deputies is not the answer.

Gary Rhoades noted he and his wife have lived in the community for 38 years. He is very concerned and supportive of the Sheriff's Department. They have three grandchildren growing up in Mason County. He strongly feels that a cut back in the Sheriff's Department and their ability to do their job is a detriment to growing up in a safe community. As a parent of a Mason County Deputy Sheriff he is concerned about his son's ability to be out in a safe environment. The environment that they deal with day in and day out is a concern if you cut back in road deputies.

Carla Madison, Deputy Madison, is also a position that is getting cut at the end of the year. They do a very important role. They work close with the deputies. It is hard with the Sheriff's office because they all work together and protect each other. She does not carry a gun. If she hears a deputy out in an area, she will go to that area. She lets them know she is in the area so she can be eyes and ears. Even though they are non-commissioned they have an important role in the Sheriff's office. She would have been starting her ninth year in February; however, now she is not.

Bernie Madison noted that his wife brings home stacks of paperwork. This paperwork is civil paperwork. It is duties that the deputies will be doing for now. These duties will take them off the streets. They will be down to one animal control staff. The deputies will be doing the civil and animal complaints. They will be taking deputies off the streets whether they cut the positions or not. He felt that if they cut the 4-H programs they would be putting kids back on the streets. He heard about a 3% mandatory pay raise for the elected officials. He asked if that is something that could be looked at. He questioned if that is a cost saving that could go back to other programs.

Russ Sage, Lake Cushman Control Committee Chair, wanted to endorse what everybody has said prior to him regarding the wonderful help from the Sheriff's Department. It has been great. He is on the fringes of a lot that has gone on there. He thanked Cmmr. Sheldon for the help on the west side. There was a logjam and they are finally getting help as they were getting violations because they were isolated. They have had a couple instances since the harsh winter with bad erosion.

Sgt Travis Adams, Sheriff's Department Supervisor, noted he is well into his second decade with the Sheriff's Department. He is not going to be losing his job. One thing he wants to put out is he has worked nights his entire time with the Department. He has worked day shift for nine months out of all the time he has been with the department. The greatest challenge as a supervisor is the compromise that he has to make between what calls he sends people to. In years past, it has been a real challenge. When it is two other deputies with him he has to decide when there are two assaults going on what to send the deputies to. It is a problem, because his grandparents built one of the first houses on Island Lake before WWII. The other side of his family homestead before Mason County became a county. His family has a long history here. He commends the commissioners for working with the Sheriff's office. The command staff has done a fantastic job in recent years in getting those positions filled and getting up to staffing. In the real recent history they have had the benefit of having more people out on the street. Those challenges, as a supervisor, is not as much of a problem now; He can now say if there are two assaults going on they have people to go to both of the incidents. If there is an area with a problem, there are people to send out to an area to work proactively to solve problems in the community that they have not been able to solve in the past. If they cut positions in the Sheriff's Department, they will be taking a step back to where he once again has to make those kind of compromising decisions on where he sends people and who gets help. Right now because they have animal control they do not have deputies out there handling the calls when something else comes up. Any cut in the Sheriff's office will be a step back and will be hard to make up. Right now if they stay where they are at they

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will be able to continue to help those people in the neighborhoods that have been waiting to take a proactive action.

Lisa Frazier, Mason County Treasurer, reported there is no money. They have used the reserves to balance the budget over the last several years and they are gone. They have to live within their income. The only income for Current Expense is sales tax revenue and property tax revenues. Those have been kept to a point that they are not there any more. Expenditures keep going up and income does not match the cost of living. None of them want to lose positions. It is important that they all take the issue in hand. She is still concerned about the budget that it does not include AFSCME's cost of living increases. They are not \$600,000 off, they are more like \$700,000 off. There is no ending fund balance to do a supplemental budget for 2009. It needs to be considered now. They need to have a true idea of what they will have to cut.

Cmmr. Sheldon commented the credit markets are in trouble.

