

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, July 2, 1985

Flag Salute

10:00 a.m. Work Session - Septage Disposal.

3:00 p.m. Public Hearing - Permit Center Fees.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, July 2, 1985, with Commissioners Vaux, Walberg and Rohrer present.

PUBLIC HEARING - PERMIT CENTER FEES.

Megan Cheney, on behalf of Jerry McInturff, Skagit County Auditor and Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board, read the Notice of Public Hearing, as published in the Skagit Valley Herald on June 21, 1985.

Steve Wood, Assistant Director of the Permit Center, read a memo to the Board outlining the Permit Center's status. He noted that when the Permit Center was created in 1979, it was staffed with 13 employees. It was created with the idea that it would be supported by permit fees received. In January of 1983, the number of employees of the Permit Center was reduced to 7 staff members. In February of 1985, one additional Environmental Health Specialist, brought the total number of Permit Center employees to 8.

Mr. Wood pointed out that the Permit Center is currently using the 1982 Uniform Building Code (UBC), however fees are charged according to the 1976 UBC fee schedule.

Mr. Wood offered the following three options:

1. Take no action at this time, which would necessitate a reduction of staff. Cutting staff levels would significantly decrease the public service by reducing the Building Section to one staff member.
2. Adopt a modified version of the 1982 fee schedule similar to those of Mount Vernon and Anacortes. The 37 percent increase in building permit and plan check fees would balance the budget for the last 6 months of 1985, however, it would not make up for the deficit accumulated during the first 6 months of 1985.
3. Adopt the 1982 fee schedule. This 70 percent increase would bring the County fee schedule to the same level as most of the

neighboring jurisdictions and would be a more accurate depiction of the cost of providing services in today's economy.

In answer to a question from Chairman Vaux, Mr. Wood stated that this increase would affect only building permit and plan check fees.

Max Alaways wanted to know the payroll costs associated with the Permit Center.

Mr. Wood stated that the Permit Center employs 8 people presently, but he did not know off hand the average salary of those 8 staff members.

Mr. Alaways felt the increase in building permit fees would not be enough revenue to meet the Permit Center's deficit.

Al Dennis asked how the Permit Center expenses are calculated.

Mr. Wood explained that only direct costs are incorporated in the expenses. Costs such as a percentage of the Courthouse building cost and custodial service cost, are not included.

Ken Slater, of Mount Vernon, noted that permit fees for a 1,575 square foot house in the County currently total \$1,008. He pointed out that the proposed increase would result in a total cost of up to \$1,258. Mr. Slater suggested the Permit Center reduce staff to cut costs.

Jim Koetje, of Mount Vernon, asked if the increase would cover expenses for this year and possibly provide a surplus for next year. He asked if the fees would be lowered next year if this situation arose.

Mr. Wood noted that fees could possibly be lowered if revenues exceeded expenses.

Leif Burkland, of Mount Vernon, stated that America was not built by people walking around with a back pocket full of permits.

Mr. Slater itemized the component costs of permits for a 1,575 square foot house in Skagit County.

Hazel Lindstrom, of Burlington, read a letter to the Board stating her opinion that people should not be charged for using their own land. She felt such permits constituted illegal taxation because they are charged to only a few. She felt the voters should be able to vote for or against the concept of a Permit Center, and she personally favored disbanding the Permit Center.

Brian McGuinness, Executive Director of the Skagit-Island Counties Builders Association, read a letter supporting a modified increase of fees and a graduated additional increase if necessary in the future. He felt the County government, however, should not make a profit on the receipt of fees.

Mr. Alaways felt the Permit Center sometimes approves buildings that are defective in one way or another.

Mr. Dennis said he wasn't sure the Permit Center had to be self supporting. He asked why the Permit Center could not receive additional funds from another source.

Mr. Slater noted that he just took a 20 percent pay cut. He pointed out that land values are going down, yet fees are going up.

Clair Brooks, of Alger, stated that he was formerly a general contractor. He felt the individuals do not have a contract with the County for anything related to their land.

Mr. Dennis asked if the Permit Center expects the issuance of building permits to increase in the summer.

Mr. Wood noted that the issuance of building permits peaks in May.

Mr. Alaways felt the issue of salaries is the main issue.

Mr. Dennis suggested the Permit Center receive the necessary funding from the General Fund in this time of need, since several years ago the Permit Center contributed a large sum of extra revenue to the General Fund.

Mr. Brooks expressed additional opposition to the increase of fees.

