

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Thursday, August 27, 1987

7:00 p.m. Public Meeting - Local Governance Study Commission Recommendation. (Hearing located in Hearing Rooms A, B and C, of the Skagit County Administration Building.)

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, August 27, 1987, with Commissioners Walberg, Vaux and Rohrer present.

PUBLIC MEETING - LOCAL GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION.

Chairman Walberg called the meeting to order.

Ken Dolbeare, political scientist at the Institute for Public Policy at Evergreen State College, introduced Jesse Anderson, Fire District Commissioner from King County; and Mike McCormick, Assistant Director of the Department of Community Development. Mr. Dolbeare explained that the Local Governance Study Commission (L.G.S.C.) was created by the Legislature in 1985 at the joint initiative of the Association of Washington Cities (A.W.C.) and Washington State Association of Counties (W.S.A.C.). The Commission is composed of 21 voting members as follows:

- 8 Legislators
- 4 City Elected Officials
- 4 County Elected Officials
- 5 Special District Officials
- 3 Ex-Officio Members: Director of the Dept. of Community Development
Executive Director of A.W.C.
Executive Director of W.S.A.C.

Mr. Dolbeare summarized the purpose of the L.G.S.C. and their recommendations (See attached summary of the Draft L.G.S.C. Recommendations, approved June 10, 1987.)

Representative Mary Margaret Haugen, of Camano Island, who is one of the L.G.S.C. members, was present to answer questions from the public.

Sedro-Woolley Mayor Don Walley asked how the proposed legislation would affect Boundary Review Boards.

Ms. Haugen stated that under the proposed legislation, Boundary Review Boards will no longer exist.

Curtis Johnson, Secretary of Drainage District #22, felt the diking, drainage and irrigation districts would be stifled by consolidation. He felt local control would best be exhibited without consolidation of districts.

Ms. Haugen noted that some special purpose districts which do not provide services should be consolidated to better serve the residents within the districts.

Representative Harriet Spanel joined the officials at the front of the room.

Mr. Anderson concurred with Mr. Johnson that his district should not be forced to consolidate with other districts. However, Mr. Anderson noted an instance where special districts don't accomplish their intended purpose. In such instances, the people within the districts should be able to vote for or against consolidation in order to receive the services they deserve.

Gary Koski, a Commissioner of Fire District #8, pointed out that Skagit County, with the exception of Mount Vernon, receives fire protection services by volunteer fire departments. He asked if all of these fire districts would be forced to consolidate with Mount Vernon.

Mr. Anderson stated that special purpose districts which cannot provide services should consolidate.

Mr. Koski asked how the people can be expected to review this proposal without any talk about funding.

Ms. Haugen felt Washington State needs tax reform. She explained that the L.G.S.C. will be addressing the funding issue.

Stan Kersey, Burlington City Supervisor, felt small districts and small governments are more able to meet the community's needs.

Ms. Haugen pointed out that the Legislature will be the only way to solve big government's problems. Special purpose districts are great when their purpose is achieved.

Neil Morrison, a member of the Burlington City Council, asked about funding for local governments.

Ms. Haugen explained that the cities and counties will be going to the Legislature for funding. The L.G.S.C. will not be recommending more taxes, however, there will be a need for new sources of revenue.

Lloyd Loop, Dike and Drainage District #25 Commissioner, noted that their commissioners aren't reimbursed a cent for their expenses. The County Commissioners and Job Corps have helped the district tremendously. Mr. Loop felt no additional taxes were needed to continue to provide the services.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that the proposed legislation would allow the residents to decide whether or not changes should be made in local governments.

Ms. Haugen pointed out that the reason the L.G.S.C. is not mandating consolidation is to leave that option open at the local level. She noted that currently, many of the laws in the State do not make sense.

Glen Strebe, Sewer District #3 Commissioner of Anacortes, noted that he doesn't get paid for his time as Commissioner. He felt adequate local control is left to the special purpose districts in Skagit County.

Ms. Haugen pointed out that the law provides for compensation to commissioners of special purpose districts.

Fire District #2 Commissioner Lloyd Ivey feared the proposed legislation because of the complications the State imposed on their project to paint the fire hall. Because of State bidding requirements, it cost Fire District #2 an additional \$3,000 to have their fire hall painted.

Ms. Haugen offered to talk with Mr. Ivey after the meeting to see how the law could be changed.

Jim Allen, Fire Chief for Fire District #8, noted that the Federal and State governments mandate requirements, but provide no funding.

Ms. Haugen stated that the State will be asked to back off once local issues have been determined.

Ted Banta, President of the Fire Chiefs Association and Fire Chief of Fire District #6, stated that there are 14,500 volunteer firemen and 4,700 paid firemen in Washington State, while there are 850 volunteer firemen and 31 paid firemen in Skagit County. Mr. Banta felt Skagit County provides services quite adequately to County residents.