Mrs. Frazier stated she has been with the county for 28 years and the last 8 years as County Treasurer. She has never seen markets like this. The property tax revenues are fairly strong in collections. The real estate excise tax (REET) collections that they use for things other than Current Expense to keep the buildings up and running is cut by 2/3 this year. They had 150 transactions they processed in November. Normally they process 300 – 400 transactions.

Cmmr. Sheldon noted that transactions of recordings of property sales and transfers are an indication of economic activity and are precipitously down. They cannot go out and get a loan for short-term expenditures because they will not have any place to repay that. It is imperative over the next several months when they do not have property tax income coming in that they live within their budget to get through to the next tax cycle, which is April, and October time frames.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated there have been comments about projections of revenues, which are difficult. They are looking at revenue in the Current Expense (general fund) at around \$26 million. He questioned if a budget written at \$26 million will be adequate given they have not figured in the AFSCME increases and other labor contracts.

Mrs. Frazier responded, no, there have been too many unknowns. Too many contracts they have to settle that they do not know about. They do not know where the markets will be. All of the forecasters say nothing will change in 2009. Interest rates are at 1%. The interest income is very small as well. She will not have money to invest. At any given time they need about \$2.5 million to make payroll.

Cmmr. Sheldon asked if the \$26 million is sufficient.

Mrs. Frazier replied it is a good start. If they have to have a firm number, that is where she would like to start. There are a lot of unknowns out there.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated if they do not think it is a solid number, they need to know that now.

Mrs. Frazier stated it is what the current projected revenues are, but they have expenditures that are still unknown and it is difficult to assess.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated it would be a cut from \$31 million to \$26 million, which is approximately a 15% cut in revenue. By law they have to have a balanced budget by the end of the year. They may have to ask the taxpayers in the future to come forward and help. Do they want the wonderful things to be continued at the current levels.

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Cmmr. Sheldon commented he noticed in the Journal foreclosures seem to be up. In her tenure in the Treasurer's office they have homes on foreclosure sale.

Pat Swartos, Clerk, there are a lot of foreclosure lawsuits filed also. The banks are taking people's homes.

Bob Simmons, WSU Cooperative Extension Office Director, noted he is employed by WSU in a relationship with Mason County. WSU provides for 2.5 staff positions in Mason County. The County provides 1.5 staff people plus a half time Weed Board staff. As part of the cuts that need to happen in the county they feel they can reduce down to one staff person provided by the County to support all the programs that they have. His budget is typically almost \$1 million based on grants. They have 19 people employed and they are working for the community as well as the 255 trained volunteers that are served through WSU and work towards the community. A lot has been said about their 4-H programs where they have over 3,500 youth involved; 570 in club settings and many others through after school programs. This builds self-discipline and positive self worth and keeps the kids out of trouble and engaged in the community. They want to balance the budget and have a balanced community that provides meaningful opportunities for people to participate in the community. A lot of people that work through the programs support their small farms. Agriculture support, which WSU provides expertise, a staff, comes from a research station in Puyallup based on issues alerted to him. Examples are pest control for Christmas Trees and rural small farms to keep the economy growing. They have programs for small farmers which they believe over the past three years they have created 30 new operations in the county helping provide jobs and sustaining the economy keeping people living on the land. The water quality programs strive to educate homeowners and residents to best protect water quality. They oversee the Noxious Weed Control Program, which is mandated. They are looking at reducing some staff time and get grants to help fund that. Some are harmful to livestock and agricultural crops.

Constance Ibsen offered that when looking at the budget she felt they could centralize financial services even more. She is hoping they will look when a department comes in for a consultant to do work. She felt that sometimes departments could do that work themselves. They should not immediately think they need to hire a consultant. It also builds capacity within the department.

Elizabeth Williams, lives at Hunter Farms, and states she owes her life to the police department. She is a product of domestic violence as well as her 14-year-old daughter. The kids are our natural resources. As adults we need to show them how to run a government. If they cannot run a government, how will the kids learn from the adults. She felt that the community is going to pull together, the churches will pull together. She is volunteering at Hunters and because of that there has been no burglaries. She is trying to get propane and oil to keep her going. She stated that her payment is the peace in her heart. She thanked God for that.

