

**BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES
Monday, November 2, 2009
Commission Chambers
411 North Fifth Street, Shelton WA 98584**

The 2010 budget workshop commenced at 1:05 p.m. Commissioners Sheldon, Ring Erickson and Gallagher were in attendance.

Clerk

Pat Swartos explained the purpose of the Superior Court Clerk's office and that her office keeps all court records. Ms. Swartos explained that for juvenile dependency hearings the parents must be notified. The notice must be published in the location where the parents reside. The Clerk's Association has asked the legislators to change the law so the petitioner (state) has to pay for the advertisement but it did not pass in 2009. Her office spent \$9,000 on these notifications to date in 2009. They were able to reduce the wording for the publication, which reduced the cost. The Clerk's Association intends to work with the legislators again in 2010 to have the cost paid by the petitioner. Ms. Swartos is requesting her 2010 budget proposal be increased for postage, advertising and the O&M extra help position. It is a request for an increase of approximately \$30,000, which includes \$20,000 from the Auditor's O&M Fund for the archive position. Ms. Swartos didn't budget the original unemployment amount at the \$1,900 per FTE. She did factor in those employees who will have step increases, per their union contracts.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson commented that she doesn't know if the Commissioners can increase her 2010 budget request. The budget needs to be balanced.

Cmmr. Sheldon pointed out there is still a \$996,000 gap in balancing the budget.

Step increases and longevity increases are to be budgeted, per union contracts.

Assessor

Dixie Smith explained the appraisal process. Her staff also attends Board of Equalization hearings. Her office determines the levy rates for all the taxing districts. They now work 5 8-hour days to make the office more efficient. Per the union contract, she has to offer 4 10-hour days in the spring. Her budget has been reduced by \$18,000 because of reduced staff.

In response to Cmmr. Sheldon's request for where Ms. Smith could make additional budget cuts, she stated it would be hard to do and still get the work done. They have reviewed what services could be cut and she noted that picking up new construction is important.

Ms. Smith pointed out that the number of BOE hearings has dramatically increased over the last two years. They take a lot of time for the BOE clerk and Assessor staff. She explained how the revaluation cycles are about a year behind the market.

Auditor

Karen Herr reviewed the responsibilities of her office, which include recording, elections, licensing and financial services. She had 16.5 FTE in 2008 and is now down to 12. Her staff has volunteered to take furlough, but that makes it difficult to keep up with the workload.

There was discussion about the office closure of the Auditor, Assessor and Treasurer. Ms. Herr noted there are licensing services available on Mt. View. Cmmr. Sheldon noted that the state closed 12 drivers license offices around the state and they instituted new procedures that make them much more efficient. They continue to look for innovative ways to provide the services. He has concerns with being closed during the busiest times which is noon and morning break time.

Ms. Herr stated using the Internet has helped but there are still complicated cases that need staff assistance. She believes they have streamlined as much as possible. They currently stagger lunches and that can create

long lines. She stated that at some point with reduced staff, you hit the wall and services have to be reduced. They do not want to close for lunch.

The Assessor, Treasurer and Auditor are requesting an extra help position in each office, at a cost of approximately \$80,000, so they don't have to close mid-day.

Cmmr. Gallagher commented that he believes elections are lighter this year.

Ms. Herr clarified that this is a big election year for her office, they have 73 candidates on the ballot. It has been more labor intensive. The State pays for their costs in even-year elections.

Cmmr. Sheldon asked for clarification on the unemployment reduction. It was budgeted at \$1899 per FTE; the reduction is going to ending fund balance.

There was discussion about WACO – Washington Association of County Officials. Non-Departmental pays the annual dues and the elected officials pay their individual association dues.

Vicki Kirkpatrick talked about the Public health unemployment reduction. She pointed out only 16.5% is paid by Current Expense; the remainder is paid by grants. She is willing to send back to Current Expense the portion that is budgeted in Current Expense. She will make a budget adjustment request for the Board's approval.

Extension Office

Bob Simmons summarized the Extension Office programs. Money is received from the state, federal and county. 13% of his salary is paid through the county. The county pays about 30% of Mo MacCracken's salary.

There was discussion about relocation of the Extension Office to Building 4. It would save time and it could then be part of the County computer network and be more convenient for the public. If sold, the money would go back to the Current Expense and it would put the building back on tax roles.

Theresa Ehrich asked about the Extension Office 2009 and 2010 revenues. There was discussion of the 2010 revenues for forestry education program.