Beverly Mendelsohn, a member of the Burlington City Council, questioned funding for this proposed legislation.

Mr. McCormick stated that \$240,000 was spent on the two-year study, while \$128,000 is being budgeted for the L.G.S.C.'s expenses between now and next year.

Mr. Anderson reiterated that it is up to the citizens to decide whether or not they want their local government to change.

Phyllis Coole-McKeehen, County Clerk, asked if the draft recommendations were being proposed as legislation.

Ms. Haugen noted that some revisions will no doubt be made.

Ms. Coole-McKeehen felt the draft sounds like proposed legislation, and asked where the funding would be found.

Ms. Haugen explained that the State would be asked to pay a portion, as would the cities and counties.

Pete Walker, Diking District #12 Commissioner, read a statement from Diking District #12 Commissioners, in which they opposed the proposed legislation. The statement pointed out that the residents of special purpose districts know the problems and solutions for their districts better than anyone else. Mr. Walker then acknowledged that the statement he read was a letter dated November 20, 1975, addressed to Representative Eugene Laughlin. Mr. Walker stated that Diking District #12 operates very efficiently on \$0.61 per \$1,000 assessment.

Mount Vernon Mayor Ray Reep asked why school districts were not included in the study.

Ms. Haugen explained that school districts represent a totally separate issue, however, they do impact the dollars available.

Mayor Reep pointed out that the City of Anacortes and the Anacortes School District share a bus barn and city shop. This shared activity saves quite a substantial amount of money.

Ms. Haugen pointed out the following situations which uniquely impact Skagit County:

1. Skagit County Hospital Districts aid people in Island and Snohomish County, without the benefit of their taxes.
2. Currently the cities operate the libraries in Skagit County without the benefit of taxes from County residents.

Milo Moore, a 12-year Commissioner of Fire District #11, asked Ms. Haugen and Ms. Spanel if they knew the definition of State sovereignty. He felt the people can't do much without violating the law. He asked Ms. Haugen to undo some of the laws passed with regard to zoning and planning. He also felt no additional restrictions should be put on volunteer firemen.

Ms. Haugen and Ms. Anderson reiterated that the L.G.S.C. wants local government to have control.

County Commissioner Bill Vaux asked what would be the minimum that the people in Skagit County would have to do to comply with the proposed legislation.

Mr. Dolbear noted the Structural Alternatives Process and the Local Government Agreement. He noted that incentives would be offered to encourage compliance within three years. Technical assistance could be offered to areas in need of further help.

Commissioner Vaux pointed out that Skagit County currently funds some programs

from which city residents benefit, and vice versa. He felt a lot of time would have to be spent going through the processes proposed by the L.G.S.C. before Skagit County would be in compliance and eligible for incentives.

Mr. Dolbeare felt it was the opinion of the L.G.S.C. that a lot of time was already being spent within counties with regard to attempted negotiations.

Ms. Haugen stated that a lot of time may be required, but it will be worthwhile.

Mr. Strebe, of Sewer District #3, suggested the L.G.S.C. develop a checklist form for the County to fill out and thus fulfill the requirements of the proposed legislation.

Chairman Walberg and Ms. Haugen thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Otto M. Walberg, Jr.
Otto M. Walberg, Jr., Chairman

W. W. Vaux
W. W. Vaux, Commissioner

Dave Rohrer, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Megan Cheney
Megan Cheney, Clerk
Skagit County Board of Commissioners



STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON STATE LOCAL GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMISSION

Institute for Public Policy • The Evergreen State College • MS/TA-00 • Olympia, Washington 98505 • (206) 866-6000 ext. 6380

SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT IGSC RECOMMENDATIONS (Approved June 10, 1987)

Background: The Local Governance Study Commission was created by the Legislature in 1985 at the joint initiative of the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC). The Commission is composed of 21 voting members (state legislators and elected officials from cities, counties and special districts) appointed by the Governor. There are three ex-officio members: the Director of the Department of Community Development, who chairs the Commission, and the Executive Directors of the AWC and WSAC.

Task: The statute requires the Commission to reexamine the roles and responsibilities of local governments. A report and recommendations are due to the legislature and Governor on January 1, 1988.

Problems: The Commission has focused on three major problems:

1. Continued urban growth in unincorporated areas cannot be accommodated under current local government service arrangements.
2. Problems that cross jurisdictional boundaries lead to inaction, lack of coordination, duplication of services and costs, and conflict between units of government.
3. Fiscal constraints for all local governments limit ability to meet services demands.