Sheriff Salisbury noted that Chief Davenport came up to him and wanted to say something about law enforcement. He recognizes that if the Sheriff's office is cut in staff members, it will also affect the residents of the City of Shelton. He wanted to be supportive of law enforcement. He also recognized Chief Mike Evans from Squaxin Island Tribal Police. He has been an outstanding support of the Sheriff's office. Also former Sheriff Bob Shepherd was present but left. He wanted to let the Board know that he is very much in support of the budget. Sheriff Salisbury read a prepared statement. He noted that the Department has made progress. The community is now safer as a result of the efforts during the last years. He thanked the Commissioners for the support. The information that he is sharing is to provide answers to concerns the citizens brought to his staff two years ago. It will also cause you to think about what services you are willing to give up as a result of the budget cuts the Sheriff's office has made in recent weeks and future cuts that may be on the horizon. To date the Sheriff's office has given notice to: 1 Animal Control Officer; 1 Civil Service Paper Processor; 1 Evidence Technician. In addition, they have moved two deputies out of the general fund budget and are financing them with state money from the boating safety money and another position funded by grant money from the State of Washington for Sex Offender Tracking and Management. The last two positions may not be continuously funded. As a result of the cuts, five patrol deputy positions will not be used to perform these duties. It will take five patrol deputies off the streets of Mason County. A survey

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completed by the citizens of Mason County prioritized the voice concerns for elected officials to deal with. In an overwhelming response, the citizens said their first priority was public safety; increasing the numbers of deputies in Mason County. The second concern was dealing with the speeding vehicles and traffic problems. The third concern was doing something about the drug issues occurring around us. The Sheriff's office began by filling deputy positions that had been continuously vacant. On October 21, 2008, the last two deputies hired graduated from the basic law enforcement academy. This date marked the first time in nearly 30 years that the Mason County Sheriff's office has had a full time, nearly reaching a national standard of one deputy per 1,000 residents. One of the senior deputies pointed to the schedule and said in 31 years he has never seen a full schedule. Traffic issues are a huge issue in the county. Next he worked in cooperation with the Commissioners to fully fund a functional traffic unit to patrol the county roadways. He has a lot of statistics. Over the last year their traffic unit has contacted over 1,890 contacts in traffic; 630 citations written; responded to multiple fatalities and traffic collisions in the county which the state patrol will not be handling in 2009. They are making a difference like no other time in Mason County. Thanks to the traffic unit staff the county is safer because of their efforts. Tomorrow Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste will be at the Commissioners meeting recognizing the Mason County Sheriff's office, the Traffic unit and the Commissioners for increasing traffic safety. Mason County is in the sixth highest for traffic fatalities in the state of Washington. The solution to the drug problem is a Drug Unit. They formed a special operation group in 2008 with two full time Mason County with a secret weapon known as Konan, a narcotics canine dog. The special operation group made 110 arrests in 2008; seized \$625,000 of street value drugs; seized \$27,000 in cash. Most recently the special operations group worked in cooperation with the United States Marshal Service. The patrol division, the five regional sheriff's offices in Operation Falcon, which led to the arrest of approximately 100, wanted felons. One of the felons was a convicted murder located in the Tahuya area of Mason County. He felt that compared to other agency successes and Mason County is at the top of the class. For the first time in Mason County they are proactive on drugs and putting bad guys in jail.

He has been asked why Mason County needs a SWAT team. In 2008 the SWAT team removed seven barricaded armed suspects from residences and businesses in the county. It is higher than surrounding counties. The total cost for service was higher than surrounding counties. The Sheriff states he does not need a SWAT team, the residents need a SWAT team.