Facilities & Grounds

Mike Rutter explained his department functions. He noted that if the Co-op Extension Office is relocated, it would save maintenance staff time for cleaning and maintenance. The existing Extension Office land includes the parking lot.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson asked Rick Brush to look at surplussing the Extension Office building.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson requested Mike Rutter and John Keates meet to look at any joint operations for Parks and Facilities & Grounds, such as staff and equipment, cooperative partnerships. She asked them to report back to the Board. She also noted there may be equipment at the fairgrounds that can be utilized.

There was discussion about the amount of staff time at the fairgrounds and Public Works. There was a facilities part time employee which is no longer in the budget and there is a ½ time at Public Works. Mr. Rutter spends time at Public Works daily. Public Works pays for the maintenance service in the indirect costs. Mr. Rutter noted that he plans to be available to the Port of Shelton as the county transitions out of the fair.

Parks & Trails Department

John Keates summarized the Parks & Trails Department. The budget request is 7% more in 2010 vs. 2009. Mr. Keates stated that in 2009 there was one-time money for the Truman Glick Park. He would have to reduce staff to lower his budget request.

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Brenda Hirschi asked why didn't Mr. Keates follow the guidance of following the June 2009 budget numbers. The Parks budget is \$40,000 higher. She noted that the extra help request is higher and many other budget lines are higher.

Mr. Keates explained that the extra help replaces some of the seasonal positions (Park Aides).

Cmmr. Sheldon questioned if that is allowed under the labor contract. Mr. Keates will discuss with TJ Martin.

Ms. Hirschi asked about boat launch fees. Mr. Keates stated they will ask for donations, rather than fees. It is difficult to estimate the amount of revenue that will bring in.

There was discussion about the parks budget. He budgeted money for sani cans, they received donations in 2009 and he hopes that is on going. Cmmr. Ring Erickson noted they are in the process of forming a committee to create a business plan for the parks department. Mr. Keates stated their focus will be to raise funds, i.e. through a parks foundation. He has met with state parks and they are looking for ways to work together. Cmmr. Ring Erickson asked if other counties have been able to make parks an enterprise fund. Mr. Keates stated that King County has a levy and they gave many parks away.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated he thinks the Parks budget needs to be reduced. He complimented John for his work but it is hard to sell the fact that the parks budget is increasing.

Patsy Robinson asked about a parking fee at MCRA. Mr. Keates stated those are the items that would be considered if more entrepreneurial. He noted the county hasn't traditionally charged parking fees or entrance fees.

Lisa Frazier asked about the fund for donations. Were the 2010 revenues adjusted?

Mr. Keates stated that would be for foundation fees.

Cmmr. Gallagher pointed out the City of Shelton is looking at creating a park district. Mr. Keates stated that is one of the things that will be looked at.

Karen Herr asked if the Commissioners are considering taking the Parks Department out of Current Expense.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated he doesn't see how that amount of revenue can be raised. They need to look at other innovative ways to raise money. The high usage parks are Sandhill and MCRA.

There was discussion about divesting the county of Foothills Park and other unused park property.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated she is meeting with staff on Tuesday to review the ER&R fund. They will review mileage rate, replacement costs and other options to see what the capacity is. It could be a transition to a smaller operating budget. They also need to looking at divesting the county of parks property.

Ms. Hirschi suggested the Commissioners request Parks to balance their 2010 request to their June 2009 budget.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson agreed that the Clerk and Parks 2010 budget request should come in at their June 2009 budget amount.

For the Budget & Finance Department, there is \$40,000 budgeted for risk management.

3/10 of 1%

Sheriff Salisbury stated he supports the 3/10 of 1% sales tax and he pointed out the tax would benefit other departments. He wants participation from other departments if they go forward with trying to get the sales

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tax passed. With the economy downturn, he doubts whether a tax can be passed, but he does support exploring it.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson pointed out the City of Shelton would also benefit yet they have a low percentage of population. She asked if the sheriff is interested in a discussion with the courts and the city. They need a sales tax projection.

Sheriff Salisbury stated he is willing to discuss it. The tax would help to stabilize the funding.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson noted that the 3/10 of 1% sales tax taps in to those who visit the county and not just property owners.

There was discussion about the process to place the sales tax option on the ballot. The Auditor estimated it could cost up to \$30,000 if it is the only ballot item.

The workshop was adjourned at approximately 3 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Zoren, Assistant to the Commissioners

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tim Sheldon
Chair

Ross Gallagher
Commissioner

Lynda Ring Erickson
Commissioner