Dave Patterson, of Mount Vernon, asked if the Permit Center could be assisted by the General Fund or if it had to be self-supporting.

Chairman Vaux stated that the Permit Center was established with the idea that it could and would be self-supporting.

Dero Forslund, of Rockport, felt the Commissioners should encourage construction in Skagit County at this time, rather than control and restrict construction. He felt taxing people to improve their property was wrong.

Mr. Alaways asked the Board to define their duties as Commissioners.

Commissioner Walberg stated that he uses the laws of the State of Washington and the sentiments of the people to carry out the duties of a Skagit County Commissioner.

Mr. Alaways suggested the members of the Board read the R.C.W.s under "Duties of a County Commissioner."

Mr. Patterson felt the Board should not resort to an increase in fees just to cover this year alone. He suggested waiting a while, if there is another means to get through this year, since an increase may not be needed next year.

Mr. McGuiness stated that the Permit Center is there to ensure that buildings are constructed to be safe for the public. He again stated that they support an increase only to cover expenses.

Mrs. Lindstrom said her motto has always been "Buyer Beware."

Mr. Koetje concurred with Mr. McGuiness.

As there were no additional comments, Commissioner Rohrer motioned to close the public hearing. Commissioner Walberg seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Commissioner Rohrer stated that he was against increasing the fees at this time because he hadn't heard sufficient proof of a need to increase.

Chairman Vaux stated that he was also against the increase at this time. He felt the time to raise fees is when times are good, rather than when economic times are troubled. He concurred with Mr. Forslund that the Board of Commissioners should encourage growth, rather than discourage growth.

Commissioner Walberg also concurred with Mr. Forslund. He felt, however, that a fee increase of some sort to keep the Permit Center self-supporting would be one option. Another option would be to transfer needed funds from the General Fund to cover the deficit of the Permit Center.

Chairman Vaux stated that he saw a third option also possible: reduction of staff. He suggested that the manpower of the Permit Center should respond to the lack of income.

Commissioner Rohrer motioned to refrain from increasing the Permit Center building fees at this time, while trying to work out a solution to the problem at hand. Chairman Vaux seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

#### MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

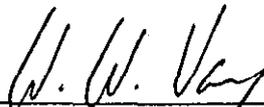
Robert Taylor, Administrative Officer, presented the following miscellaneous items:

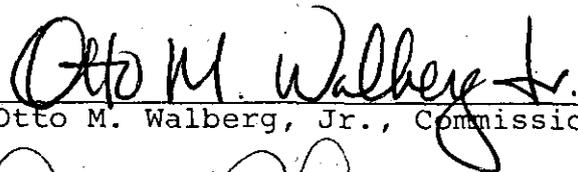
1. In accordance with action previously taken, the Board approved for signature the resolution approving and adopting the Six Year Road Program for 1986 through 1991. (Resolution #10540)
2. Commissioner Rohrer motioned to approve Warrants #1918 through #2312 in the amount of \$511,592.09. Commissioner Walberg seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously. (P-6)
3. Commissioner Rohrer motioned to approve Warrants #38040 through #38093 in the amount of \$76,084.53. Commissioner Walberg seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously. (R-23)

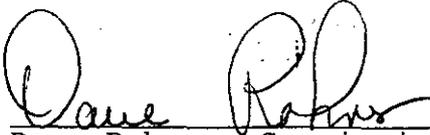
ADJOURNMENT

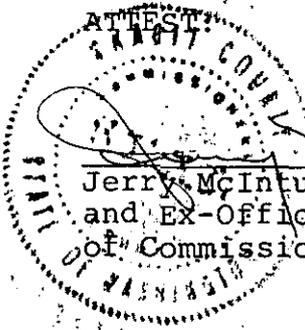
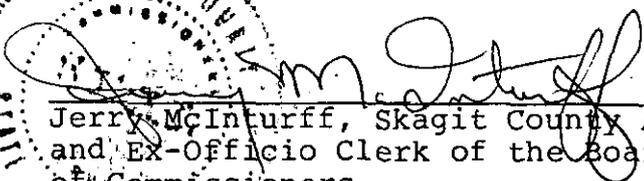
Commissioner Walberg motioned to adjourn the proceedings. Commissioner Rohrer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
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W. W. Vaux, Chairman

  
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Otto M. Walberg, Jr., Commissioner

  
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Dave Rohrer, Commissioner

ATTEST:  
  
  
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Jerry McInturff, Skagit County Auditor  
and Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board  
of Commissioners