In 2008 they revived and re-established the Search and Rescue team. Mason County ranks 16th in the State of Washington for search and rescue events. He thanked Sgt. Severance for getting the program going. He has been asked how the one per 1,000 deputies compared with neighboring agencies. Mason County rates in the top six for overall crime rates in the State of Washington and first among counties its size. When viewing counties in similar size they often double the crime rates in both crime rates against person and property crimes. Since they have filled the deputy positions they have begun to slow the trends. It does seem necessary to have a full staff. Mason County is one a few counties that only has one city police agency to assist with responses throughout the county. He also recognized the tribal law enforcement staff, Squaxin Island Tribe and Skokomish Tribal Police for their assistance in responding off the reservations when there are emergency situations that the County does not have staff to handle.

North Mason county residents are dependent on the Sheriff's office. He is concerned with the bad economy. His concern is as the economy weakens the crime rate rises significantly. His deputies have been involved in four officer shootings this year. He is thankful they are safe. They are willing to stand between the residents and the bad guys. He thanked God for deputy sheriffs. He asked if they are willing to have fewer deputies serving the needs and keeping each family safe. Are there other areas of government people would be willing to sacrifice. He asked if residents are willing to accept less. The Mason County Sheriff's office will always do the best that they can with the resources provided. He thanked each person in the community for the work in supporting their office.

Cmmr. Sheldon commented that the Washington State Patrol is pulling out of Mason County and the county is one of the last counties in the State where the WSP handles accident investigation on county roads. Chief

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Batiste has been told by the legislature to not handle the accident investigation in the county. This is an example of the increased level of service that the county must provide. The training and all those costs the county must bear.

He also noted that citizens are looking at other revenue source enhancements that might provide specific services. They heard from citizens at Lake Cushman. This was a good example of that community stepping up with a contract. They will provide funds for partially funding a deputy. He asked what would be a response to the public if there were a proposal for a sales tax increase dedicated to law enforcement. The public responded overwhelmingly to the proposal for 1/10 of 1% for the 911 service. It passed with almost 70% of the public voting in favor to improve the 911 capabilities.

Sheriff Salisbury noted the 1/10 of 1% for communications for all the emergency services in Mason County. Their office was tasked for taking it to the public. The person that made it happen was Dean Byrd. That was previous to the time when the national economy started to sink. City officials have asked him and numerous people throughout the county to take that task on again go for 3/10 of 1% like some of the other places. It was not a task that was easy to go with 1/10 of 1%. The way things are right now with layoffs, he is not sure that people in the community will accept another tax at this time. It would be incredibly challenging to pass that. The margin that was passed on that tax was one of the highest margins of passing in Mason County for the 1/10 of 1% and he is not sure it would be the same.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated in Olympia they are facing a huge budget deficit. The dollar volume is 500 times the County's budget deficit. From experience, legislators say they would like to help the county, but you have not implemented all the tools (tax increases) that have been made available. Sometimes, it is difficult in Olympia to find help from the mother ship when legislators will say you have not asked the voters if they will subsidize to go deeper into their pocket for law enforcement specifically.

Sheriff Salisbury stated he met with the other 38 sheriffs and undersheriffs in the State of Washington. It is a daunting task and is very difficult to tell someone they cannot respond to an incident that a deputy is needed.

Cmmr. Gallagher stated that basically everyone is supporting the Sheriff. Pat Swartos is supporting the Clerk, They have not heard from the Assessor. They heard from the Treasurer. No one else is waving the flag. They will have to make some decisions. He thought about going for the sales tax. 4/10 is \$2 million; 2/10 is \$1 million; 1/10 is \$500,000. The problem is they have to balance the budget in 30 days. They cannot go to the polls until March or April. If they were successful at the polls they would not see the funds until July or August. How would the Sheriff's Department, knowing that things will be better, function. He asked that the Sheriff ask the citizens to walk the talk and support law enforcement. The only option is the sales tax option. They have to meet payroll every month and do not want to go on warrants. They have run out of options. One option, as mentioned by Cmmr. Sheldon, is the sales tax to keep the department functional to serve the citizens of the county they need to do that.

