

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITTTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
AUDITORIUM
SPECIAL MEETING**

TUESDAY

2:00 P.M.

DECEMBER 2, 2025

Board members present: Chairman Laura Osiadacz; Vice-Chairman Cory Wright & Commissioner Brett Wachsmith.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; Mandy Buchholz, Office Administrator; Sarah Keith, Superior Court Administrator; Kasey Knutson, Human Services Manager; Candi Blackford, Chief Administrator; Ed Buntin, Jail Lieutenant; Mark Larson, Public Health Officer; Paul Sander, Lower District Court Judge; Erin Moore, Deputy Public Health Director; Doug Fessler, IT Director; Stephanie Hartung, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor; Emma Madland, Human Services Admin. Specialist; Emily Brown, Treatment Court Coordinator; and approximately 45 members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

1/10TH OF 1% TAX FUNDING

PUBLIC HEALTH

At 2:00 p.m. **CHAIRMAN OSIADACZ** opened a Public Hearing to consider 1/10th of 1% Tax Funding for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders programs and services in Kittitas County, to receive comments on the use of 1/10th MH and SUD funding, then deny, approve or continue the hearing to address the sunset clause for funding.

KASEY KNUTSON, HUMAN SERVICES MANAGER, reviewed a Staff Report and provided information on the history of the tax, which was implemented in 2021, with a sunset clause for 2027. She said the sunset clause was to allow funding of programs, time to gather data, and to show results of impacts to the community. **JUDGE PAUL SANDER, LOWER DISTRICT COURT**, reviewed the therapeutic courts' success from receiving funds as well as data resulting from the programs since the tax was implemented. **ED BUNTIN, LIEUTENANT**, reviewed some of the programs and successes at the Jail due to the funding they've received. He noted an award they recently received from the Washington Association of Counties which was based on impacts from the projects. He indicated they are continuing to help change lives before the person gets out of jail and he recommend continuing the tax. **MICHELLE GURTNER, CWU COMMUNITY CLINIC**, provided information on the benefits of their program, along with data and the successes. She said it's been an excellent experience and everyone's thankful to be able to provide the services to our community. **DAWN BASS** provided information about the youth programs and their successes. She said the free programs have offered teens to have continued growth as the needs are rising. She encouraged the Board to continue the tax and to remove the sunset clause. **SHASTA MARIEN** explained how she's been impacted from the programs in the Upper County and is now

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going back as an adult to help others. She encouraged the Board to remove the sunset clause and continue the tax for the programs offered to those in our community. **DR. MARK LARSON, PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER**, said he sees many mental health issues on a regular basis and the importance of being able to address the problems as early on as possible. He encouraged the Board to remove the sunset clause and continue the tax to allow continued help for various services.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: TROY TORNOW, ELLENSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, thanked the Board for the funding they've received and how it's made a difference. He pledged to continue to meet the intent of the funding and the importance of how it allows them to assist students. **LORI NEVIN, SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR**, provided examples of how the tax dollars have been an extreme value to the Upper County Senior Center and urged the Board to continue the sales tax. **KEN WADE, ELLENSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT CHIEF**, shared the successes their department has seen due to the funding they've received and described the various programs they've been able to implement. **DOUG FESSLER, 1/10TH BOARD MEMBER**, felt the sunset clause should be removed and their Board has adequate safeguards for spending the funds. **LAREE BERN, COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH**, explained how their Crisis Case Managers are extremely important to the hospital and encouraged the Board to remove the sunset clause as it's vital to those serving our community. **CHARLIE MCKINNEY, REPRESENTING KITTITAS COUNTY NAMI**, spoke in favor of continuing the tax to how it's been a significant support of various needs throughout our community. **ANN LEICHLITER, BOYS & GIRLS CLUB** spoke in support of the sales tax and highlighted what's at stake due if the funding was not continued. She said the results are clear in how it's assisted our community. **SUSAN GRINDLE, CEO HOPESOURCE**, said they were thankful for the grant funding received for the Behavioral Health Impact program and how many people it's helped throughout the County. **DEBBIE BOGART** spoke in favor of the programs due to the funding and asked the Board to continue the tax. **RON GINGLAN** talked about the importance of the funding to allow the community to bring in resources for everyone. He said it's allowed for greater education and has reduced the stigma. **HEIDI PEREZ, CWU PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT** explained how the funding has allowed for the clinic to be launched and expanded services, provided a Behavioral Health Undergraduate degree, a Mental Health Counseling Graduate program, and they look forward to expanding their services. **LIZ RITZENTHOLAR** explained how her teen's benefited from programs and how they've had a direct link with Mental Health issues. She urged the Board to remove the sunset clause and to allow the funding to continue supporting those throughout the community. **KITTITAS VALLEY FIRE & RESCUE CHIEF GOLDSMITH** explained the impacts due to Mental Health issues they see in their day-to-day business. He said since the County's implementation of the sales tax and success, their model is being used in other counties. He recognized how taxes are not a popular thing with the public, the benefits to the community have

been significant. **CATHERINE CROWLEY, 1/10TH BOARD MEMBER,** attested to the power of programs and the positive impacts to the Emergency Room staff, Courts, and the Jail, where people are entering systems in crisis. She encouraged the Board to continue the tax for the successful programs. **THERE BEING NO OTHERS REQUESTING TO TESTIFY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.**

VICE-CHAIRMAN WRIGHT moved to remove the sunset clause and to direct Staff to prepare enabling documents. **COMMISSIONER WACHSMITH** seconded.

COMMISSIONER WACHSMITH expressed his appreciation for everyone's comments. He said he's been able to see the impacts from how the funds have been utilized and was in support of removing the sunset clause.

VICE-CHAIRMAN WRIGHT explained how the sunset clause was a way to test the waters and be able to produce results. He said he was pleased with the amount of work that's taking place, and recognized the work is not stopping and would continue to let people know there are good things happening as results of the funding.

CHAIRMAN OSIADACZ thanked everyone for presenting and appreciated the great work that's being done in the community. She said she couldn't support the process and was clear at the last public hearing and would like a comprehensive survey done where citizens could stand on the issue with all the facts presented. She said there was not enough time to accomplish that at this time, but due to the lack of information and process it's against her values to subject citizens to a tax without their voice.

Motion carried 2-1 (Chairman Osiadacz voted against the motion).

The meeting was concluded at 3:31 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD


Julie Kjorsvik

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**


Laura Osiadacz, Chairman