

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
KITTITAS VALLEY EVENT CENTER
TEANAWAY HALL
SPECIAL MEETING**

WEDNESDAY

6:00 P.M.

NOVEMBER 30, 2011

Board members present: Chairman Paul Jewell; Vice-Chairman Alan Crankovich and Commissioner Obie O'Brien.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; Dan Valoff, Staff Planner; Neil Caulkins, Deputy Prosecutor; Anna Nelson, Planning Consultant and approximately 20 members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

CDS

CHAIRMAN JEWELL opened the public hearing to consider a Voluntary Stewardship Program created by the Legislature through ESHB 1886.

ANNA NELSON, PLANNING CONSULTANT presented a Staff Report and reviewed the intent of the Voluntary Stewardship Program and steps the County needs to take before deciding whether to opt-in to the program or continue under the Growth Management Act, Critical Areas. She indicated that if the Board decided to opt-in to the program, there would be no further action to take until funding becomes available from the State. She said staff feels the program would be beneficial by protecting the critical areas where agriculture activities are conducted; it would maintain and improve long-term viability of agriculture; reduce the conversion of farmland to other uses, as well as fostering cooperation among County, tribal, environmental and agriculture interests. She said they recommend the County opt-in for the Upper Yakima watershed and the Alkali-Squilchuck watershed.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: JACK FIELD, REPRESENTING THE WASHINGTON CATTLEMAN'S ASSOCIATION asked for further clarification on the process to update the County's Critical Area Ordinance. He indicated there are currently no State dollars available to fund the program and the public should be aware of that. **FRITZ GLOVER** felt it was a great proposal and highly endorsed the program, especially since it was voluntary. He felt there was very little chance of litigation with the Voluntary Stewardship Program. **MONICA HUNT** expressed concerns of protecting land owner's rights and what type of financial assurances would there be to property owners. **BILL WOODS** commended the Board of Commissioners for considering the program and felt issues would be better managed locally. He recommended approval of the program and encouraged the County to designate the Kittitas County Conservation District to manage it. **MARGE BRANDSRUD** questioned what would happen if the County decided to opt-in and funding was not available. She asked if the agriculture and critical lands would be protected while waiting to see if funding becomes available. **BOB SCHNEBLY** said he liked the voluntary program because it can protect existing agriculture activities and urged the Board to opt-in to the program. **BILL BARSHAW** said he was a member of the Kittitas Valley Farm Bureau and expressed the importance and value of agriculture in the County. He recommended opting-in to the Voluntary Stewardship Program. **DON JACOBS** representing his family said it was frustrating to have outside agencies come in and bring litigation to the County, where the proposed program would allow for local control and encouraged the Board to opt-in to the program. **ROB ACHESON** felt the program would be a benefit to the County and hoped the litigation would

lessen. He also encouraged the Kittitas County Conservation District to manage the voluntary program. **VINCE TOMASSO** questioned how difficult it would be to participate in the program and whether it was an extensive application process. **KAREN POULSEN** felt having a voluntary program would be better than being forced to participate. She questioned if it was an opt-in plan, would the State still be required to approve the local plan, including the Growth Management Hearings Board. She asked if the County could opt-back out of the plan if they chose to. **KAREN VANDERGRAAF-ERICKSON** said their family fully supported the voluntary program. **BRIAN WILLIAMS** expressed concerns of the legislative process and felt it was a very complicated Bill with a very quick timeline. He questioned why the Board would not challenge the rapid-fire process. **RON FRASIER** said he felt the Voluntary Stewardship Program was a great program. **THERE BEING NO OTHERS REQUESTING TO TESTFY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.**

CHAIRMAN JEWELL asked about the exemption and what would happen if the County decided to not opt-in to the program. **MS. NELSON** noted how the County's Critical Areas Ordinance has not been updated since 1994, and reviewed possible impacts to property owners if the County did not opt-in to the program, which could result in being more restrictive and include further appeals to the Growth Management Hearings Board. She said if the County decided to opt-in, there is a 3 year period for the State to provide funding to the County, and if they don't provide it within that time period, they would revert back to the Growth Management Act. She said there are periods of time to which the County could choose to opt-out of the program once funding has been received, at the 3, 5 and 8 year window. She addressed the approval process that includes a work group, which the County would be a part of, where plans would be developed and submitted to a technical group at the State level for their consideration. **MS. NELSON** said there was nothing in the Bill that says the State will provide full funding, as there is only an estimate of how much the program will cost to manage. She said the State hopes the cost estimate would be enough to cover it, but there could potentially be some unanticipated costs associated however, it is difficult to tell at this time. **COMMISSIONER CRANKOVICH** asked if funding was not available within the three year period, should the County take preliminary measures to update the Critical Areas Ordinance. **MS. NELSON** said she would be hesitant for the County to touch the agriculture lands during the waiting period, in order to not expose it to appeal. **COMMISSIONER O'BRIEN** noted there was a lot of land not located in the particular watersheds.

ORDINANCE 2011-012

VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

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COMMISSIONER CRANKOVICH moved to approve Ordinance No. 2011-012, Electing to Participate in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (RCW 36.70A.705). **COMMISSIONER O'BRIEN** seconded.

COMMISSIONER CRANKOVICH said he would support the program since it was a voluntary and having an element of local control is beneficial to the County. **COMMISSIONER O'BRIEN** felt it was an opportunity to do things voluntarily and was comfortable with the potential of opting out, if needed. **CHAIRMAN JEWELL** spoke of his support to opt-in to the program, stating the alternative could be much worse. He felt it provides alternatives for property owners and noted the County could opt-out if it doesn't work.

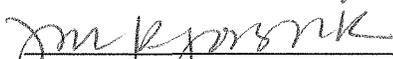
Motion carried 3-0.

CHAIRMAN JEWELL suggested staff to prepare open house presentations in various areas of the County to get the public up to speed on the voluntary program. **MS. NELSON** suggested waiting until January or February so they can bring more information forward on what to bring to the work plan and they may have additional news by then on potential funding from the State.

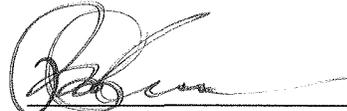
The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Julie Kjorsvik



Paul Jewell, Chairman