Cmmr. Salisbury responded that he was put on the spot with the 1/10 of 1% that nobody wanted to do it. He had asked for 3/10 of 1% at that time. No one wanted to do it. He walked across the street and was told that they were not going for the 1/10 of 1%. By the time he got across the street, the opinion was changed and the Commissioners decided to go for the 1/10 of 1%. He was tasked with doing that along with Chief Deputy Byrd. It was incredibly daunting with the things he has in his office already to keep up with. He suggested that some other people jump on board and try to spearhead that project and they would assist in that. For nearly four and a half months, he and Chief Deputy Byrd were working nearly 20 hours a day attending breakfasts early in the morning at service organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary Club or anyone that would listen to them talk. He took that task on and the fire chiefs jumped in and helped them out. He is laying off people and to ask for 3/10 of 1% would be a tough sell right now. If that task were to be placed on him, he would expect there would be some other people involved to lead that process.

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Cmmr. Gallagher if they go for 2/10 of 1% that would be \$1 million. A million dollars could go for court Clerk, Treasurer, etc. They would reap the sales tax money and the Current Expense money would not be used. It would be a joint effort. He suggested to get this thing rolling. It is not necessarily, the Sheriff doing the breakfasts. The other elected officials could do it or anybody else. It is our county, this county needs to act together.

Sheriff Salsibury stated that if someone would be willing to help bring that together, he would be more than willing to help with that. Right now he is very busy trying to keep things going.

Ione Siegler, Director of Budget & Finance, noted on the 4/10 of 1% and assuming the county has decided how they would like to use the money for. The County does not get to keep all the money; 40% would go to the City of Shelton. Right now they are trying to find out the sale of new automobiles is not covered and some rentals. It would be slightly less revenue than some of the others. Many years ago they passed with great majority 1/10 of 1% for juvenile detention facilities and jails. That has allowed the County to operate a juvenile detention facility for all these years. The voters have been very supportive through sales tax approvals of dispatch, jails, and juvenile detention facilities. All the money would not go to the county.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson noted that Initiative 695 dealt with the motor vehicle excise tax was overwhelming passed in the county. That was a lot of money that was used for law enforcement, transit, and public health issues. People asked why counties do not have reserves like they used to. Part of the reason has to do with the fact that kind of legislation has taken place over the years and passed. She respects that the voters have spoken on that issue. Initiative 747, which was the limitation of property taxes, also passed. In times when the operating budgets go up somewhere between 2.6 to 3.2% a year, the limitation on how much money they get is about 1% a year. It creates a continuing issue of how they support government. If you live in a \$200,000 house in Mason County you pay \$282/year for the general fund, which covers the mandated services. That is less than \$1 a day. It does not make their task any easier or more difficult. He was impressed with the idea of possibly charging for parking at MCRA to help make parks and recreation able to cover its own costs. She truly suffer for the people that she sees working in the building that are trying to do the jobs really require 2 – 3 people to do. They are trying to do them within their normal work hours. She genuinely appreciates the elected officials who have stepped forward and stated they would work with them to try and get through this. It is a tough time for everybody. There are general things about government today vs. government 15 years ago that are different. She concurred with Cmmr. Sheldon that the new code at the state is they will give you a “tool box.” You take your toolbox home figure out how to run government. She felt they have a very sincere look from the voters to 695 and 747 about how people feel about increasing taxes in the county. In this time their increasing responsibility is to give the public the very best value for every dollar. She does intend to ask the Sheriff where the research is. Generally speaking, historically, her research suggests that crime rates go down during tough economic times. Nationally, crime is down 20%. Crime in Washington State is down 25%. Calls for service have been down in the County for the last three years. That is not to suggest they do not continue to support the Sheriff's office at its current level. The idea of having staff visible does work. They will continue to struggle through this and figure out what is the exact bottom line number they need to reach.

Cmmr. Gallagher/Ring Erickson moved and seconded to close the public hearing for the 2009 Mason County budget. Motion carried unanimously. G-aye; RE-aye; S-aye.

4. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2008.

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Tim Sheldon, Chair

ATTEST:

Lynda Ring Erickson, Commissioner

Rebecca S. Rogers, Clerk of the Board

Ross Gallagher, Commissioner