

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES  
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON  
COMMISSIONERS' AUDITORIUM  
PUBLIC HEARING**

**THURSDAY**

**6:00 P.M.**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2006**

Board members present: Chairman David Bowen, Vice-chairman Alan Crankovich, and Commissioner Perry Huston.

Others present: Auditor Jerry Pettit; Sue Higginbotham, Assistant; Megan Calais, Deputy Clerk of the Board; and three members of the public.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**VOTING OPTIONS**

**AUDITOR**

Public Hearing was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Bowen opened the meeting by stating the purpose of this continued public hearing was to consider how future elections in Kittitas County should be conducted.

**AUDITOR JERRY PETTIT** presented a detailed Power Point presentation discussing means of conducting future elections in Kittitas County. He discussed both pros and cons of the three options to consider: Remain a polling place and absentee ballot county; consolidate existing polling places into regional vote centers; and become a vote-by-mail county.

**AUDITOR PETTIT** stated there have been three surveys for the public to share their preference in voting options: Daily Record Online, KXLE Radio Homepage, and Kittitas County Auditor's Homepage. A spreadsheet was provided with the results of the three surveys. Additionally, two public forums were held (one the upper county courthouse and one in the lower county) to receive public concerns and feedback on the current voting systems where a total of 8 members of the public attended. Several emails were received stating their preference of going to a vote-by-mail system.

**VICE-CHAIRMAN ALAN CRANKOVICH** proposed the question of voter signature verification. Auditor Pettit responded by stating that Kittitas County employees would have the opportunity to take a course in signature verification, and added that county employees used more scrutiny when examining signatures than the trainers themselves.

Public comment

**MRS. VIRGINIA HASSAGEN**, shared that she had worked on at the polls for several years. She enjoys the hometown feel and wants to keep the big business, commercialized feel out of our elections. She shared how going to the polls to vote had made significant impact on people, and if we went to a vote-by-mail system then the act of voting would not feel as significant. Vote by mail may be less expensive at the cost of losing contact with the community.

**MRS. MOLLY CRISTEN**, Kittitas, stated that voting is a community event.

**MR. RICHARD JOHNSON** shared that he likes the experience of the polling places. Vote by mail is not as personal, even though it may be cheaper. The vote by mail option is available for those who prefer the option. He would be favorable to condensing to two main polling sites.

No other public comments were made.

**CHAIRMAN DAVID BOWED** expressed the desire to keep the public testimony open for further gathering of comments.

Chairman Bowen inquired about the school district's input.

**AUDITOR PETTIT** shared he sent letters to the school officials in December to consider vote-by-mail for the spring elections. None wanted to go vote by mail. He had one discussion with a school official about going to a vote-by-mail system whose response was a firm no vote-by-mail. Statistically voters submit positive votes if in person rather than voting by mail.

**AUDITOR PETTIT** provided a spreadsheet outlining elections costs. The final numbers are every conservative on estimates. Chairman Bowen shared he had found similar results when he did the research during his time as the County Auditor.

Currently 60% of Kittitas County residents vote by mail, and of the 40% remaining voters only 10% come to the polls as shared on spreadsheet....

**VICE-CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH** stated his preference in going to the polls to vote. Polling places incur higher error ratios than solely vote by mail. He expressed his desire to have additional time to consider this issue.

**COMMISSIONER HUSTON** shared his preference to keep polling places, as the ritual of casting a vote is an important act. He feels that we need a (one) day in our society that we exercise our most important constitutional right.

Chairman David Bowen moved to continue the public hearing to Tuesday, March 7, 2006, at 4:00 p.m., at the Commissioners' Auditorium, Room 109, Kittitas County Courthouse, for further consideration of the proposed voting options and to keep the record open for public comment. Vice-chairman Alan Crankovich seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Chairman David Bowen moved to adjourn the public hearing at 6:55 p.m. Vice-chairman Alan Crankovich seconded. Motion Carried.

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD**

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

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Megan J. Calais

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David B. Bowen, Chairman