Public Opinion: The Commission sponsored a public opinion survey of 700 people statewide, in which 61% of the respondents felt that the state should have a major role in ensuring that local governments work together in planning for future growth.

Strategy and Principles: The Commission believes that the state should create a framework and processes for locals to determine their own solutions. Five principles establish the framework for the Commission's recommendations. These include:

1. Cities should be the major provider of urban services, and should be enabled to grow.
2. Counties (or other units with capability) should provide areawide services.
3. Special districts should consolidate, and small special districts should not be allowed to form.

4. Governments need adequate revenues for assigned services.
5. Citizens and their local government officials should be empowered to make structural changes.

Recommendations: The main body of the Commission's recommendations are two new processes: a Local Government Agreement (LGA) and a Structural Alternatives (SA) Process. These processes will enable local governments and their citizens to address the problems posed above. The Commission expects that there will be a significant amount of interplay between the two processes although they are described separately below:

The Local Government Agreement

Definition and purpose: The LGA is an agreement required by the state between all local governments to resolve urban growth and service allocation issues on a multicounty, county and subcounty basis as needed. An agreement must be completed within 3 years after the law becomes effective.

Board of Directors: A Board of Directors will be formed in each county to address the above issues, allocate planning funds, arbitrate disputes, oversee development of and approve the final LGA, and monitor the agreement once it is in place. The Board may be designed by the local governments or follow the Commission's proposal below:

Elected officials from each type of government as outlined below will be selected from their legislative bodies. Some provisions will be made for cities based on population differences.

Board Composition

County Reps: 2 in all counties
City Reps: 8 in King, 5 in Pierce/Snohomish/Spokane, 3 in the other counties
Spec Dist Reps: 3 in King, 2 in the other counties

The Board will hold public hearings on the draft LGA and make any necessary modifications. The Board's final approval of the LGA will occur in two steps: 1) a 60% majority vote by Board members, including the votes of the county and any city with 25% of the population, and 2) approval by 60% of the general purpose governments in the county.

Content: The LGA will contain:

- 1) Urban areas: Definitions of areas that are or will be urban within the next twenty years.

- 2) **Boundary changes:** Provisions for multi-year phased annexation process by a city to include the entire urban area, subject to a protest by 40% of the voters in the specific area proposed for annexation. Such a protest will trigger an election. Encouragement for incorporations of high-density urban areas.
- 3) **Service provision:** Allocation of areawide services to counties. Allocation of urban services to cities. In either case, if there is another unit of government that can provide the service more effectively, then that unit should be selected. Financial adjustments may be necessary to compensate governments for any rearrangement of service provision. Special districts should be consolidated and small districts should not be formed in the future.
- 4) **Land use planning/zoning:** Provision of joint land use, zoning ordinances and development standards in the urban areas as defined above.

State's Role: The state will provide 60% matching funds for IGA start up costs, provide informal advice when asked, and help arbitrate disputes when asked. Once an IGA is completed, the state will review the IGA from a strictly procedural perspective. The state and its agencies are expected to abide by the IGA in place when making decisions that might affect urban growth or service provision in each county or counties.

The Structural Alternative Process

Definition and purpose: The SA process will enable citizens and local government officials in each county to form a Review Committee to review current governmental structures and powers on a multi-county, county and subcounty basis and recommend desired changes which, if approved by the voters, will override the IGA provisions that are inconsistent with the SA changes. The SA Review Committee will exist during the 3 year development of the IGA and cease at the general election after the IGA has been filed.

SA Review Committee: The Committee shall consist of 60% elected citizens and 40% local government officials as outlined below:

Citizens will be elected from county council or commissioner districts. Elected officials from each type of government will be selected by their legislative bodies. Some provisions will be made for cities based on population differences.

Committee Composition

County Reps:	2 in all counties
City Reps:	8 in King, 5 in Pierce/Snohomish/Spokane, 3 in the other counties
Spec Dist Reps:	3 in King, 2 in the other counties
Citizens:	18 in King, 14 in Pierce, 15 in Snohomish, 12 in all the rest

All decisions by the SA Review Committee must be approved by a majority of the Committee. The SA Committee will then submit its recommendations to a vote of the people. Any changes must be approved by a majority of the people in each governmental unit affected.

Content: The SA Committee may undertake any form of structural review (some examples might include: consolidation of special districts or cities, city/county consolidations or federations, or full service counties). The SA Committee may also look at service delivery alternatives such as multi-county transit authorities.

Invocation: Every ten years voters in a county will decide whether or not to reinvoke the SA Process to reexamine the need for structural or service delivery change. The SA process can be invoked 3 years after the LGA is filed by either a 10% citizen petition or the action of the county legislative body, (both of which trigger an election), or by a majority of local government bodies any time as long as the county and any city with 25% of the population agree to reinstating the SA Process.

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