

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITTTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
UPPER KITTTITAS COUNTY DISTRICT COURT
CLE ELUM, WASHINGTON
SPECIAL MEETING**

TUESDAY

6:00 P.M.

JULY 24, 2007

Board members present: Chairman Alan Crankovich; Vice-Chairman David Bowen; Commissioner Mark McClain.

Others: Mandy Robinson, Deputy Clerk of the Board; Gene Dana, Sheriff; Jerry Pettit, County Auditor; William Holmes, Probation Services Director; Clayton Myers, Undersheriff; Mike Johnston, Daily Record Reporter; Jim Fossett, Northern Kittitas County Tribune; Joyce Julsrud, Clerk; and seventeen members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COMMISSIONERS

At approximately 6:00 p.m. **CHAIRMAN CRANKOVICH** opened a public hearing to consider a request from the Citizens Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Board of County Commissioners place a ballot proposition on the November 6, 2007 General Election, to increase the County sales tax by three tenths of 1% as authorized by RCW 82.14.450 to fund Kittitas County and the incorporated cities of Kittitas County's criminal justice purposes.

DJ HALEY, COMMITTEE MEMBER of the Citizen's Advisory Committee introduced himself and gave a brief overview and history of how they came up with the recommendations of the Committee and how they have worked to compile the information being presented. Mr. Haley indicated that the only way the Committee would support this proposition is if there was a sunset clause. He indicated he would be available to answer any questions the Commissioners may have, and thanked them for the opportunity to produce the proposal.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: **DICK SHELLEY** expressed his concerns with the limit of law enforcement in the Upper County, and felt the law enforcement that is there are generally all alone and come in to contact with very dangerous situations. He felt it would be lifting a huge target off the county's back to get multiple officers on shift at all times. He indicated that the response time can leave officers in jeopardy for long periods of time and that becomes a huge liability to the County. He indicated that if this proposition passes, the Upper County Law Enforcement would receive three new positions (two law enforcement and one animal control).

HOWARD BRIGGS expressed his understanding of the need for more law enforcement. He explained that with the resources we have are only "reactive" and indicated that they need to be "proactive". He gave his support for the increase of 3/10th of 1% sales tax. He indicated that people are not aware what a large area the Sheriff's Office Deputy's are responsible for and the staff is very limited with the expectation to cover an area from Hyak to Vantage and everywhere in-between. He explained it took him awhile to realize how important this tax is, but when he considered the growth in our County it all made sense.

GENE DANA, SHERIFF expressed his appreciation to the committee for all their hard work and time they put into the final product before the Commissioners for consideration today. He reviewed the significant increases in costs they have been experiencing for Kittcom Dispatch and hopes this will help us get ahead of the game. He indicated that the current average response time for the Sheriff's Deputies is twenty eight minutes.

BETH MARKER, expressed her thoughts on the document before the Commissioners and felt the Committee did a good job on it. She indicated that she took a great deal of time to go over the extensive report and paid special attention to the costs. She indicated it was a real eye opener. She reviewed personal suggestions on ways to do other increases and indicated she was thrilled to see the effort in the Juvenile Department for non-repeat offenders. She expressed her frustration over how the portions were delegated to the different law agencies and stated that the Upper County has had a forty two percent call increase over the past year. She indicated that changes need to be made at a legislative level. She felt it would better serve the Law Enforcement Agencies if the percentages were based on call volume and she related that to the way Judges salaries are figured off their case load, and not population.

TOM DAVDEN, expressed concerns with all the sales tax increases.

SCOTT FERGESON, CLE ELUM / ROSLYN CHIEF OF POLICE thanked the citizen committee for their efforts, he indicated that they are currently in a crisis situation and when the Iman era happened they had to cut a deputy position and they have never re-filled that position. He indicated that they are a seven deputy department all our bookings have doubled and they lost animal control in 1999. He reviewed the animal trouble that the Upper County faces every day, and explained it is crucial to get that position back.

JIM IDAMILLER, explained that he had come to the County a very long time ago and felt that nothing has changed except we are in more trouble. He explained that the changes that have taken place are in

population and we continue to grow but law enforcement does not. He spoke in support of getting the proposal on the ballot and "call a spade a spade" taxpayers need to understand this is for "Boots on the Street". He stated it is crucial to get expenses out in the open.

DARREN HOGAN, spoke in support of impact fees. He felt if we had them we would not have money in the general fund for officers.

DEDIRE LINK, indicated that she was in agreement with Ms. Marker in being proactive and also with her comments regarding other funding sources.

DJ HAYLEY, explained that the 60%/40% distribution of funds was fair. He indicated that the County has more responsibility than the Cle Elum Police Department, as they cover a larger area. He expressed his understanding of what it's like to be the only deputy and expressed his frustration with the public not understanding why we need more law officers.

JIM BOYLE, spoke in support of the tax. He felt that any law abiding citizen would support this issue, but indicated this should have been addressed five years ago. **THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL PUBLIC REQUESTING TO TESTIFY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.**

COMMISSIONER BOWEN indicated that he was aware of the need to have these issues addressed at the state level. He explained that he has brought it up to the legislative members he is in contact with. He explained that the feedback he has received regarding the sales tax funds is that they are currently tied up in contracted obligations. He also explained his struggle with the current Medicare expenses and indicated that they are currently going up ten to twenty percent a year. He referenced the time period of 2001-2003 where the County quit filling positions and indicated that they are trying to fill what was vacated. He touched on the four things they are able to use impact fees for and indicated that increasing law enforcement is not one of them.

COMMISSIONER CRANKOVICH stated that they are looking at all options. He indicated that I-695 created a lot of hardships for the County and they are working hard at finally bringing the staffing levels back up to what they were prior to 2001. **COMMISSIONER BOWEN** moved to continue the hearing to July 25, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. at the Kittitas Valley Event Center (Teaway Hall), noting the record would remain open. **COMMISSIONER McCLAIN** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Mandy Robinson

Alan Crankovich, Chairman