

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITTTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
PUBLIC HEARING**

TUESDAY

4:00 P.M.

AUGUST 24, 2004

Board members present: Chairman Perry D. Huston and Vice-Chairman Bruce Coe.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board and approximately 10 members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

RAIL DISTRICT

COMMISSIONERS

At 4:00 p.m. **CHAIRMAN HUSTON** opened the public hearing to consider submission to the voters, a ballot issue creating a Kittitas County Rail District, pursuant to RCW 36.60.

MARY PITTIS representing a blue-ribbon committee of Kittitas County residents gave a brief history of the past three years of work that had been done to this point. She said the next step to re-establish passenger rail service was for the Board of County Commissioners to place the issue of creating a Rail District on the ballot. The creation of a Rail District is the only way that they would be able to accept grants and various other funding sources. She said by having a passenger rail service to Kittitas County, it would greatly benefit commuters, students at Central Washington University, and increase the number of tourists. **CHAIRMAN HUSTON** said it would cost approximately \$10,000 to place the issue on the ballot and questioned who would cover the expense.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: LOUIS MUSSO explained the level of taxing authority and said there was no current ability to impose a tax without the Board of County Commissioners, acting as Commissioners of the Rail District, and submitting it to the voters. He said Rail District levies are limited to one year, and said there was no intent at this time to request a tax. He felt they could eventually issue revenue bonds, without any recourse against the public, but that would be a long time from now. He said if it were voter approved, the Board of County Commissioners would act as the Commissioners of the Rail District, and there would be no separate Board or organization. **MARTIN KAATZ** questioned the costs associated with placing the item on the ballot. **MARGARET CONDIT** supported the concept and felt the voters should be given the opportunity to decide on a Rail District. She said she was unaware of any costs associated with placing the issue on the ballot. **DOROTHY STANLEY** spoke in favor of the proposed Rail District. She submitted a copy

of a funding breakdown for the "Skagit Stations" project. **COLLIN CONDIT** felt by establishing a Rail District, it could help speed up the restoration process for the old rail station/depot in Ellensburg. He said without having a Rail District, they are currently restricted from receiving a lot of funding assistance. **BILL HINKLE** endorsed the formation of a Rail District and explained how the proposal had been worked on for a very long time. He encouraged the County to help facilitate and be a part of the negotiations with Burlington Northern Railroad and Amtrack. He noted the County may need to assume the election costs. **ANDREW JOHNSON** said he needed more information on what would be accomplished by forming a Rail District. He questioned the benefit to the area and costs associated with it. **COUNCIL MEMBER BETH MARKER, REPRESENTING THE CITY OF CLE ELUM** said they were in favor of giving the voters the opportunity to decide on the formation of a Rail District. She said the City of Cle Elum had hoped to have a location for a station in Cle Elum and be a stopping point for passenger rail service. **THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.**

CHAIRMAN HUSTON felt he could not make an immediate decision, but would be in favor of continuing the hearing to allow for additional review. He asked what studies had been done, and to what end; what would the revenue source be for revenue bonds; how does a Rail District tie to revenue bonds; staffing activities; and the cost of placing it on the ballot.

COMMISSIONER COE said he was impressed with the time and resources that had been used to get the proposal to this stage. He felt the old station in Ellensburg was worth preserving and a passenger rail service to Kittitas County would be beneficial. He was in favor of additional time to review further information.

COMMISSIONER COE moved to continue the public hearing to Tuesday August 31, 2004, 2:30 p.m. in the Commissioner's Auditorium, to accept written comments, and to re-open the public testimony portion on that date. **CHAIRMAN HUSTON** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Julie A. Kjorsvik

Perry D. Huston, Chairman