COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
PUBLIC HEARING

TUESDAY 4:00 P.M. OCTOBER 12, 2004

Board members present: Chairman Perry D. Huston, Vice-Chairman Bruce Coe and Commissioner Max A. Golladay.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; David Bowen, Auditor; Greg Zempel, Prosecutor; William Holmes, Probation Services Director and approximately 12 members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING ELECTED OFFICIAL SALARIES COMMISSIONERS

At 4:00 p.m. CHAIRMAN HUSTON opened the public hearing to consider amendments to Resolution No. 2004-84, In the Matter of Setting Salaries for Elected Officials, more specifically, the salaries for Kittitas County Commissioner Districts One and Two.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON gave an overhead presentation (EXHIBIT 1). He explained that Resolution No. 94-21 created automatic wage increases for all elected officials (with the exception of Judges since they are set by the State). Resolution No. 2000-30 cancelled the automatic increases and established a schedule and process for reviewing elected official salaries. He said salaries were to be established prior to candidates filing for the upcoming 4-year term (by July 1st), with the exception of Commissioner Districts 1 and 2 which were mid term. He reviewed the elected official salaries for the terms beginning January 1, 2003 and their respective salary increases.

COMMISSIONER GOLLADAY acknowledged that the Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing and approved Resolution No. 2004-84, setting County Commissioner District 1 and 2 salaries, but said it was done after the July 1st deadline, which was set forth in a previous Resolution. COMMISSIONER COE questioned if the deadline of July 1st was statutory or policy language? CHAIRMAN HUSTON said the July 1st deadline was a local rule set out by Resolution, which was policy, and not set forth by Ordinance. He said it was the intent of the Resolution to have elected officials salaries set prior to the filing date for candidates. He apologized for missing the July 1st deadline, but noted he was set on making sure the salaries were set prior to any election filings.
THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: HELEN BURROWS spoke against the increase in Commissioner's salaries and claimed they were out of proportion. She felt elected officials should receive the same percentage of salary increases, as all other employees that work for the County. SUE HAMMOND said she was confused with the numbers and had been seeking information from the County's Human Resources Department. She had been trying to put it all into perspective and with the numbers given out by the Commissioners and those in the newspaper and said they did not match no matter how many different ways she tried to calculate them. She felt the large increases in the Commissioner's salaries were not justified with all of the budget cuts that had been going on within the County. GREG ZEMPEL, COUNTY PROSECUTOR reviewed the process that had been put in place for reviewing county salaries, including the six other counties they have used as comparables and reviewed by a compensation committee. He reviewed the allowed salary increases for County employees, which are based on annual performance evaluations and their respective ratings, therefore justifying a percentage increase. He said elected officials are not eligible for annual increases and noted they are locked into their salaries until they are reviewed by the Board of County Commissioners before the next four year term is up. He felt the numbers submitted for the salaries were sufficient and the Board had followed the County process. THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.

COMMISSIONER GOLLADAY moved to repeal Resolution No. 2004-84, In the Matter of Setting Salaries for Elected Officials, due to not meeting the July 1st deadline, and revert the salaries of Commissioner District One and Two to $47,556.00 annually. COMMISSIONER COE seconded.

COMMISSIONER COE acknowledged the duties of a County Commissioner had significantly increased in the past years, and they were required to have vast knowledge in areas of land use, public health and safety, and budget. He felt the decision made by the Board increasing the salaries in Resolution No. 2004-84 was defensible, but recognized the July 1st deadline had not been met. He explained that since the electing filing deadline and the primary election had already passed, the only recourse was to allow the salaries to go back to the amount of $47,556.00. He said he was not interested in adjusting an elected official’s salary in the middle of an election process, and therefore he must honor the validity of the process previously set out by the Board of County Commissioners.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON explained the history, approach of compensation and built in growth factor for elected officials. He said once positions in the County have been found out of line, they try to address them, and said he could not support the motion because it
would go against the years of hard work creating a process that had been set out and supported by the County. He reiterated the intent of the July 1st deadline, which was to establish elected officials salaries prior to an election filing period. He felt the Board did comply with the process, while recognizing they were only two weeks past July 1st deadline. He said mistakes have happened in the past when dates had not been met, and the Board has always strived to fix the problem, while making sure the procedural requirements fit at the end result.

COMMISSIONER COE suggested bringing District One and Two in line with Commissioner District Three.

Motion to repeal Resolution No. 2004-84 was approved 2-1. (Chairman Huston voted against the motion).

CHAIRMAN HUSTON moved to direct staff to present a Resolution to bring County Commissioner Districts One and Two salaries equivalent to Commissioner District Three, beginning January 1, 2005. Motion died due to a lack of a second.

Meeting adjourned at 4:43 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD
KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Julie A. Kjorsvik

Perry D. Huston, Chairman